



“Wellington, TX Farmers Cooperative Gin Owners Grow Cotton, Ride Bikes”

WELLINGTON, TX.--Members of the Farmers Co-op Society #1 here make good use of the latest mechanical technology for work and recreation.

Coop Manager Kim Martindale and several members of the farm cooperative are enthusiastic bike riders; taking in national biker rallies at Sturgis, Four Corners, Ralley Durango, Colorado Springs, Ruidoso and Big Bend.



Martindale and several of his friends will make the Ruidoso, New Mexico, motorcycle rally this month.

"Several of our coop members are bike riders," Martindale said. "We all ride together. We also ride with other bikers from Borger, Amarillo, Canadian and with several from Oklahoma."

Cooperative members who are motorcycle riders with Martindale are Ronald Carter, Brad Bawcom, Tommy Coleman, Doug Coleman, Jr., Jim Cabble, Gary Don Davis, Elmer Keller and Dan Langford, Martindale said.

"Bike riding gives us a chance to enjoy each other's company and see a lot of beautiful country," Martindale said.

Cooperative members also displayed a real interest in the latest in cotton ginning technology in 2005 when they built a new Lummus cotton gin.

"Our members have a lot of cotton acreage," Martindale said. "New developments such as the boll weevil eradication program, new cotton varieties and farming techniques have greatly increased our cotton production.

"We needed a new gin to get better-grading, cleaner cotton," he said. "The new gin will process 60 bales an hour. It doubles our bale production. It gives us

cleaner cotton with higher grades and that is where the money is for our producers. It also reduces our labor and utility costs. We are able to process more cotton with a smaller work force and lower utility costs. During the ginning season, we still run 24/7 to harvest and process the crop as soon as possible. But the new gin permits us to do this in a shorter time frame."

Founded in 1927, the Wellington, Tx.-based cooperative ginned 59,000 bales in 2006, Martindale said; acknowledged to be one of the worst drought years in the U.S. southern plains.

Members of the cooperative have planted more than 40,000 acres of cotton this year, Martindale said. "Our cotton acres have fallen off some," he said. "we lost 10 percent of our cotton acres this year to storm damage."

Like all farmers, cotton growers are eternal optimists, Martindale believes. "Two weeks ago, cool, wet weather didn't make crop chances too promising. But the warm, dry weather we are getting now is helping the crop catch up quickly." Not wanting to go too far out on the prediction limb, Martindale says several farmers have told him the 2007 crop is as good a crop as they have had in a long time.

"We have a long way to go before we harvest," he said.

One of the reasons for the early enthusiasm this year, Martindale said, concerns the number of acres planted with new Roundup Ready Flex cotton varieties. "Last year, only 10 percent of our acreage planted to the new varieties. This year, 50 percent has been planted to the Flex varieties. We have some real weed problems with all of the rain we have had; the Flex varieties give farmers more help with their weed control efforts."

A top peanut production area (there are three peanut processing facilities in the Wellington area) cotton provides farmers with a good crop to rotate with peanuts, Martindale said. "Since the early 1990's, peanuts have been an important crop here. Rotating it with cotton improves both yields and land productivity." There was a brief wooly worm attack on the young cotton, but the crop grew out of the problem, he said. The worms, located along the edge of the fields, have moved over onto sunflowers growing in the fence rows.

"No one had to spray for the worms," he said.

A bad storm June 20th damaged the cooperative's gin building, Martindale said. "We had some exterior damage to the gin building. None of the machinery was damaged."

Plenty of soil moisture and a drying weather forecast causes farmers to have a positive outlook for the 2007 cotton crop, Martindale said.