

TALKIN' COTTON

DROUGHT with continuous hot winds has made the 2011 cotton crop a shambles in the North Texas, Oklahoma and Kansas area of the Southern Plains. Beginning in Kansas, Dick Cooper, who works for the Plains Cotton Cooperative Assn., estimates "we planted 70,000 acres in Kansas, up from 53,000 last year and 12,000 in northern Oklahoma, up from 8,500 in 2010. As in the past, the area west of Pratt, Ks., and all of southwest Kansas is irrigated and to the east is mostly dryland. Planting is complete and most of our crop is up to a good stand. There are pockets where moisture was not sufficient to germinate seed, but in general, the crop is off to a good start. Most of the irrigated crop in the southwest is at the three leaf stage and is making rapid progress with the 100 degree heat we are having.

"The dryland areas in the eastern areas will need timely rains to achieve average yields as subsoil moisture remains limited. Moisture is non-existent in the southwest except for irrigation. We will have some dryland cotton out here this year."

Mike Berry, manager of the Cotton Growers Cooperative gin in Altus, has this to say about cotton production in the Lugert-Altus Irrigation District: "Most of the cotton growers here have used up the six inches of water allotted to them this year. Some rain fell north of Altus last week, a little in the Blair region. Before we used the six inches allotted this year, Lake Altus was about one-half full at 47,000 acre feet. After the six inches was used up, there is only 30,000 acre feet of water left in the lake. There will have to be a lot of rainfall in the watershed north of the lake to help out this year."

Jeannie Hileman, manager of the Farmers Cooperative gin at Carnegie, Ok., explained cotton farmers in that part of Caddo County have received some badly-needed rain "enough to allow us to hold on a little longer."

"Our cotton growers here have planted 25,000 acres to cotton, double what the acreage was last year," she said. "About half of the late-harvested irrigated wheat around here has been planted to cotton."

Craig Bolton, manager of the Tri-County Gin east of Chattanooga, Ok., estimated some 20,000 acres of cotton have been planted in the area. "Farmers are still planting right now; about 20 percent of it is up. We received some rain last week, but it was scattered around the area. Next week will tell the story on how well the crop will do."

Rodney Sawatsky, manager of the Midwest Farmers, Inc., gin at Clinton, says a lot of cotton has been planted in the region with some of it growing well and some of it in trouble. "We have gotten some rain, but it has been very scattered," he said. "Farmers are still planting cotton. We will just have to wait to see if any more rain will come our way soon."

Jamie Snider, manager of the Harmon County Cooperative gin at Hollis, says at least 15,000 acres of cotton have been planted there. "A lot of our cotton has been planted with center pivot irrigation. Farmers here are worried about how strong their wells will stay without any rainfall to help water the cotton. It may be some of them will have to recharge their wells to keep enough water flowing to water the cotton."

David Lingle, manager of the Tillman Producers Cooperative gin south of Frederick, said farmers are still planting cotton. "Farmers have had real difficulty getting a stand of cotton, even in the irrigated fields," he said. "Hot winds have wilted the young plants. Farmers with pivot irrigation started watering their ground back in March to get enough subsoil moisture to get the crop going. but the wind, blowing continuously at 40 miles per hour, has sucked surface moisture

away from the young cotton. The hot wind won't let the cotton grow enough to let the tap root get down to the subsoil moisture."

TERRY PITTS, OSU Extension IPM specialist at the Southwest Research and Extension Center south of Altus, will retire this summer. A come and go retirement reception for Pitts will be held July 6 from 2 to 4 p.m. at the Center. Anyone wishing to contribute to a retirement present for Pitts should send a check before July 1; payable to the Oklahoma Cotton Council, c/o of Harvey Schroeder, 309 Willard, Frederick, Ok., 73542.

AGRICULTURE NEEDS YOUTH. Many young people graduating from high school and college these days think careers in agriculture are limited to farming and ranching. But there are thousands of wholesale and retail jobs available where agriculture commodities are produced and bought and sold. Everyone involved in agriculture should tell the young people they meet about the many opportunities available in agriculture.

TALKIN' COTTON is produced by NTOK Cotton, a cotton industry partnership which supports and encourages increased cotton production in the Rolling Plains of North Texas, Oklahoma and Kansas. For more information on the cotton scene, see ntokcotton.org and okiecotton.org. For comments or questions about Talkin' Cotton, contact buatersbarn1@yahoo.com.