

TALKIN' COTTON
by Vic Schoonover



Snyder, Ok.-Drought in the Southern Plains in 2011 has made farming even more chancy than it usually is. Winter wheat harvest results left farmers with many acres insured out and only a few fields worthy of harvest.

Now, with the drought still on-going, they are planting summer crops like grain sorghum and cotton.

Perhaps the only reliable, season-long source of soil moisture for cotton and other warm-season crops will be where farmers have access to irrigation wells. With no rain clouds in sight, it would be interesting to

observe the progression of a cotton field watered with a center-pivot irrigation system.. Such a field is located southwest of Snyder,Ok; a little west of Snyder and just south of HW62.

Cotton, the variety FiberMax 1740, was planted there May 10. The crop belongs to Joe and John Bates, Altus, Ok., who farm in Jackson and Kiowa Counties. The field is the responsibility of John's son, Billy Bob Bates.

"We planted the crop dry," Bill Bob said. "After the plants had come up, we put about .8 of an inch of rain on it to get it started growing. We will water it again this week (June 7, 2011)."

"Availability of water will be the deciding factor on the success of this year's cotton crop," said Dr. Randy Boman, director of the Oklahoma State University cotton production program.

Also the director of the OSU Southwest Research and Extension Center south of Altus on HW283, Boman explained farmers in the Lugert-Altus Irrigation District have been limited to six acre inches of water this season for their crops. "Most farmers will probably use that six inches to their best advantage for their crops," he said. "After that, unless enough rain falls north of Lake Altus to recharge the lake, the crops in the irrigation district will have to depend on what rain may fall." Lake Altus is only at 47 percent capacity now.

Bates said the seed planted in the field near Snyder had been treated with Acceleron to combat thrip and mite depredations. Bates said the field contains approximately 105 acres.

As an indicator of the progression of the 2011 cotton crop, North Texas, Oklahoma and Texas Cotton will disseminate pictures and information on this field of pivot-irrigated cotton throughout the season.

NTOK Cotton is a cotton industry partnership which supports and encourages increased cotton production in the Rolling Plains of North Texas, Oklahoma and Kansas. For information on the cotton scene, see ntokcotton.org. and okiecotton.org. For comments or questions about this article or NTOK Cotton, contact bustersbarn1@yahoo.com.