October 31, 2014

No. 2014-30

Harvest Summary

The end is near or is it here? Harvested acreage numbers on Monday were 95% so we’re right there. Overall a difficult year that most are glad to see in the rearview mirror. There’s not a lot of time to reflect on this season though as seed purchasing for 2015 has already picked up.

Currently the projected state average yield for 2014 is 167 bushels per acre. That puts us right at last year’s record average of 168 bu/A. Later-planted fields seemed to hold a lot better than in most years, so that may be what is propping up the overall number given that a lot of earlier rice seemed to be off anywhere from 10-30 bushels compared to last year.

Planting date studies at Stuttgart reflect what a strange year it’s been (Figure 1). Most years we see the highest yields in our March planting date with a fairly linear decline as you plant later. This year we still had that general decline but some of the numbers definitely bounced around giving it a much different look. The strangest bounces were the May 2 drop and the June 18 jump.

Figure 1. 2014 average yield by planting date, RREC, Stuttgart, AR.

Cover Crop Considerations in Rice Rotations

Cover crops can provide a multitude of benefits when managed properly. However, if you as a producer do not take the time to develop a start-to-finish total management plan it can be a disaster. Investing the time to effectively plan cover crop implementation will pay dividends in the long run.

Winter cover crops can provide some weed suppression, but the primary benefit that producers should focus on is the stabilization of soils and nutrients. Many producers fail to realize that the erosion loss of just ¼ inch of soil results in the loss of tons of soil per acre and many nutrients as well. Our soil is our greatest resource and preventing erosion and nutrient loss – like the fertilizer you paid for – should become a top priority.

In rice rotations, winter cover crops are most likely going to be the topic of discussion. Although we are still conducting research on the best management practices for winter cover crops preceding rice, there are some key points that you need to keep in mind before jumping into cover crops with both feet. If you are going into rice next year, consider a winter legume this fall, which can fix nitrogen similar to soybean. Clovers, vetch, and winter peas are all legumes capable of fixing nitrogen and can actually provide a significant nitrogen credit for your following rice crop. However, we are still conducting research on how to manage these crops effectively in Arkansas and there are still many questions to answer regarding effective termination of legumes.
In order to get the greatest benefit from these legume winter cover crops they most likely need to be incorporated prior to rice planting to ensure that the nitrogen is available. Limited research with Austrian Winter Field Pea in Arkansas (one year of data) suggests that we can get 20-30 units of nitrogen credit from this legume for the following rice crop.

For those producers going into beans you might want to consider a winter wheat or cereal rye for a winter cover crop. Wheat and rye provide a large amount of biomass to help with weed suppression, lower crusting, and increase soybean emergence with low input costs.

Producers that have recently leveled ground should also consider planting a winter cover crop to aid in soil stabilization, but there are other advantages as well. A winter cover crop on cut ground can help you identify problem areas in the field and increase the organic matter content, which can be a major problem in areas with cuts >4 inches. There is no data to prove this, but I have a feeling that cover crops may also attract waterfowl and provide additional benefits for wildlife.

There is a definite need to reduce erosion and increase nutrient capture – use of cover crops has the potential to aid in that battle, but we need more research to develop and support the best management practices for cover crops in Arkansas. Please let us know if you are planting cover crops and if we can help.

Farm Bill Workshops for Crop Producers

FSA and Division of Agriculture offer Farm Bill workshops this fall. Topics to be covered include: required information; retain or update yields; retain or reallocate base; compare agricultural risk coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC); consider ARC – individual coverage; Supplemental Coverage Option (SCO) and STAX offered under the federal crop insurance program; election and annual enrollment; and web-based decision aid demonstration with examples.

Schedule for each event:

- Nov. 3, 8:30 a.m. – noon, Lonoke, Arkansas Rural Water Association.
- Nov. 5, 9 a.m. – noon, Newport, ASU-Newport.
- Nov. 6, 9 a.m. – noon, Mountain Home, Black River Technical College Development Center Auditorium.
- Nov. 7, 9 a.m. – noon, Paragould, Paragould Community Center.
- Nov. 10, 6 p.m., West Memphis. Mid-South Community College.
- Nov. 12, 9 a.m. – noon, Augusta.
- Nov. 13, 9 a.m. – noon, Portland, Portland Baptist Church.
- Nov. 17, 2 p.m. – 4 p.m., Manila. Airport Center.
- Nov. 18, 9 a.m. – noon, Marianna. Lon Mann Cotton Research Station.
- Nov. 19, 8:30 a.m. – noon, Stuttgart. Rice Research & Extension Center.
- Nov. 20, 9 a.m. – noon, Morrilton. Conway County Fairgrounds Multi-Purpose Building.
- Dec. 17, 9 a.m. – noon, McGehee. McGehee Men’s Club.

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Arkansas Rice Update
Dr. Jarrod Hardke, Dr. Trent Roberts, & Scott Stiles

Farm Bill Web-based Decision Aid Schedule:
    Nov. 4 at 6 p.m.  West Memphis – Mid-South Community College.
    Nov. 6 at 6 p.m.  Jonesboro – Arkansas State University College of Agriculture.
    Nov. 18 at 6 p.m.  West Memphis – Mid-South Community College.
    Nov. 20 at 6 p.m.  Jonesboro – Arkansas State University College of Agriculture.

Additional Information
Arkansas Rice Updates are published periodically to provide timely information and recommendations for rice production in Arkansas. If you would like to be added to this email list, please send your request to jhardke@uaex.edu.
This information will also be posted to the Arkansas Row Crops where additional information from Extension specialists can be found. Please visit the blog at http://www.arkansas-crops.com/

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