THE 2011 CROP YEAR IN REVIEW

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The 2011 production season was certainly unique and quite different from that of 2010. Georgia's planted cotton acreage increased approximately 20 % from 2010, with an estimated 1,520,000 acres harvested in Georgia during 2011, according to the National Agricultural Statistics Service. Most of the irrigated cotton crop this year was planted relatively on time, however the hot dry spring weather conditions resulted in poor stands in some dryland fields, necessitating replanting for many of these dryland fields. As a result, some dryland fields were planted and subsequently developed somewhat later than normal.

The 2011 planting season may have been one of the hottest and driest on record, causing significant stand establishment problems, even in a few irrigated fields with larger pivots that were slow to turn around. Rains returned across most of the state near the end of June, leading into July when earlier planted fields began blooming. The month of July was relatively wet, allowing much of the earlier planted (primarily irrigated) crop to develop a very large boll load with excellent yield potential. Rains began to subside across the state during August, possibly reducing the incidence of boll rot or hard lock issues for the early planted irrigated crop, which are often observed when rains are frequent in August. However, many of the later planted dryland fields began blooming around or near the first of August and the dry August weather may have penalized yield potential in some of these situations. There were also several reports of growers encountering difficulty defoliating which may have also resulted from the August weather conditioning the crop for poor defoliation. The remainder of the fall brought about sporadic rains and some periods of cool temperatures, allowing for more effective defoliation and somewhat decent harvest conditions. Although yields were highly variable depending upon rainfall, the average state yield was estimated at 805 lbs/acre per the January 12th, 2012 USDA NASS Crop Production Report, which isn't bad considering the spring weather. 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.

The 2011 season was the first season in several years that DP 555 BR was not planted, finalizing the transition to 2-gene Bt technologies. Now that other factors tend to drive variety selection in particular situations, -and- since a single replacement for DP 555 BG/RR was unlikely, growers began to plant a wider array of varieties in 2011. The 2011 cotton acreage in Georgia was predominately comprised of Deltapine varieties (59.2%), FiberMax varieties (11.7%), and Phytogen varieties (25.2%) (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.

Quality of the 2011 crop was noticeably better than previous years for some parameters. Of bales classed as of February 9, 2012, 3.7 percent were short staple (<34) and 9.7 percent were high mic (>4.9). Staple and micronaire were similar to that of 2010, and continue to be better than in years preceding 2010, likely due to the fiber characteristics of newer varieties. Fiber length uniformity continues to improve compared to previous years, which is a likely result of the changes in varieties.

Fiber Quality of Bales Classed at the Macon USDA Classing Office, 2008-2011

	Color Grade 31/41 or better (% of crop)	Bark/ Grass/ Prep (% of crop)	Staple (32nds)	Strength (g/tex)	Mic	Uniformity
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 / 90	all < 1.0	35	29.9	48	81
2011	42 / 88	3 / <1 / 1	35.9	29.5	46	81.7
Bales classed short staple (< 34) and high mic (>4.9) 2008: 20% and 21% 2009: 22% and 20% 2010: 4% and 9% 2011: 3.7% and 9.7% Fiber quality data as of February 9, 2012. Source: http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSv1.0/						

The UGA Cotton Team would like to sincerely thank the Georgia Cotton Commission for their generous support of the Cotton Team's research and extension programs, allowing us to better serve Georgia Cotton Growers.