

Use DD50, Know Where To Plant Conventional vs. Hybrids

HAZEN, ARK.

Knowing where and when to plant conventional varieties versus hybrid rice will be critical to success in 2012, according to Chuck Wilson, director of the Rice Research and Extension Center for the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture, said Tuesday.

Hybrid rice offers strong yield potential, as well as good resistance to diseases including bacterial panicle blight, a significant threat in Arkansas' rice fields. Conventional varieties can also offer outstanding yields.

"Hybrids are a more forgiving plant than the conventional varieties," he said told the audience at a crop production meeting in Hazen. "You can grow good rice with the 'conventionals,' but you have manage them more intensively."

Wilson said that come March, farmers need to know what rice is going on which acres and when.

"If you look at the hybrid that you paid \$150 an acre for, your instinct may be to put that seed on your best acres," he said. "It's counter-intuitive, but put that high cost seed in lower yielding field, because you'll get more out of it."

"Plant the hybrids where you have the most trouble," Wilson said. "Plant the conventionals where you can manage best" for those varieties' particular needs.

As far as planting order, Wilson advised growers to "plant conventionals first. They're more

sensitive to planting dates than the hybrid rice.

Hybrid varieties, such as the Clearfield varieties, comprised 40 percent of rice acres in Arkansas last year, up from less than 30 percent during the 2008-2010 seasons. A decade ago, hybrids made up less than 5 percent of Arkansas' acreage.

Conventional varieties include Francis, Roy J. and Taggart.

Wilson also reminded growers and consultants of the utility of the DD50 program.

"DD50 allows growers to plan ahead," he said. "It predicts timing of more than 25 production decisions. It acts as a tool to improve management for growers and consultants alike."

Program use spiked in the 1980s and tailed off in succeeding decades. Some said they stopped using the program because they used a consultant, Wilson said.

However, "if I'm a consultant and I have 100 fields to keep up with, I'd be using DD50. It has more value than just to the farmer," he said.

Learn more about DD50 in the publication FSA2124, "DD50 Computerized rice management program," available online at: www.uaex.edu/Other_Areas/publications/PDF/FSA-2124.pdf.

Producers can enroll in the DD50 program online at <http://dd50.uaex.edu/dd50Logon.asp> or work with their county extension agent to use it. Δ