

THREE YEAR OVERVIEW OF UNRC VS. CONVENTIONAL COTTON

**W. R. Perkins
BASF Corporation
Idalou, TX**

Abstract

Acceptance of the Ultra Narrow Row Cotton, UNRC, system has continued to gain momentum over the past three years, due to the advancements in seed, herbicide and plant growth regulator technology. The desire of the producer to hold production costs down while having the chance to increase yields, along with opportunity to grow cotton on lands not generally suited for this crop has also increased the popularity of UNRC. While the original definition of UNRC was "cotton planted in 10 inch rows or narrower with approximately two plants per foot (120K)" we have seen this change across the various regions. UNRC now is generally accepted as cotton grown in 20 inch rows or narrower. Plant densities have remained fairly stable, settling at an average of 100 -120K plants per acre. The change in row spacing can mostly be attributed to the producer using his 30" or 40" planter, and "doubling" back on the same piece of ground. New varieties with and without herbicide tolerances are making the UNRC system possible on virtually any type of farm. Over the last three years, over 40 varieties from all major seed companies have been evaluated under the UNRC system. Through all of those studies it is evident that most varieties will adapt to UNRC production practices. UNRC acreage has grown from an estimated 3000 acres in 1995 to around 30,000 - 35,000 in 1997. Areas such as Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana and North and South Carolina which had never seen a cotton stripper, now have close to 8000 acres on UNRC. Other regions such as Texas and Oklahoma have seen UNRC acreage increase to around 15,000 acres. Many parameters which were previously considered limiting factors for UNRC production have now been solved by new technologies. Factors such as grass / weed control, rank growth, and harvest aid management are now easily accomplished. The only real remaining hurdle to the production of UNRC is the continued need for a new type of harvesting system. While many producers have made conversions and improvements to existing machinery, the development of a new harvester would help greatly. The advancements in technology coupled with the need for a higher return on inputs at the producer level, should equal a continued increasing UNRC acres. The past three years give evidence that Ultra Narrow Row Cotton is an efficient, cost effective management program which fits across all soil types, production systems and environmental conditions.