



Water conservation is extremely important to farmers in the southern Rolling Plains

Cotton farmers like Jerry Mitchell and his son, Bryan, are acutely aware of the need to hold onto every drop of precious rain that falls. While living at Davidson in southern Tillman County, they farm several different locations across the county.

This season has been particularly frustrating for the Mitchell's, Jerry will tell you. "All this summer we will get some moisture at one location and then, not too far away, another field won't get a drop," he said. "All of our farm land is no-till now. We believe it is the best way to hold what moisture we get in our dryland farming."



Rapidly increasing fuel prices are another reason no-till helps by significantly cutting down on tractor use, he adds. Mitchell is optimistic about his chances for a good cotton crop this year, but he cautions, "a lot can change in the last weeks of the cotton growing season."

The Mitchell's report they got a good stand of cotton in the Spring, only having to replant less than 10 percent of it due to inclement weather. Infestations of thrips and fleahoppers caused them to apply pesticides on some fields. "We had to be careful with our spraying so we wouldn't kill the beneficial insects we found in the fields," he said.

Mitchell only plants stacked gene cotton varieties with the built-in genetic qualities of resistance to certain herbicides and insects.

Like most other cotton farmers who are getting back in the game after the boll-weevil eradication program proved to be successful, the Mitchell's are looking to the future with their fingers crossed.

"We need good rains in August and an open, warm fall to make this crop," Jerry said. "We have cotton now that has a good boll load. We just need some moisture and a late frost."

