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Abstract

The 2010 production season was challenging for cotton growers throughout the U.S. cotton belt, but was rewarding for some growers. Harvested acreage in 2010 was estimated to be over 10.7 million acres; a sizable increase from 2009 (7,586,000) and the decade low acreage in 2008 (7,400,000). Essentially every state increased cotton acreage from 2009, which is a quite a different trend than what was observed between 2008 and 2009. Average lint yields were slightly elevated compared to 2009 yields, but were comparable to average yields of most years since 2004. Total bale production was also substantially higher than 2008 and 2009, which can be strongly correlated to harvested acreage trends, especially since 2004. Optimal planting conditions were observed throughout most of the Southeast, however hot and dry weather prevailed in this region throughout most of the summer, resulting in a relatively early crop. Yields were highly variable in this region, primarily a result of rainfall patterns. The loss of single-gene Bt varieties, primarily DP 555 BR, has forced growers to plant newer multi-gene Bt varieties. As a result of this transition, fiber quality has generally improved and management strategies for plant growth have been modified. Glyphosate-resistant Palmer amaranth still presents a significant production challenge throughout the Southeast, and has recently moved into North Alabama. Technology options appear to be driving variety selection in many areas. The Midsouth also experienced dry weather conditions during 2010. A warm spring allowed for earlier planting in this region. Glyphosate-resistant Palmer amaranth also continued to be a challenge, as well as plant bugs and caterpillar pests. Excellent harvest conditions allowed most producers to harvest a decent crop. Grain crops continue to compete with cotton for acreage, primarily due to the higher planting and management costs associated with cotton, and the loss of some infrastructure. However, recent increases in cotton prices in addition to improved performance of some of the new varieties, may make cotton more attractive to producers in the Midsouth. The Southwest region also experienced an increase in cotton acreage, with Texas producing over half of the US cotton acreage in 2010. Both the High Plains and South / Central Texas experienced frequent rainfall during April and May, delaying planting and slowing crop growth in some areas. Growing conditions were slightly drier but decent during June, followed by significant rainfall in July, causing flooding and further delaying development in some areas. Nutrient deficiencies became an issue for some growers following the July rains. The rains subsided in the latter part of the summer, allowing for additional heat unit accumulation and thus timely maturity and harvest. Yields were generally good throughout Texas, and fiber quality was excellent. Verticillium Wilt continued to be a challenge in the High Plains. The Western region, consisting of Arizona and California, experienced very cool spring weather and cooler than normal summer temperatures in 2010. Arizona experienced below average insect problems, however the Western San Joaquin Valley had appreciable Lygus bug problems. The Pink Bollworm Eradication Program is nearing its end, largely due to the widespread planting of Bt varieties. The release of RF Pima varieties and the ongoing struggles with the forage/dairy industries may prove to be favorable for cotton in this region. Harvest conditions and yields were also generally good in this region of the cotton belt.