

THE 2012 CROP YEAR IN REVIEW

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The 2012 production season was certainly unique and quite different from that of 2011. Cotton acreage harvested decreased approximately 14 % from that of 2011, with an estimated 1,285,000 acres harvested in Georgia during 2012, according to the National Agricultural Statistics Service. Approximately 2,807,821 bales were classed from Georgia for the 2012 season, resulting in an approximate average yield of 1093 lbs per acre, which is a new record for Georgia. Georgia remains the 2nd largest cotton producing state in the nation, second only to Texas. Most of the cotton crop this year was planted relatively on time, and frequent rains allowed for activation of residual herbicides, exceptional stand establishment, and early season vigor in most areas, which was quite a different and better scenario than what was experienced in the Spring of 2011. Slightly lower heat unit accumulation (slightly cooler day and nighttime temperatures) and frequent rains were observed throughout most of the summer, helping many fields to avoid stress that would normally occur in most other years. A few hot and dry spells occurred but were generally short-lived and were less severe than normal. In general, rainfall seemed sufficient during periods of peak demand; however, a few regions could have benefitted from a little more rain, which is nothing abnormal. Contrary to 2011, a prolonged period of cloudy, rainy, and foggy weather occurred during late summer, which resulted in some losses due to hardlock and/or boll rot for earlier planted cotton, as mature bolls began to crack open during that time. The slightly cooler, wetter and cloudier than normal weather during late July and August noticeably slowed boll development in many fields, prolonging the boll opening process and delaying the onset of harvest. Significant regrowth was also a challenge for many producers in defoliating the 2012 crop. In general, weather during the latter part of the 2012 harvest season was fairly cooperative.

The most common challenges for growers in 2012 included nematodes, which were observed in several more fields than normal, emphasizing the need for cultivar tolerance to nematodes or other effective treatment options. Glyphosate-resistant pigweed remains a significant challenge, although activation of residual herbicides by rainfall during 2012 noticeably improved control. Despite these and other challenges, many parts of Georgia were blessed with appreciable rains and/or less-than-normal stress, resulting in a projected statewide average yield of 1093 lbs/A, a new record. Although yields were variable depending upon rainfall, average statewide yields continue to remain above 800 lbs/acre, despite the loss of DP 555 BR, which is a true testament to Georgia's growers, their commitment to cotton, and the release of superior varieties. As modern varieties are currently being released onto the market in a much more rapid manner, due to increased competition and advancements by industry, variety selection remains a very important and costly issue; however, many of the new varieties performed very well for Georgia growers in 2012. The 2012 cotton acreage in Georgia was predominately comprised of Deltapine varieties (46.3%), FiberMax varieties (7.6%), Stoneville (3.7%), and Phytogen varieties (41.3%) (<http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/>).

Quality of the 2012 crop was comparable to previous years for some parameters. Of 2,807,821 bales classed as of February 7, 2013, 1.4 percent were short staple (<34) and 15.4 percent were high mic (>4.9). Average staple was similar to that of 2011; however, the incidence of short staple was very low. Average micronaire was similar to that in 2011, but the incidence of high mike was noticeably higher in 2012. Fiber length uniformity remained high, a likely result of the changes in varieties. Most noticeably, bark was significantly higher in 2012 than in several recent years (Table 1).

Table 1. Fiber Quality of Bales Classed at the Macon USDA Classing Office, 2008-2012

	Color Grade 31/41 or better (% of crop)	Bark/ Grass/ Prep (% of crop)	Avg. Staple (32nds)	Avg. Strength (g/tex)	Avg. Mic	Avg. Uniformity
2008	25 / 93	all < 1.0	34	28.7	46	80.2
2009	26 / 96	all < 1.0	35	28.8	45	80.3
2010	50 / 90	all < 1.0	35	29.9	48	81
2011	38 / 84	2.6 / <1 / 1	36	29.6	46	81.7
2012	48 / 91	11.9 / <1 / <1	36	29	46	81.6

Bales classed short staple (< 34) and high mic (>4.9)
2008: 20% & 21% 2009: 22% & 20% 2010: 4% & 9% 2011: 2.8% & 8.8%
2012: 1.4% & 15.4%
Fiber quality for 2,807,821 Georgia bales classed in 2012-2013 as of February 7, 2013.
Source: <http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/>

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