

Sun Aids Swift Arkansas Harvest

LITTLE ROCK, ARK.

Arkansas farmers seem to be setting harvest speed records this year; just nine months after some growers were finishing up the 2009 growing season.

"Weather has been as perfect as it could be for harvesting," said Chad Norton, Lincoln County Extension staff chair for the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture. "We are going to need a rain sometime soon for wheat planting.

"Other than that, another day in paradise," he said.

It's a stark contrast to a year ago when many Arkansas farmers were scanning the skies for a break in the rain while soy pods split, cottonseed sprouted in the boll and crops drowned.

"I don't recall seeing so many fields worked up after harvest as I'm seeing this fall," said Don Plunkett, Jefferson County Extension staff chair for the U of A Division of Agriculture. "Beds have been disked out."

"Farmers have moved quickly from crop to crop then prepared fields for the next crop. They have worked long days. They are tired," he said.

It's a good kind of tired though.

"They have some bright spots in crop prices heading into 2011 and hope upon hope they pay out in 2010," Plunkett said.

In Phillips County, extension agent Robert Goodson said the harvest was nearly over for all crops.

"Soybeans are 95 percent complete, which is pretty good considering we have 218,000 acres," he said.

"Cotton is a high point with yields being reported in the 1,200-1,400 pounds of lint range with an average yield of about 1,100," Goodson said. Rice and corn were both off, with soybean yields up from last year, but down from 2008.

"There's a lot of interest in wheat, but no seed," he said.

Randy Chlapecka, Jackson County extension staff chair for the U of A Division of Agriculture, said "corn harvest is pretty much complete and rice harvest is probably 85-90 percent done at this point. Soybean harvest was underway at some farms, but most of our beans are not quite ready. In fact, there are still a few late beans being irrigated," he said.

Growers are very disappointed in rice this year.

"The weather has been great for harvesting rice. Too bad it couldn't have been a bumper crop," he said. Heat and stinkbugs are proba-

bly to blame for low quality.

Norton said stinkbugs "were bad in rice this year, worst in seven or eight years."

Disappointment in rice echoed in Phillips County too.

"Rice was the worst off, maybe 40 to 50 bushels on average and individual fields maybe



Perfect weather is helping speed the harvest as bolls disappear from a field in Jefferson County.

University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture photo by Don Plunkett.



Sunny, low-humidity days have provided ideal conditions for a speedy harvest.

University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture photo by Don Plunkett.

off 100 bushels per acre," Goodson said.

In Lonoke County, Keith Perkins, extension agent for the division, said growers in his county "will need a rain to start wheat planting in about 10 days."

And with duck season around the corner, "We need water for ducks – but that can come after harvest," he said.

The forecast through The National Weather Service at North Little Rock through Oct. 7 shows no rain.

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