

COST CUTTING IN THE WEST

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When I speak of cost cutting, I don't necessarily mean spending less on input costs. In fact, it may mean spending more per acre.

Pink bollworms have caused us to limit the use of our growing season for many years. Bt cotton has changed all that. The large scale availability of Bt cotton in 1997 and limited supply in 1996 have allowed me to try a production management scheme used by a few growers in my area.

Let me give the main points involved.

First, plant as early as possible - March 1st in my area. Use high seeding rates and a fungicide.

Second, push plants early with irrigation and fertilizer. Use low application rates of PIX, multiples if necessary.

Third, protect against whiteflies and lygus. The new IGR's should be applied as soon as the threshold is reached with no delay. They have been the other key in this production system. The "soft" IGRs and Bt cottons have allowed us to use IPM.

Fourth, irrigate on short intervals, six to eight days during the hot weather and use shorter set times if possible.

Fifth, make sure fertility is adequate. August nitrogen application may be necessary.

Sixth, keep irrigating to assure adequate moisture for late season boll fill, on some soils as late as October 1st.

Seventh, defoliate with high rates of most materials in mid-to late October.

Eighth, start harvest in mid-November.

Drawbacks to this system are: one, total input costs are high, two, defoliation is more difficult, and three, there is more risk of weather loss with delayed harvest.

The benefit can be tremendous yields. We have harvested several fields that made 4.25 bales per acre on the first pick. The grower in our gin I have tried to model (he is the guru of full season production) has harvested five bales per acre, first-pick, on a significant number of fields.

Let me itemize for you some of my production costs this season in our field 15-1.

Disk -	\$24.00 per acre
Plow -	18.00
Landplane -	16.00
Furrow out -	6.00
Plant -	6.00
Fertilizer side dress -	18.00
Build ends -	4.50
Irrigation labor -	42.93
Soil/water amendment -	41.92
Fertilizer -	112.66
Herbicide -	12.69
Herbicide application -	8.71
Growth regulators -	23.12
Insecticide -	94.62
Insecticide application -	12.17
Adjuvants -	4.84
Foliar feed -	34.83
Foliar feed application -	16.54
Defoliation material -	34.11
Defoliation application -	8.81
Seed -	13.46
Bt license fee -	32.00
Crop-hail insurance -	18.19
Pump electricity -	3.53
Water -	220.44
Water assessment -	2.63
Machinery labor -	36.16
Seasonal labor, weeding -	14.22
Harvest -	124.50
Land rent -	100.00

Total Expense -	\$1,105.58
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The first pick lint yield from this field was 2,100 pounds per acre.