

THE 2014 CROP YEAR IN REVIEW

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The 2014 production season will be remembered as the year the rains stopped. Georgia producers planted 1.38 million acres in 2014, which was similar to 2013 acreage. USDA-NASS reported a state average yield of 876 lbs lint per acre on 1.37 million acres harvested. Georgia remains the second largest cotton producing state, trailing only Texas in acres and production.

Generally, good growing conditions were experienced from planting through July. Stand establishment and early-mid season growth and fruit set were generally good. Drier conditions became prevalent in July and August, however, depending upon location. These dry conditions persisted through harvest, except for the early part of September, which brought some rain and extended periods of cloudy weather that were extremely favorable for boll rot.

Dryland yields were highly variable ranging from poor to very good depending on planting date and rainfall. Irrigated yields were generally good to excellent. The 2014 crop matured very quickly. In most fields, good early boll retention followed by drier conditions contributed to a more determinate crop, and very few fields had late-season boll production in the top of the canopy. Early crop maturity and dry conditions allowed for timely harvest of the majority of the crop. There were, however, some harvest delays on late planted cotton.

The most common challenges for growers in 2014 included Palmer amaranth, thrips, nematodes, and droughty conditions. Georgia cotton producers continue to improve management programs for Palmer amaranth, and diligence with aggressive management and hand weeding appears to be paying dividends. Thrips management has become an increasing concern since the loss of aldicarb, and growers are supplementing at-plant insecticides with a foliar insecticide for thrips control, especially on early planted cotton. Nematodes are also a perennial pest and dry weather conditions were conducive for nematode damage. Despite these and other challenges, many parts of Georgia were blessed with better than expected yields, resulting in a statewide average yield of 876 lbs lint per acre.

Variety selection remains an important issue. New varieties are being released in a rapid manner due to increased competition and advancements by industry. Many of the newer varieties performed very well for growers in 2014. The 2014 cotton acreage in Georgia was predominantly comprised of DeltaPine varieties (58.99%), Stoneville varieties (15.36%), Phytogen varieties (14.42%), and FiberMax varieties (6.48%). Americot and Croplan varieties were planted on fewer acres and accounted for 3.78 and 0.92 percent, respectively, of the 2014 crop (<http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/Cotton>).

The quality of the 2014 crop was comparable to previous years (Table 1). Of 2.522 million bales classed as of February 12, 2015, 5 percent were short staple and 18 percent were high micronaire. Average staple was 36 and average micronaire was 4.7, which are similar to recent years. Uniformity averaged 81.3, which was slightly lower in 2014 compared with recent years. Strength averaged 29.0 and has been consistently around 29 in recent years. Timely harvest resulted in 62 percent of the crop grading 31 or better for color, which is the highest percentage in the last seven years. Bark issues were reported on 3.3 percent of bales classed, which is an improvement from the previous two years.

Table 1. Fiber Quality Summary for Georgia, 2014 and Previous Years

Year	Color Grade 31/41 or better (% of crop)	Bark/ Grass/ Prep (% of crop)	Average Staple (32nds)	Average Strength (g/tex)	Average Micronaire (units)	Average Uniformity (%)
2008	25 / 93	all < 1.0	34	28.7	4.6	80.2
2009	26 / 96	all < 1.0	35	28.8	4.5	80.3
2010	50 / 90	all < 1.0	35	29.9	4.8	81.0
2011	38 / 84	2.6 / <1 / 1	36	29.6	4.6	81.7
2012	48 / 91	11.9 / <1 / <1	36	29.0	4.6	81.7
2013	49 / 89	5.3 / <1 / <1	36	29.6	4.7	81.8
2014	62 / 87	3.3 / <1 / <1	36	29.0	4.7	81.3

Bales classed short staple (<34)
2008: 20%, 2009: 22%, 2010: 4%, 2011: 2.8%, 2012: 1.4%, 2013: 1%, 2014: 5.2%

Bales classed high micronaire (>4.9)
2008: 21%, 2009: 20%, 2010: 9%, 2011: 8.8%, 2012: 15.4%, 2013: 22.3%, 2014: 18.1%

Fiber quality data as of February 12, 2015. Source: <http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/Cotton>

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