



Mike Berry—Cotton Growers Cooperative Gin 2007 Growing Season

COTTON GROWERS COOPERATIVE gin, Altus, Ok., has had a good run this 2007 harvest season, according to the cooperative manager, Mike Berry.

"We finished our ginning season this weekend before New Years," Berry said. "We will gin over 85,000 bales of cotton this year. This has been a good crop and our ginning season has been very smooth with very few problems."



It may not be a record year according to number of bales ginned (They ginned 89, 000 bales two years ago), but Berry has seen outstanding cotton ginned this year. Outstanding not just in average yields, but in the quality of cotton produced, he says.

"We have had cotton ginned here sell for 58 to 59 cents per pound and two cents over the loan rate," Berry said. More than 85 percent of the cotton ginned at the Cotton Growers Cooperative is picker cotton grown in the Lugert-Altus Irrigation District located in Jackson County.

Operating 22 hours a day, seven days a week during the ginning season, the gin shuts down for an hour at the end of each shift for cleanup and to check and service the gin machinery. The gin can process 60 bales an hour or 991 bales ever 22 hour period of running, he said.

Berry estimates irrigated cotton in the district averaged two and a half bales per acre this year. After having some problems with cool, wet weather at the beginning of the 2007 growing season, the latter part yielded ideal growing weather for cotton, he said.

"Starting in August, we had warm days and cool nights that gave the young cotton a lot of help," he said. "The new Roundup Ready Flex cotton varieties were able to use the good weather to the highest potential of their genetics. We were able to harvest a lot of top-quality cotton."

Originally from southwest Oklahoma, Berry spent much of his youth in West Texas. He came back to Oklahoma where he worked in various jobs affiliated with cotton farming. He managed a cotton gin at Davidson, Ok., in Tillman County, until that gin was closed due to the depredations of the cotton bollweevil in the 1990s. Now more than 99 percent under control through the efforts of the producer-managed bollweevil eradication project, absence of the bollweevil has been the most important factor allowing cotton farming, particularly dryland cotton, to make a comeback as an important agricultural commodity, Berry said.

Along with his responsibilities as manager of the Cotton Growers Cooperative, Berry is also a member of the Oklahoma Cotton Council and serves as board chairman of the Producers Cooperative Oil Mill in Oklahoma City, Ok. The oil mill is going through a transition period now; moving some of its assets and building a larger plant. In 2008, the mill will process canola and oil seed along with cottonseed into several different byproducts; enabling the U.S. consumer a wider choice of quality cooking oils along with other byproducts.

TALKIN' COTTON is a feature of NTOK Cotton, a cotton industry partnership which encourages increased cotton production in the Rolling Plains of North Texas, Oklahoma and Kansas. For more information on the cotton scene, check out okiecotton.org and ntokcotton.org. For comments or questions about Talkin' Cotton, contact us at enterprise@hughes.net.

