THE 2010 CROP YEAR IN REVIEW

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The 2010 production season was certainly unique and quite different from 2009. Cotton acreage increased approximately 33 % from 2009, with an estimated 1,320,000 acres harvested in Georgia during 2010. The majority of the cotton crop this year was planted on time or slightly early in some areas, with approximately 22% of the acreage planted in June 2010 (2005-2009 average = 25%) as opposed to 40% planted in June 2009.

Early season rains were frequent and timely, allowing for superior crop stands in most places, and vigorous early season growth leading into the bloom period. However, these rains ceased to continue into July when a large majority of the crop was blooming. Additionally, both day and nighttime temperatures were elevated for most of July, compounding the effects of the drought. As a result, the crop encountered severe stress throughout most of Georgia (including irrigated fields), which consequently shortened the bloom period and reduced yield potential in many fields.

Rainfall returned around the 1st of August which resulted in some hardlock and boll rot in some early planted fields. Yields in the severely stressed areas were estimated to be relatively low (300 – 500 lbs/A) and bolls were beginning to open. In many cases, growers decided to wait to see if the August rains would produce a top crop, which proved to be a successful strategy in many cases this year. The weather from September and forward produced many warm, clear days providing adequate heat units to develop a top crop.

Harvest conditions were also better compared to recent years. According to the National Agricultural Statistics Service, cotton harvest, averaged over the previous 5-year period, has been 41% completed by November 1st (nearly 50% in years preceding 2009). This year, nearly 63% of our crop had been harvested by this date, further indicating that the 2010 crop was earlier than normal.

Although yields were highly variable depending upon rainfall, the average state yield was estimated at 811 lbs/A as of January 12, 2010, which isn't bad considering the summer weather. Despite the adverse summer weather and the widespread planting of newer varieties, cotton yields in Georgia continued to average over 800 lbs/A, which is a true testament to our growers, UGA research and extension personnel, and to the support of the Georgia Cotton Commission (http://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications).

The 2010 season was the first season in several years that DP 555 BR did not dominate the state's acreage, due to the transition to 2-gene Bt technologies and the limited remaining seed supply of DP 555 BR. Now that other factors tend to drive variety selection in particular situations, -and- since a single replacement for DP 555 BR was unlikely, growers began to plant a wider array of varieties in 2010.

The 2010 cotton acreage in Georgia was predominately comprised of remaining DP 555 BR (25%), other Deltapine varieties (34%), FiberMax varieties {15% (8% Liberty Link)}, and Phytogen varieties (24%) (http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSv1.0/).

Herbicide resistant Palmer amaranth (pigweed) continued to be a serious production challenge across much of the state, and was the driving force behind variety selection in many areas, especially for dryland / conservation tillage growers.

Quality of the 2010 crop was similar to slightly better than previous years (Table 1). Of bales classed as of January 28, 2011, 16.3 percent were short staple (<34) and 26.5 percent were high mic (>4.9). Micronaire was higher than in years past, likely due to the widespread planting of slightly earlier maturing varieties and the abnormally severe drought stress. Fiber length uniformity improved substantially when compared to previous years, also a likely result of the changes in the predominant varieties planted (http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSv1.0/).

Table 1. Fiber Quality of Bales Classed at Macon USDA Classing Office, 2007-2010

	Color Grade 31/41 or better (% of crop)	Bark/ Grass/ Prep (% of crop)	Staple (32nds)	Strength (g/tex)	Mic	Uniformity
2007	39 / 97	all < 1.0	34.3	28.6	47	80.0
2008	25 / 93	all < 1.0	34.4	28.7	46	80.2
2009	26 / 96	all < 1.0	35	28.8	45	80.3
2010	50 / 94	all < 1.0	34.9	29.7	47	81

Bales classed short staple (< 34) and high mic (>4.9)
2007: 20% and 21% 2008: 22% and 20% 2009: 4% and 9% 2010: 16% and 27%

Fiber quality data as of January 28, 2011. A total of 2,208,993 bales were classed.
(Source: http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSv1.0/)