The University of Georgia
Cooperative Extension Service
College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences

Georgia Cotton

September 3, 2003 http://www.griffin.peachnet.edu/caes/cotton

ET, A New Harvest Aid Product. (*Brown*) ET, a newly approved herbicidal compound from a Japanese Company called Nichino, has been approved for use in cotton for harvest-aid and row middle/hooded applications. Much like Aim, ET is a fast-acting, contact herbicide in the class of compounds referred to as PPO-inhibitors. Harvest aid rates center on 1 oz/A. It can be included as a tank mix partner with most other cotton harvest aid products.

The product has been evaluated at UGA over the past couple of seasons by Dr. Craig Bednarz. Most evaluations have included sequential programs. Observations with ET for once-over treatments in Georgia have been limited. Most likely it will be used in mixtures with boll openers and/or regrowth inhibitors and will be used in similar fashion as Aim. Our best current knowledge indicates that the two products perform similarly, though ET holds a price advantage.

"Hardlock" Means "Hard-luck" for Growers. (*Kemerait*) With the rainy weather that we have had this season, it should come as no surprise to anyone that traditional boll rot will be widespread in 2003. Growers in Georgia typically recognize that there is very little we can do about this problem and accept it as a cost of ample rainfall during the season.

The symptom of rotted bolls is not the result of any one single cause or pathogen, but is likely the result of a complex of fungi and even some bacteria. The condition known as **"hardlock,"** which occurs when the cotton lint develops but fails to fluff-out properly at boll opening has often been lumped with boll rot diseases. However there are strong indications from work done by Dr. Jim Marois and Dr. David Wright at the University of Florida that at least some of hardlocked cotton may be distinct from traditional boll rot. Though there may be several causes that produce "hardlocked" or "tight-locked" cotton, such as stinkbug feeding. These researchers believe that the fungal pathogen *Fusarium moniliforme* is the key pathogen in most of the hardlock in the panhandle of Florida.

Research from Florida has been published in several popular-press articles. In these studies, use of the fungicide Topsin-M has been demonstrated to significantly reduce the severity of "Fusarium hardlock". Growers and agents in Georgia have read these articles and have wanted to know application timing, rates, etc. so that they can use the treatment in their own fields. Growers and agents need to know the following:

1. The results reported out of Florida appear very interesting, but have not been tested in other states. Extensive trials are being conducted in Georgia, Florida, South Carolina, Alabama, and Louisiana in 2003.

2. Topsin-M is active against *Fusarium* pathogens and seems promising. However, this product is NOT currently labeled for use on cotton, though Cerexagri, the maker of this product is seeking a label for cotton.

3. The results obtained from Florida required multiple applications of Topsin-M beginning at FIRST BLOOM. The current theory is that if *Fusarium moniliforme* is causing the hardlock condition, it is infecting the crop through the open blooms, not as the bolls begin to open as with classic boll rot. Thus, late season applications of fungicides would not be beneficial.

4. Current studies across the southeast are evaluating rates and timing of Topsin-M (and other fungicides) for control of "Fusarium hardlock". The message to growers is "WAIT!" By the 2004 winter meeting season, we should have a much better idea if a) *Fusarium moniliforme* causes the hardlock, b) if Topsin-M is affective and at what rate and timing, and c) when Topsin-M will be labeled for use on cotton.

Cotton Price Comments. *(Shurley)* Prices for the 2003 cotton crop have attempted to stage a mini-rally in recent days after a decline earlier in August. For a more detailed discussion of the current cotton situation and outlook, go to the UGA Cotton Web Page and click on "Marketing".

As harvest time approaches, the market could decline back to earlier levels of 55 cents or lower or could rally further to challenge the 60-cent level. Much depends on how the US crop comes in and the outlook for export potential. Regardless of what prices might do, the table below shows that total money (cash + LDP) to the grower may likely be in the neighborhood of 58 to 59 cents per pound because the LDP will rise or fall with change in price (see table footnotes).

So, in my mind, 58-59 cents becomes the no-risk strategy. The real question is how *or if* we can do any better. And one also has to consider the impact of possible prices on the 2003 crop CCP.

Unless price patterns and producer selling times vary greatly from recent years (see table footnotes), should prices remain at current levels (57-58 cents futures) or lower the CCP will be maximum or within several cents of maximum and total price plus payments would be about 79 cents per pound on production up to 85% of the base and at the DP and CCP payment yield. If prices strengthen, total money could actually decline. The CCP declines if the MYA price is above the loan rate of 52 cents per pound and will be zero at roughly 66 cents.

At current prices, producers seem to be well protected from prices moving lower. Lower cash price will likely be offset by higher LDP and the CCP would likely end up at the max either way. Gains (speculative?) may be achieved through Put Options if prices move lower. At current price levels and certainly if prices move higher, contracting would be advantageous should prices later move lower. In doing so, the producer would have a relatively high price and an increasing LDP. A disadvantage of contracting would be the risk of prices continuing to increase, which would result in a relative low-price contract and a falling LDP and CCP. If contracting, following up with a Call Option might reduce some of the risk.

Harvest-Time Dec Futures	**50.00**	**55.00**	**60.00**
Cash Price [1]	47.00	52.00	57.00
LDP [2]	11.94	6.94	1.94
Total	**58.94**	**58.94**	**58.94**
DP	6.67	6.67	6.67
CCP [3]	13.73	13.73	10.39
Total	**79.34**	**79.34**	**76.00**

[1]/ Assumes basis of 3 cents under the futures price.
[2]/ Assumes A-Index is 3.5 cents above futures. LDP is 52.00-AWP. AWP is A-Index minus 13.44 cents adjustment.
[3]/ 72.4 cents - 6.67 - higher of Marketing Year Average (MYA) price or 52 cents loan rate. MYA assumed to be 3% below November-December cash price.

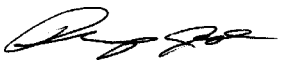
Crop Condition and Defoliation. (*Jost*) It appears that this may be the year for a good crop. The Agriculture Statistics Service rates more than 70% of the Georgia's cotton as good or excellent. In addition, with this seasons weather patterns we should also be able to produce a crop with decent quality. This will be a good year for examining fiber quality differences between varieties. In most cases, quality discounts will be difficult to blame on the weather.

Unlike past years (especially 2002) this year's crop is actually "cutting-out". Many leaves are dropping naturally and showing their fall colors. There is also limited new growth to deal with as the good boll set and more-than-abundant rainfall has managed to deplete soil nitrogen. Thus, many are speculating that this crop will be easy to defoliate. I tend to agree that this crop should be easier to deal with than those of the recent past. But with that in mind, we do not want to skimp. Also even with the crop potential that is out there, we do not want to over-spend on trying to get the leaves off and bolls open and eat-up a portion of the potential profit.

For the past several years it has almost been a necessity to wait on later-set top bolls to make a crop. This crop is different. Most fields have a good uniform boll set throughout the plant. Do not make the majority of the crop sit out in the weather while waiting for a few top bolls to

mature. As stated above we have an opportunity to harvest good quality cotton, and the quality of a boll is at its maximum the day it opens, but declines thereafter. Along those same lines, there are many boll-opening materials on the market, some more expensive than others. However, the cost of these materials and the benefit of opening bolls quickly is lost if these materials are applied and the cotton sits in the field for three or four weeks before picking.

Edited by: **Philip H. Jost**, Extension Agronomist-Cotton & Soybeans



Contributions by:
Steven M. Brown, Extension Agronomist-Cotton,
Philip H. Jost, Extension Agronomist-Cotton & Soybeans
Bob Kemerait, Extension Plant Pathologist
Don Shurley, Extension Economist