

Lamesa  
**Press**

**Reporter**

Agriculture Section

Sunday, October 21, 2018



**Dawson County**  
**A Agriculture 2018**  
**Patchwork**  
**Landscape**



# A tough year for farmers

## Too dry at planting time, fields now are too wet to harvest

By Russel Skiles  
Lamesa Press-Reporter

With much of Dawson County getting less than two inches of rainfall over the previous six months, most farmers simply didn't have enough moisture available to get a crop started when planting time came around last spring.

Now they are facing the opposite problem as they seek to get what crops they do have harvested and out of the fields.

Repeated rainfall over the past few weeks has shut down the harvesting activity that was just beginning to get underway.

Then a cold spell early this past week – with temperatures near Lamesa dropping to 34 on Monday and 35 on Tuesday – may have shut down some of the crops that still needed all the warm, dry weather they could get.

"Everybody is just frustrated right now. We just need some sunshine," Welch-area farmer and cotton ginner Glen Phipps said this past Tuesday as damp, cool weather hung over the area.

The assessment was the same from several other farmers and agriculture officials across the county this past week.

"If we don't start getting some dry weather and warmer temperatures we are going to be getting really hurt," said Gary Roschetzky, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Agent - Agriculture for Dawson County.

Ackerly-area farmer David Zant, president of the Lamesa Cotton Growers organization, said that area has virtually no dryland cotton this year, and harvesting

**All of your prayers (for rain) were finally answered but we just got it all at one time.**

Tommy Doederlein  
AgriLife Extension agent

**Everybody is just frustrated right now. We just need some sunshine.**

Glen Phipps  
Welch farmer/ginner

of the irrigated cotton had just begun before the wet weather set in.

"At Ackerly, we're just trying to get the irrigated cotton out of the fields," Zant said.

Both Zant and Phipps said they are beginning to see some of the cotton that already was open starting to "string out" as the rainfall starts pulling the fiber out of the bolls.

"We've lost a little of the irrigated cotton that is just strung out, and a little of it is on the ground," Phipps said.

The Welch area has some dryland cotton that looked like it could produce "decent" yields, he noted.

"It was looking really good but this early cold is putting a stop to that," Phipps said Tuesday afternoon. "It's probably not a money-maker right now but it probably was before this hit."

As of late Tuesday afternoon, the West Texas Mesonet automated weather station at Welch had recorded 6.63 inches of rainfall so far just this month.

And that is came on the heels of 4.47 inches in August and 4.79 in September – compared to a total of only 1.58 inches during the first five months of the year.

"All of our prayers (for rain) were finally answered but we got it all at one time," said Tommy Doederlein, integrated pest management agent here with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension.

He said the rain could deteriorate the color grade of the cotton that already has opened.

"We won't know how it has been affected until it shows up at the classing of

rice," Doederlein said.

And that could be awful, Phipps said.

"It's probably going to be 8-10 days after the sun starts shining before we are able to gin anything," Phipps said.

Kevin Pepper, who farmers in the Patricia area, said there simply isn't much of a crop in that area this year.

"We're pretty sparse out here," he said.

He said the few fields of irrigated cotton in that area appear to have a decent crop.

Most of that cotton had not started opening yet, he said, so it might not be impacted as much as in other areas of the county.

"It's been a hard year farming," Pepper said. "We just need some warm days now."

### Peanuts

The wet weather has been devastating to some of the peanut crop in Dawson County, Doederlein said.

"Some of the peanuts that were dug before this all hit – I don't know if they will be salvageable," he said.

"Everything is deteriorating as it sits there just soaking up rain," he said.

Roschetzky said yields have been very low from the peanut fields that have been harvested.

"There was just a lack of moisture throughout the year to get those peanuts really going," he said.

Now the wet weather is causing problems, with the possibility of mold becoming an issue.

"If we don't get those plants dried up it's going to be hard to get the peanuts off the vine," he said.

### Cold weather

The impact of this past week's cold weather on everything from cotton to milo is yet to be determined.

While everyone said Dawson County was fortunate not to have had freezing temperatures early in the week, the cold weather may cause crops to quit maturing any further.

That could hurt the dryland cotton that mostly was planted late in the season and impact the milo and oth-



### STRUNG OUT

Weighed down by moisture from repeated rainfall – some of it falling hard – cotton that had been sprayed and was ready for harvest is being strung out and falling from the bolls in some locations. The wet weather also is expected to impact the color grade of the open cotton.

LPR photo

er crops that were planted on failed cotton acreage.

"Some of the sorghum was planted extremely late and I don't know if some of it is going to make," Roschetzky said.

However, he said a lot of the sorghum was beginning to change colors – a sign it is reaching maturity – but it looks like yields could be fairly low.

### Maybe next year?

Despite the challenges it is causing, farmers have been hesitant to complain very much about the rain.

"You hate to complain about rain, because 90 percent of the time we're needing it," Pepper said.

Phipps said the current situation is just one of the challenges that farmers face.

"It's frustrating but it's part of what we do, and we can't do anything about it," he said.

However, rainfall in the fall and winter traditionally means a good crop the following year, several noted.

"The rain is setting us up for next year," Doederlein said, noting that even the fields left bare by dry weather early in the year are now soaking up moisture.

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### SOGGY PEANUTS

Upturned peanuts were sitting in ponds of water at the edge of a field north of Lamesa this past Wednesday, with additional rain on Thursday. Farmers who had already dug their

peanuts before the recent run of cold, wet weather could face heavy quality losses and even the possibility of losing the crop altogether.

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# Cotton production

Dawson County cotton production and acreage figures from 1937 through 2017.

Year	Bales	Harvested Acres
1937	104,000	182,000
1938	46,100	124,000
1939	41,500	94,100
1940	39,100	127,400
1941	57,900	130,200
1942	74,260	126,000
1943	51,950	129,000
1944	55,800	121,000
1945	7,150	44,800
1946	27,100	111,000
1947	102,000	266,000
1948	60,400	267,000
1949	193,000	318,000
1950	96,000	225,000
1951	67,000	319,000
1952	50,000	361,000
1953	12,300	45,000
1954	81,164	213,000
1955	85,000	185,000
1956	82,057	202,000
1957	129,000	201,000
1958	143,000	202,000
1959	152,767	192,084
1960	176,756	205,073
1961	213,217	221,393
1962	145,648	212,330
1963	160,483	196,489
1964	93,944	156,000
1965	153,000	186,354
1966	130,000	196,009
1967	76,317	113,553
1968	182,096	168,554
1969	140,159	214,138
1970	169,300	221,700
1971	116,800	215,600
1972	234,400	215,200
1973	315,300	268,500
1974	38,800	72,900
1975	123,400	237,600
1976	244,200	271,400
1977	230,000	290,000
1978	92,000	271,000
1979	243,800	275,000
1980	88,000	293,900
1981	270,600	316,500
1982	153,400	251,200
1983	57,800	103,400
1984	129,900	225,500
1985	147,200	220,000
1986	39,000	220,700
1987	120,000	227,000
1988	204,168	245,244
1989	85,515	199,750
1990	220,800	221,500
1991	99,300	153,500
1992	156,800	178,800
1993	226,500	237,062
1994	140,100	221,900
1995	171,700	266,900
1996	108,100	112,500
1997	213,900	251,800
1998	80,800	86,500
1999	209,100	258,900
2000	83,500	103,500
2001	82,000	84,500
2002	190,000	216,500
2003	191,500	238,000
2004	330,200	251,700
2005	400,000	291,700
2006	161,000	137,400
2007	393,000	271,300
2008	144,500	114,000
2009	271,000	258,000
2010	381,900	313,500
2011	68,000	64,800
2012	160,300	160,300
2013	86,100	47,000
2014	228,700	229,700
2015	328,800	294,900
2016	339,600	286,200
2017	343,200	274,900



**SMALL DRYLAND CROP**

These rows of dryland cotton on the corners of a circle-irrigated field shows the effect of extremely dry weather the first half of the year that prevented crops from even coming

up in most areas. The Farm Service Agency office here reports that about 80 percent of the 360,000 acres of cotton planted in Dawson County have been failed out.

LPR photo

## Most cotton didn't make it

FSA estimates 80 percent failure rate in Dawson County

By Benjamin Hettick  
Lamesa Press-Reporter

Local farmers are waiting for the weather to dry up to harvest their crops, said Rebecca Walker, Dawson County executive director with the USDA's Farm Service Agency.

This has been a challenging year for farmers, as most of the area was simply too dry to get a crop going during normal planting time in May and early June.

Out of the 360,000 acres of cotton planted in Dawson County, Walker said about 80 percent failed.

About 6,500 acres of grain sorghum (or milo) have been planted as well.

"What I've seen is the feed grains, at this point in time, are doing pretty good," Walker said.

The recent drought in Dawson County is the most

obvious reason why many farmers have been struggling to grow cotton this year.

"I believe a few went ahead and replanted with the hope something would come up," Walker said.

The recent rains should be too late to help the cotton, Walker said, but hopefully some Dawson County's producers will have some cotton to harvest.

As far as peanuts are concerned, some farmers started turning the crop over to dry up about two to three weeks ago, Walker said. However, after the rains in Dawson County since then, the farmers are waiting for the ground to dry up so they may return to the fields.

Farmers should begin harvesting their milo around the time of the first freeze, Walker said.



**EMPTY FIELDS**

Some fields were simply left bare after cotton failed during the early part of the summer due to extremely dry conditions.

LPR photo

## Elevating efficiency is 2019 goal of Beltwide Cotton Conferences

The 2019 Beltwide Cotton Conferences (BWCC), set for Jan. 8-10 at the New Orleans Marriott in New Orleans, La., will provide insight on current research and emerging technology – to help attendees improve production, processing and marketing efficiency.

The BWCC, coordinated by the National Cotton Council (NCC), annually brings together university and USDA researchers, Extension personnel/agents, consultants, and industry sales/support personnel.

Information on the 2019 BWCC, including registration and housing reservation instructions, is at [www.cotton.org/beltwide/](http://www.cotton.org/beltwide/). The site also includes a link to BWCC proceedings from 2005-2018.

The 2019 BWCC will begin at noon on Jan. 8 with the half-day Cotton Consultants Conference – open to all attendees.

Among scheduled topics selected by the consultant community are:

- an expert panel of entomologists to discuss bollworm and Bt resistance;
- objectives of cover crop initiatives;
- status and new products pertaining to nematodes;

■the current state of integrated pest management in cotton and future considerations;

■the status of boll weevil eradication in the Lower Rio Grande Valley; and

■a product registration update.

The BWCC cotton technical conferences, which will provide updates on research and a look into the technology pipeline, will meet concurrently beginning on the morning of Jan. 9 and conclude by noon on Jan. 10.

The Ginning Conference, for example, will include several presentations critical to cotton quality and efficient processing. Included will be updates regarding ongoing ginning research, new equipment, cottonseed, and lint contamination research/prevention.

Beginning on the afternoon of Jan. the National Cotton Ginners Association will hold several committee and subcommittee meetings. A schedule of those meetings is at [www.cotton.org/ngca/index.cfm](http://www.cotton.org/ngca/index.cfm).

The Cotton Engineering-Systems Conference will have a panel addressing sustainability issues. Also, the Cotton Improvement

Conference will feature five-minute lightning talks from poster presentation authors. Initiated last year, the lightning talks' intent is to provide the main points of the authors' research for stimulating more discussion later at the poster session.

Registration costs for the 2019 BWCC before Decem-

ber 17 are: \$200 for NCC/Cotton Foundation members, university and USDA researchers, Extension personnel, associations and consultants; \$500 for non-U.S. research, extension, associations, and consultants; \$400 for non-NCC/Foundation members; and \$80 for students.

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# Maeda joins AgriLife Extension cotton program in Lubbock

By Kay Ledbetter  
Texas A&M AgriLife

Dr. Murilo Maeda returned to his roots when he traded the Texas coast for the South Plains to take the position as Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service cotton specialist in Lubbock, effective Oct. 1.

"My family's roots run deep into the cotton industry, and I would like to contribute to its improvement," Maeda said, as he left his position as a Texas A&M AgriLife Research assistant research scientist in Corpus Christi.

"Working out of the Corpus Christi center, I had the opportunity to work with many different crops, but cotton is special to me," he said. "With that being said, there is no better place than the Southern High Plains to work with cotton."

As he makes the move to Lubbock, Maeda brings with him a growing expertise on using unmanned aerial systems, or UAS, to assist cotton research.

Maeda said the transition from AgriLife Research to AgriLife Extension will be a change in day-to-day focus as program activities shift to more traditional outreach/educational/applied research.

"But the main goals are still the same – improve agriculture, food security and



Dr. Murilo Maeda

farmers' well-being; to make a difference in someone's life, to have a long-lasting impact," he said.

With AgriLife Research, his primary focus was UAS platforms and methodologies for high-throughput plant phenotyping and UAS-based applications for plant breeding, agricultural research and precision management applications.

Maeda earned a bachelor's degree in biology from Centro Universitário do Triângulo, Brazil, and master's and doctorate degrees in agronomy/crop physiology from Texas A&M. Before moving to the U.S., he worked at Netafim Brasil assisting in the development of precision irrigation systems for commercial coffee and citrus farms and with TCMA Agropecuária Ltda, assisting

with large soybean, cotton, and corn commercial operations across Brazil.

In 2005, he joined Deltapine/Monsanto's cotton breeding program as a research assistant. In this position, he served as the breeder's assistant, designed and conducted breeding research trials across the Brazilian cotton-growing regions, managed breeding-associated field tasks, as well as research databases.

After leaving Deltapine/Monsanto in 2010, Maeda moved to College Station to pursue his master's and doctorate degrees. While working on his degrees, he served as a graduate teaching/research assistant for the cotton physiology program and the department of soil and crop sciences.

His degrees focused on the morphological and physiological responses of cotton to drought and high-temperature stress, and at Corpus Christi, he was responsible for managing the development of a cropping systems and remote sensing program for agricultural research and crop precision management applications.

Because the South Plains is a completely different region from the Coastal Bend, Maeda said he will need to spend time adapting to the regional culture and farming practices. There will also

be a need to establish new working relationships with allied industry, a regional network of county and integrated pest management agents, as well as colleagues both in and out of the Texas A&M University System.

But the South Plains cotton industry also has plenty of issues to put him to work right away.

"You name it: lack of adequate rainfall, hail storms, dwindling water supply for irrigation, pest pressure, diseases, herbicide-resistant weeds, soil fertility, off-target movement of herbicides, crop management issues, and the list goes on," Maeda said.

"The South Plains is a challenging environment, but that also means there are opportunities to improve. Thankfully, the region is well served with some of the best people working with cotton in the nation and in the world, and by collaborating I am confident we can make a difference."

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## Center creates video to help with seed cotton allocation decisions

Seed cotton producers who want to participate in the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) program for the 2018 crop year must enroll by Dec. 7, 2018.

Farmers with generic base acre farms and a recent history of covered commodities have a one-time opportunity to allocate all generic base acres on the farm.

Producers can use the decision aid tool developed by Texas A&M University' Agriculture and Food Policy Center (AFPC) to

decide how to allocate generic base acres to other covered crops based on planting history: <https://www.afpc.tamu.edu/tools/cotton-base>.

For additional information, watch a video featuring Dr. Joe Outlaw, agriculture policy specialist with the Texas A&M University Agricultural and Food Policy Center, and Texas FSA leadership, on the Texas FSA website at: <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/state-offices/Texas/>

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# Cottonseed protein consumption for humans gets closer to reality

By Kay Ledbetter  
Texas A&M AgriLife

Cottonseed ground into flour to deliver protein to millions of people, a project to which Dr. Keerti Rathore has devoted more than half his professional career, is one step closer to reality. Rathore, a Texas A&M AgriLife Research plant biotechnologist in College Station, received word that Texas A&M's "Petition for Determination of Non-regulated Status for Ultra-Low Gossypol Cottonseed (ULGCS) TAM66274" has been approved by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, or APHIS.

Texas A&M University Chancellor John Sharp, who oversees Texas A&M AgriLife Research along with 11 universities and seven state agencies, said Rathore's work will have a dramatic effect across the world.

"The work and dedication of Dr. Rathore has paid off," Sharp said. "He and his team exemplify the values of the Texas A&M System, and because of them, more than half a billion people across the world may have access to a new form of protein, and our farmers will be able to earn a much better living."

Through a project funded by Cotton Incorporated, Rathore and the Texas A&M team have developed a transgenic cotton plant - TAM66274 - with ultra-low gossypol levels in the seed that maintains normal plant-protecting gossypol levels in the rest of the plant.

Dr. Kater Hake, vice president of agricultural and environmental research at Cotton Incorporated, said it has been a decades-long journey.

"Gossypol suppression in cottonseed has been part of our funded research portfolio for over 30 years," Hake said. "It took time to tap the innate protein potential in the seed; time for the right technologies to develop; and time for the right research team to come along."

Tom Wedegaertner, director of cottonseed research and marketing at Cotton Inc., underscores the potential of the breakthrough and the journey through the regulatory process.

"Gossypol in the leaves and stalks of the cotton

plant serve as a pest deterrent, but its presence in the seed serves no purpose," Wedegaertner said. "The more widespread use of cottonseed as a livestock feed and even for human consumption has been stymied by the natural levels of gossypol in the seed."

The recent USDA action confirms that TAM66274 and any cotton lines derived from crosses between TAM66274 and conventional cotton or biotechnology-derived cotton granted non-regulated status by APHIS are no longer considered federally regulated articles, he said.

For the past 23 years, Rathore has been determined to create cotton plants that produce seeds containing gossypol well below what the U.S. Food and Drug Administration considers safe levels while maintaining normal levels of gossypol and related chemicals in the foliage, floral parts, boll rind and roots.

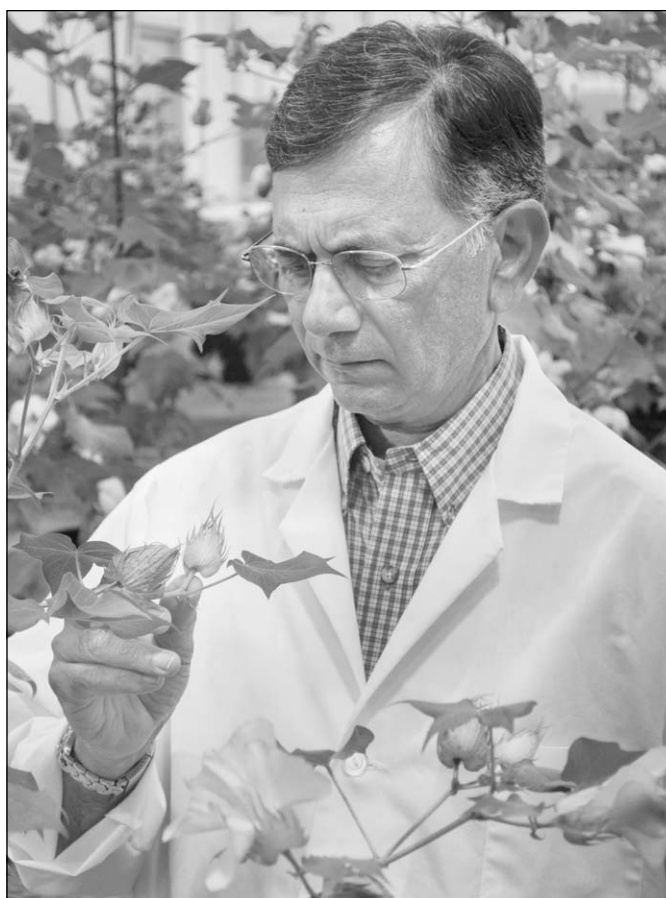
Gossypol, while toxic to humans and monogastric animals such as pigs, birds, fish and rodents, is useful to cotton plants for defense against insects and pathogens. Therefore, cottonseed containing gossypol is currently used mainly as ruminant animal feed, either as whole seed or cottonseed meal after oil extraction.

"Biotechnology tools that made the ULGCS technology successful had just become available when I started looking at the potential to make this new source of protein available to hundreds of millions of people," Rathore said.

"I also realized the value to cotton farmers everywhere of removing gossypol from the cottonseed because such a product is likely to improve their income without any extra effort on their part or additional input," he said. "Such a product can also be important from the standpoint of sustainability because farmers will produce fiber, feed and food from the same crop."

Cotton-producing countries with a limited supply of feed protein can realize great benefits by utilizing this seed-derived protein as a feed for poultry, swine or aquaculture species, Rathore said.

These animals are sig-



**RESEARCH SUCCESS** Texas A&M photo by Lacy Roberts  
Dr. Keerti Rathore, a Texas A&M AgriLife Research plant biotechnologist in College Station, received word that Texas A&M's "Petition for Determination of Non-regulated Status for Ultra-Low Gossypol Cottonseed (ULGCS) TAM66274" has been approved by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, or APHIS.

nificantly more efficient in converting plant protein into high-quality meat protein, he said. Egg and broiler production could become the most efficient use of any available feed protein source, including the ULGCS.

Rathore said cottonseed, with about 23 percent protein content, can play an important role in human nutrition with the gossypol eliminated, especially in countries where cereal/tuber-based diets provide most of the calories but are low in protein content.

Rathore said cotton will continue to be grown as a source of natural fiber, but the adoption of the ultra-low gossypol varieties by farmers has the potential to make the seed just as valuable as the lint.

Even after this deregulation hurdle has been jumped, the work is not done.

"The next major effort will be aimed at activities to demonstrate the value-added potential of this technology," Wedegaertner

said. "The first step will be to produce enough ULGCS seed for a commercial-scale production run at a cottonseed oil mill. This will take a couple of years."

Rathore said development of ULGCS involved several patented technologies, so additional steps must be taken to secure agreements with the patent holders, then to find a seed company willing to market the ULGCS trait and make it available to cotton farmers worldwide.

Rathore said as a scientist who has conceived and developed this technology, "My personal preference as we move forward would be to follow the 'Golden Rice' example in terms of its use for humanitarian purposes."

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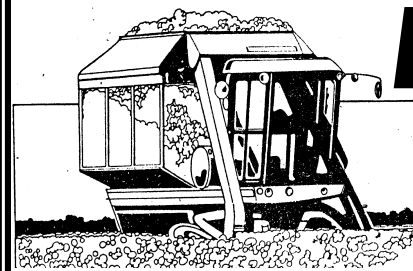


### GOSSYPOL REDUCTION

Seeds containing gossypol (left photo) have glands showing up as black specs. In the de-regulated cottonseed (right), the glands are still there but are much lighter, reflecting the very low levels of gossypol.

Texas A&M AgriLife photos by Dr. Devendra Pandeya

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# Nature, markets tough on grain producers

## Texas crop and weather report

By Adam Russell  
Texas A&M AgriLife

Texas grain producers faced a difficult 2018 as natural and market forces aligned against them, according to Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service experts.

Drought conditions and high temperatures hurt production as low prices, all-time record yields in the midwestern U.S. and trade uncertainties created a tough market for corn and sorghum growers across the state, they said.

Dr. Ronnie Schnell, AgriLife Extension agronomist, College Station, said corn and sorghum acres were down slightly, to 2.3 million acres and 1.6 million acres, respectively, mostly due to low grain prices.

Yields were down for dryland acres of corn and sorghum while yields were better for irrigated fields, Schnell said.

“Yields for dryland acres in most areas of the Coastal Bend, upper Gulf Coast, Central Texas to Dallas

were worse than a typical year,” he said. “There were isolated fields that did well, but drought and high temperatures hit as plants were going into pollination and grain fill.”

The Texas High Plains accounts for about 40 percent of the state’s corn acres, and 60 percent of the overall statewide crop.

Sorghum fared a little better because it is more heat and drought tolerant, Schnell said. Farmers have also managed sugarcane aphids well with the use of aphid-tolerant varieties and due to vigilant monitoring of their fields.

Schnell said most grain

fields outside of the High Plains were harvested before rain prevented farmers access to fields.

Dr. Mark Welch, AgriLife Extension economist, College Station, said grain producers experienced a tough year both on the production side and at market in 2018.

Lower yields in dryland fields and a higher cost of irrigation compounded the financial impact to producers, and market conditions will likely worsen this season’s results, he said.

“It was a tough, tough season for grain production,” he said.

Sorghum prices were already low as trade disputes with China created more uncertainty, Welch said.

“Up to 80 percent of all sorghum exports go to China, so that number went to zero for now,” he said.

“As exports dropped off, other sectors came up, such as sorghum for food production, seed and industrial use, but again due to lower

prices.”

Texas cash sorghum and corn prices held up relative to the futures market in Chicago this season,

likely because of tight local supplies.

“Texas corn producers took a real hit as they dealt with seasonal price dips and uncertainty in (the North American Free Trade Agreement), which was compounded by all-time record grain production in the Midwest,” Welch said.

Texas grain exports to Mexico and Canada appear to be more secure at this point in the NAFTA negotiations

AgriLife Extension district reporters compiled the following summaries:

**CENTRAL:** Rains of 1-5 inches were reported. Temperatures cooled. Fields

were too wet to harvest cotton. Producers were preparing fields for wheat and oat planting where possible.

Producers were still fighting armyworms. Nearly all counties reported good soil moisture. Overall rangeland and pasture conditions were good in nearly all counties, and most counties reported fair crop conditions. All counties reported good overall livestock conditions.

**ROLLING PLAINS:** Weather was cooler and rainy. Counties received half an inch to 10 inches of rainfall. The moisture was very beneficial to pastures, rangelands and winter wheat fields that were planted. Wheat fields vary from poor to excellent condition. Pastures were providing plenty of grazing for livestock.

**COASTAL BEND:** Wet weather conditions continued to delay field operations in most counties. A small amount of cotton remained unharvested. Some cotton was baled as fields started to dry in certain areas. Volunteer cotton needed to be controlled. Insecticide applications on pastures continued for armyworms. Producers were hoping to get another hay cutting before the first frost. Livestock auctions reported large runs. Livestock were doing well. Some pecans were harvested as weather allowed.

**EAST:** Counties reported 3-8 inches of rainfall. Pastures greened up with the rain. Producers were still feeding hay despite hay being extremely difficult to locate and costs for round bales at \$65-\$110 per bale. Anderson County cotton was mature with about a half a bale per acre, but rainfall was delaying harvest. Livestock body conditions improved to good. Hatchling, small and large armyworms were reported in some counties. Heavy wild pig activity was reported in areas.

**SOUTH PLAINS:** Subsoil



The 12 Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Districts

and topsoil moisture levels improved due to recent rains, but harvest was expected to slow down due to wet conditions. Some defoliated cotton had new growth and will require a re-spray once conditions allow. Rains caused stringing of bolls in many fields. Winter wheat continued to mature. Pastures and rangelands remained in fair to good condition.

**PANHANDLE:** Temperatures were much cooler, and moisture was received in most of the district. Amounts ranged from a trace to 8 inches in some isolated areas. Fieldwork was halted by rains. Cotton took a hit from rains, and freezing temperatures in the forecast could put crop quality in question. Corn harvest was just getting underway before the rains. Winter wheat was coming along, and dryland fields should do well. Cattle conditions improved.

**NORTH:** Most areas received 2-8 inches of rain on top of recent rainfall amounts. Pastures were standing in water, and tanks were filled to their spillways. Hay producers were working to get a last cutting of hay. Some wheat and oat

fields planted early were underwater or washed out. Cotton was waiting to be harvested. Fields were recovering from armyworms destruction, but sunshine was needed. Livestock were doing well.

**FAR WEST:** Flooding occurred in most of the northern and eastern counties with some areas getting as much as 16 inches of rain, but counties in southwest parts of the district only received up to half an inch. Although rainfall arrived in time to prevent excessive boll loss for some producers in August, more than 80 percent of dryland cotton failed due to drought. Winter wheat, hay grazer and oats were planted and progressing well. Winds caused pecan drop. Pastures were improving.

**WEST CENTRAL:** Conditions were wet. Additional rain fell throughout the district, causing flooding in many areas. Soils were saturated and causing runoff. Cotton crop conditions were declining due to excess rain and standing water. Winter wheat plantings were delayed. Acres already planted were in mostly good condition, but many fields had standing water

that drowned out emerged wheat. Armyworms continued to be a problem in isolated areas. Hay cuttings were also delayed due to rain. Rangeland and pasture conditions were mostly good to excellent.

**SOUTHEAST:** Livestock were in good condition. Cotton farmers made good progress with dry conditions, but heavy rains in some areas stalled harvest. Producers were still on the lookout for fall armyworms despite. Small-grain and cool-season forage plantings were mostly complete and growing. Rangeland and pasture ratings were poor to excellent.

**SOUTHWEST:** Moisture conditions continued to increase with rain. Rangeland and pasture conditions improved significantly. Rains made it difficult to get hay cut, cured and baled in a timely manner. Winter wheat and oat planting were delayed due to rains.

**SOUTH:** Conditions were mild with wet weather in some areas and adequate soil moisture levels. Peanut harvest started, and cotton harvest was active in some areas but stalled due to recent rainfall in others. Cotton gins were on a 24/7 schedule. Wheat and oat planting were stalled due to armyworm activity and rainfall. Fall armyworm damage was still occurring in some improved pastures and hayfields. Rangeland and pasture conditions remained good with some in excellent shape. Pecan orchards were in good condition and near maturity.

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LPR photo

**PEANUT HARVEST**

With dusk setting in, a combine harvests peanuts in a field west of Lamesa earlier this month. Recent rainy weather

has halted the harvest and is damaging the peanuts that already had been dug up and overturned.

**Peanut varieties**

**Runner Peanuts**

The most widely consumed variety, Runner peanuts, have delicious flavor, great roasting characteristics and high yields. This medium-sized peanut is an ideal choice for use in peanut butters. Runner peanuts are grown in Texas, Georgia, Alabama, Florida and Oklahoma due to their need for a warm climate and sandy, well-drained soil.

**Spanish Peanuts**

Spanish peanuts are used mostly in peanut candies, peanut snacks and peanut butter. This peanut is easily identified by its smaller kernels and its reddish-brown skin. It also has a high oil content, which makes it an excellent choice for extracting oil. Spanish peanuts are grown mostly in Texas and Oklahoma.

**Valencia Peanuts**

Valencia peanuts are a sweet peanut with a bright red skin. This peanut usually contains three or more kernels in a longer shell. Valencia peanuts are mostly served roasted and sold in-shell or boiled. While grown less frequently in the United States, its primary production region is in West Texas and New Mexico.

**Virginia Peanuts**

Often called "cocktail nuts," Virginia peanuts are considered large-kernelled. Its size makes it great for processing, particularly for salting, confections and in-shell roasting. Virginia peanuts are primarily grown in Texas, southeastern Virginia and northeastern North Carolina.

**Continued rainy weather puts peanut harvest on hold**

Peanuts have been a staple in Dawson County for a long time, as the crop fertilizes the ground and make the soil better for growing cotton.

Quinton Kearney said growing peanuts is good for the land and for crop rotation. He grew about 250 acres of peanuts this year.

Waylan Hogg had been growing peanuts for four years. Hogg said the sandy

soil and water in the area grow peanuts well. This year, he planted 400 acres of organic peanuts and 700 acres of conventional Virginia peanuts.

Peanut producers are waiting for the weather to dry up before they begin harvesting the crop. Kearney said the peanuts have had some heavy rains on them in the past week, so farmers cannot really har-

vest at this time.

Some farmers dug their peanuts before the rains began and got flooded out, Hogg said.

"That can be a devastating situation," Hogg said.

The drought followed by heavy rain will cause a wide variety of results for peanuts in the field, Hogg said.

Hogg predicts a long harvest season for the crop. The

yields he has seen so far are average to good, so he hopes that trend continues.

**Organic crops offer benefits for farmers**

By Benjamin Hettick  
Lamesa Press-Reporter

Dawson County FSA Executive Director Rebecca Walker said about 2,000 acres of organic cotton and 1,000 acres of organic peanuts have been planted in Dawson County this year.

The main motivation for farmers to plant organic crops is they receive a premium when they sell, Walker said.

The FSA provides a program for farmers which will cost share for the process they must go through to be certified to plant organic crops.

"We have several producers that have come in and got certified organic, but not a whole lot of them," Walker said.

In order to qualify, the farmer must be pesticide and herbicide free for a period of time. If producers fill out an application and present their paid bills for the cost of becoming certified to the FSA, the agency will reimburse a portion of the costs.

Waylan Hogg has planted about 400 acres of organic peanuts and 700 acres of the non-organic variety.

Hogg said the organic

market has been difficult to establish but it has been good for the area.

Quinton Kearney has planted 800 acres of organic cotton and about 250 acres of organic peanuts this year. He is currently planting a planned 900 acres of organic winter wheat.

When it comes to working with organic crops, Kearney said he has had to take everything he has learned about farming in the past 30 years and throw it out the window.

"You have to go back to doing it (farming) the old way, the hard way," Kearney said.

Methods for growing organic crops include using garlic to repel pests and manure as a fertilizer. The only ways to repel weeds are to cultivate close to the crop and to hoe, Kearney said.

Kearney said the high volume of compost needed to fertilize fields of organic crops cause the costs of fertilizer to jump three to four times the cost of fertilizer for non-organic plants.

Kearney said the difficulty of farming organic crops and the high amount of labor it requires is the reason why organic products are

more expensive in the store.

Kearney said organic cotton lint sells for more than the non-organic equivalent; furthermore, organic cottonseed sell for almost twice as much as regular cottonseed. Cottonseed makes good feed for cattle, and organic cattle are fed only organic feed.

Kearney said working with organic products is a challenge, but he enjoys the work. He has transitioned all of his irrigated land to growing organic crops.

Growing organic crops "pays the bills in the lean years," he said. When cotton is down, organic cotton follows to some degree, but not as dramatically as the non-organic variety.

Kearney began growing organic cotton this year, and plans to see how the market and buyers respond to his yield.

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# Grape production continues to expand

By Herrel Hallmark  
Lamesa Press-Reporter

Two local vineyards, both located south of Lamesa, experienced different harvest times this season apparently due to the drier weather conditions earlier this year.

The harvest for ReaGae Vineyard and LeGrande Chapeau vineyard was conducted a little earlier than normal.

"We harvested our grapes about mid-August, since they ripened a lot earlier," Robyn Shofner with Rae-Gae Vineyards said. "The day before we were to harvest, it rained, which was good because it made them a little juicier."

A little farther west, the harvest for Lilli of the Vine vineyard actually was four days later than last year.

"We keep track of our harvest times and this year it came a little later," local veterinarian Bo Brock said. "We had a good harvest, but it was not as good as last year's. Maybe it was because there was not as much rain earlier in the year, but I don't know why necessarily that would have affected the crop because we irrigate."

"We got about two-thirds of what we got last year, which was a really good harvest."

We've been told grape harvests come in cycles - good one year and not so good the next year - so we are hoping next year the harvest

amount will go back up."

Dawson County currently has just over 200 acres of grapes spread out over four local vineyards. That total has grown by 53 acres since last year with additional plantings at two vineyards.

## ReaGae Vineyard and LeGrande Chapeau

Mark and Robyn Shofner own ReaGae Vineyard and LeGrande Chapeau vineyard both of which are located south of Lamesa along F.M. Highway 26 toward Sparenberg. Mark's sister, Shani Shofner, also owns some interest in the vineyards.

ReaGae Vineyard has about 17 acres of grapes, while LeGrande Chapeau Vineyard has about nine



LPR photo

## PLANTING GRAPE VINES

A crew is shown preparing to plant young grape vines in the as-yet-unnamed vineyard being developed by Greg and Judith Holladay about 2.5 miles north of Lamesa. The Holladays added 45 acres of grapes this year,

bringing their vineyard to a current total of 57 acres with plans to add another five acres next year.

more acres for a total combined acreage of about 26 acres for the Shofners.

The two main varieties of grapes raised by the Shofners are Cabernet and Merlot, Robyn said, while they also have two experimental varieties of grapes - Negroamaro and Sangrantino.

Robyn said those experimental varieties had to be hand harvested last year, but since have matured enough that their entire grape crop was able to be machine harvested this year.

ReaGae Vineyard originally had its first three acres of grapes planted in 1998 by Mark's parents, the late Reams Shofner and Gay Shofner, making it the

second oldest vineyard in Dawson County.

## Lilli of the Vine

The Lilli of the Vine vineyard, which is owned by local veterinarian Bo Brock and his son-in-law, Garrett Kellermeier, still is in the growing stages with a goal to eventually have a total of about 70 acres of grapes.

That vineyard started out in 2014 with only four acres of grapes. Since that time, 17 additional acres have been added.

Brock said three acres of a new variety of grapes were planted this year.

Brock said they planted a total of 3,000 vines - 1,000 vines per acre - this time and only one plant died. He

## We have plans to put in five more acres next year.

Judith Holladay

credited the toughness of the vines for their survival in spite of the dry, hot and windy weather conditions.

"Llano Estacado Winery in Lubbock buys all of our grapes," Brock said, "so Garrett asked them what kind of grapes they wanted to buy and that's what we planted this time."

If a vineyard does not have a way to get the juice from the grapes, Brock said, they need a winery that is willing and able to buy their grapes at harvest time.

"When grapes get ripe, they're ripe and have to be harvested. If no one is ready to buy them, you might as well pour them out on the ground," Brock said.

In order to make it easier to sell their grapes, Brock said, Lilli of the Vine has decided to only plant grapes that are preferred by their buyer.

Brock said it is harder now to find a buyer of grapes than it was four years ago, as the number of acres has increased dramatically in the state.

"These are just estimates, but there only were about 3,600 acres of grapes in Texas when we planted our vineyard," Brock said.

"Then a man in Brownfield planted 1,800 acres and that really changed the dynamics

for selling grapes."

Lilli of the Vine is located south of Lamesa about one mile north of 10-Mile Gin along Texas Highway 137. All red wine varieties of grapes are planted in the vineyard.

## Holladays' vineyard

Greg and Judith Holladay are hoping to have a small harvest next year from the original 12 acres of grapes they planted in 2017. That would be the first harvest for the Holladays on their vineyard, located about 2.5 miles north of Lamesa off of Highway 87.

Since last year, the Holladays have planted an additional 45 acres of grapes, bringing their vineyard to 57 acres currently.

"We have plans to put in five more acres next year," Judith said.

That would put them in line with the original goal expressed by Greg last year to have a vineyard of 60 to 65 acres of grapes.

Although the planting of their vineyard almost is complete, the Holladays have yet to settle on a name for the vineyard.

"We are still working on that," Judith said. "It's something we really want to get right, so it's taking us a while!"

expanded throughout the years and grows a variety of grapes.

Delaney also owns and operates a vineyard and winery in Grapevine. That vineyard, which grows ten acres of Cynthiana grapes, also was planted in 1993 and the winery was completed in 1996.

The Grapevine winery had its first bottling production of wine in the following summer of 1997.

## Delaney Vineyard

Delaney Vineyard, which is owned by Jerry Delaney, is the largest and oldest vineyard in the county with more than 100 acres available just off Texas Highway 137 north of Lamesa.

First planted in 1993, Delaney Vineyards has been

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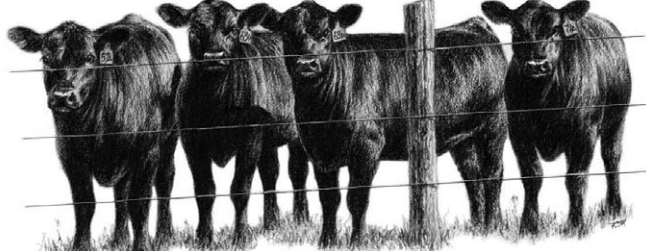
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**FLOCK OF SHEEP**

Chad Raines has given up growing cotton and is now raising hundreds of sheep, grazing them on several different fields scattered across the county.

Photo courtesy of Chad Raines

**Sheep, goat conference slated here**

By Kay Ledbetter  
Texas A&M AgriLife

A Sheep and Goat Production Conference hosted by the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service in Dawson County will be held Nov. 14 at the Forrest Park Community Center, 814 S. Houston, Lamesa.

Registration will begin at 8 a.m. and the cost is \$20. Lunch will be provided.

Preregistration is requested by Nov. 12 to allow for planning. To register, contact the AgriLife Extension office at 806-872-3444, email lydia.aguilar@ag.tamu.edu, or go to <https://dawson.agrilife.org/> and fill out a registration form.

"This conference will address everything a producer needs to know when it comes to raising sheep and goats in this region, from health to markets to best management practices," said Gary Roschetzky, AgriLife Extension agriculture and natural resources agent for Dawson County.

Three Texas Department of Agriculture continuing education units – two general and one integrated pest management – will be offered.

Topics and speakers will be:

- General Health/Nutrition, Dr. Reid Redden, AgriLife Extension state sheep and goat specialist at San Angelo.

- Cropping Forages, Nick Voss, Hugoton, Kansas, producer.

- Parasite Control, Redden.

- Production Calendar, Jake Thorne, Texas A&M AgriLife Research farm manager at San Angelo.

- Fencing Option, Chad Raines, owner of Key Farms Inc. in Lamesa.

- Marketing, Bill Thompson, AgriLife Extension economist at San Angelo, and Redden.

- Predator Control, Thorne.

**Raines gives up cotton for sheep**

By Russel Skiles  
Lamesa Press-Reporter

A fourth-generation cotton farmer, Chad Raines was struggling to make a profit from the staple feature of Dawson County agriculture.

"It just wasn't working," Raines said, adding that he had tried several different farming systems without much success.

After losing money on cotton several years ago, Raines decided to look closer at a suggestion from a friend that he start raising sheep.

Having bought his first 200 sheep in May of 2015, this year Raines completely quit growing cotton and is now focusing entirely on raising sheep.

At least a half-dozen or more other Dawson County farmers also are getting into the sheep business.

Raines said his friend that made the initial recommendation "was making pretty good money" running Dorper sheep on a half-section of land that had come out of contract as part of the federal Conservation Reserve Program.

Reaching out to several ranchers who also were raising Dorpers, Raines said he couldn't find anyone who said anything negative about raising them.

Dorpers are a breed of sheep developed in South Africa by crossing Dorset Horn rams with Blackhead Persian ewes to produce fast-growing, heavily



**PROTECTING THE FLOCK**

Chad Raines uses large dogs to protect his sheep from coyotes and other predators

Photo courtesy of Chad Raines

muscled lambs that thrive under arid to semi-arid conditions.

Raines said he placed his first 200 Dorper ewes on 120 acres of farmland watered by a pivot irrigation system.

Despite initial challenges from predatory coyotes – and even from a couple of the guard dogs he placed with the sheep – Raines said that initial venture was a success.

"With these Dorpers, you get a lot of twins," he noted.

According to the American Dorper Sheep Breeders Association, a 150-percent lamb crop is typical and rates of around 180 percent are achieved with proper nutrition.

Developed for meat production, Dorpers have only a light, short coat of wool and hair that is shed in the spring or early summer.

In 2017 Raines added 2,000 more Dorpers to his operation.

In addition to placing them on fields of haygrazer,

Raines is experimenting with different forage crops including various species of millet and grass.

He has even planted turnips and radishes as feed on the dry corners of his irrigated fields.

"I'm trying to improve the health of the soil at the same time by trying different things," he said.

But while the forage crops provide better nutrition, Raines said Dorpers love to eat weeds.

"The sheep prefer a weed over grass," he said, noting he sold one load of lambs that had eaten nothing but weeds.

Although the Dorpers will not eat a whiteweed, Raines said, they will eat almost anything else such as careless weeds and tumbleweeds.

That keeps his crop production costs down, as he doesn't have to use herbicide and the sheep naturally fertilize the fields. Rotation plays a big role

in Raines' operation. He will separate a pivot-irrigated field into two pastures, growing a crop on one side while grazing the other.

One of his major start-up expenses has been installing fencing.

"I've had to fence all of my farm land," he said.

While he started with electric fencing and barbed wire, Raines said he now is converting to net fencing mainly because of the time and expense required to maintain electric fencing.

"Electric was costing me more in the long run, so I've gone to net fence," he said.

One of the major benefits of raising Dorpers, Raines said, is that the market is very consistent year after year.

An average 60- to 70-pound lamb will sell for \$125 on the regular market.

Raines said he has begun focusing much of his efforts on reaching ethnic markets through a meat processing company at Goldthwaite

that supplies lamb meat to Whole Foods and HEB.

That effort is requiring him to following Global Animal Partnership (GAP) guidelines which focus on humane treatment of animals.

GAP certification, Raines said, requires him to keep extensive records and care for the animals in specific ways regarding such things as watering, shelter and no use of antibiotics.

The advantage is that he is able to sell 100-pound lambs for \$200 each.

With Dorpers being a fast-maturing breed, Raines said he can get a lamb up to 100 pounds in 7-8 months – only a 2-3 months longer than required to reach the normal market weight.

Raising sheep makes sense financially, Raines said.

While a single bag of cotton seed nowadays may cost \$200, Raines said he can buy a ewe for \$200 and sell its offspring each year for about that same price.

"She's going to be giving me one-two babies for the next 7-10 years."

Raines is developing a schedule where he can produce up to three lamb crops every two years.

Although noting he is still learning, and continues to face challenges from coyotes trying to get into his fields, Raines said he has less stress and risk than he did when growing cotton.

"It has been fascinating," he said.

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**MAGESTIC LONGHORN** Photo courtesy of TS Adcock Longhorns/Terry and Sherri Adcock  
TS Red River Tuff is one of the Terry and Sherri Adcock's herd sires. The couple's website contains details about each longhorn, from the history of their measurements to pedigree and progeny.

## Adcocks enjoy working with longhorn cattle

By Benjamin Hettick  
Lamesa Press-Reporter

Terry Adcock has been raising longhorn cattle on his land about four miles north of Lamesa for about 12 years.

Terry and his wife Sherri originally intended to care for the animals as a hobby, but the practice eventually became a job for the couple. Terry said they enjoy working with the breed and like the animals.

The Adcocks began their herd when they bought three heifers from Cedar Creek Cattle Company. After the couple met Mike and Debbie Bowman in the summer of 2008, they purchased their herd sire from the Bowmans.

Mike and his foreman have also been helpful as the Adcocks developed their herd. They have answered their questions and taught them about raising longhorns and the business side of things, as well.

"You've got to like the

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**You've got to like the breed. The horns are a challenge to deal with.**

Terry Adcock

breed. The horns are a challenge to deal with. They aren't the old, skinny animals you see in westerns," Terry said.

According to the Adcocks' website dedicated to their longhorns, "We enjoy our cows and are in the pastures with them almost daily so disposition is also a very important trait for us."

Terry said the horns of the cattle can range up to 70 to 90 inches from tip to tip.

"Our goal is to produce top quality longhorns with proven genetics for producing long horn, good conformation, lots of color along with good mothering abilities in our cows," the Adcocks' website states.

The Adcocks have about 75 cows that can bear calves and about 75 assorted bulls, calves, and steers.

"We are living our dream of raising top quality registered Texas longhorns here on the flat plains of West Texas," the website reads.

Terry said the couple always has different cows to sell, and they sell cows with inferior horns to the meat market. All of the Adcocks' longhorn cattle are grass fed, so they provide natural beef to the market.

The females provide milk like any other cow, but the Adcocks do not milk them. Terry said the cows do a good job of taking care of their young.

Terry said some people like to buy longhorn steers to become what he called trophy steers. These animals graze in the pasture to give those who purchase them something to look at.

According to the Adcocks' website, "We will work at and continue to put the best genetics of the longhorn breed into our program so that the animals we sell will not only enhance your program but will add value to it as well. If you just want a living, ornamental pasture ornament full of color and horn then we can help you with that too!"

## Cattle provide farmers supplemental income

By Herrel Hallmark  
Lamesa Press-Reporter

While farming is the main agricultural practice in Dawson County, some local producers also raise cattle to help supplement their crops.

Kent Peterson said he began raising cattle about 18 years ago with the plan to supplement the crops he produces and, hopefully, to allow him to be able to farm a little less.

"I don't think that has worked out too well," Peterson said about farming less, since he currently splits his time about half and half between farming and working cattle.

Peterson said he raises Angus cattle for both slaughter and breeding.

Nicky Goode said his dad always raised cattle, so he grew up around cattle and enjoys working with them.

Goode said he has been raising cattle on his own for about 43 years, but he still does more farming than tending cattle.

"I probably do about 70 percent farming and 30 percent cattle right now," Goode said.

Goode said that over the years he has built up a nice herd of Red Angus Cross cattle. He added that he hopes one day to be able to cut back on his farming duties and rely more on his cattle.

One advantage to having both farm crops and cattle, Goode said, is being able to rotate the cattle around in the pastures and resting the fields between plantings. He said it also allows him to be more diversified instead of relying solely on the success of growing one particular crop every year.

Probably one of the largest and most well-known cattle operations in Dawson County is Indian Canyon Ranch, which is located east of Lamesa near the Caprock.

Indian Canyon Ranch,



**CONTENT CATTLE** LPR photo  
Both farm land and range land provide a home for cattle in Dawson County.


which was established in 1882 by Col. C.C. Slaughter, has a long-storied history, including bringing one of the first English bulls to breed to Longhorn cows in the early 1900s.

Three years ago Indian Canyon Ranch was recognized as Commercial Producer of the Year at the 2015 Red Angus Association of America National Convention held in Grapevine.

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# Sign-up deadline Nov. 15 for ranch risk management tool

By Kay Ledbetter  
Texas A&M AgriLife

Pasture, Rangeland and Forage, or PRF, insurance can be a way to protect Texas landowners' perennial forage for livestock and manage the risks of a constantly changing weather environment, said a Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service expert.

DeDe Jones, AgriLife Extension risk management specialist in Amarillo, said the U.S. Department of Agriculture Risk Management Agency offers the PRF program and policies covering the 2019 calendar year through crop insurance agents until Nov. 15. Premiums are billed on Sept. 1, 2019.

"Conventional crop insurance doesn't offer much for ranchers, but they need to focus as much on risk management as farmers do," Jones said.

With the pasture insurance, producers are not required to insure all their acres for the entire 12-month period, she said. They can

**Conventional crop insurance doesn't offer much for ranchers, but they need to focus as much on risk management as farmers do.**

*DeDe Jones  
Extension expert*

choose the acres and months most important to their grazing and/or haying operations.

Payment is not determined by individual damages, but rather area losses based on a grid system, she explained. Producers can select any portion of acres to insure, but they must select between 11 of the two-month intervals outlined, choosing at least two and not more than six.

Coverage levels between 70 and 90 percent are available,

Jones said. Once coverage is selected, the producer also chooses a productivity factor between 60 and 150 percent. The productivity factor is a percentage of the established county base value for forage.

The base value is a standard rate published by the Risk Management Agency for each county. It is calculated based on estimated stocking rates and current hay prices.

Jones said the program uses a rainfall index to determine potential indemnity payments.

Additionally, she said alfalfa and other irrigated hay can be insured under a PRF policy at different coverage levels and higher base values.

A decision-support tool to help producers determine coverage levels and intervals can be found at: <http://bit.ly/2yAKAeb>.

For more information about the insurance and how it fits into a risk management plan, contact Jones at 806-677-5600 or [djones@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:djones@ag.tamu.edu).

# AgriLife Extension offers CRP risk management decision aid

By Kay Ledbetter  
Texas A&M AgriLife

As Conservation Reserve Program, or CRP, contracts expire, landowners must decide if they should re-enroll acreage, convert it back to farmland or leave it in permanent cover for wildlife and/or grazing, a Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service specialist said.

An AgriLife Extension publication, *After the Conservation Reserve Program: Economical Decisions with Farming and Grazing in Mind*, can help landowners make the necessary decisions, said DeDe Jones, an agency risk management specialist and publication co-author.

Jones and Tracy Fischbacher, U.S. Department of Agriculture-Natural Resources Conservation Service conservation agronomist in Amarillo, outline the pros and cons of each option in the six-page document, which can be found at <https://tinyurl.com/AfterCRP>.

CRP began in 1985 to protect topsoil. Highly erodible land is taken out of crop production and permanent vegetative cover is established in its place, Jones said. Several million acres of land highly susceptible to erosion with relatively low fertility were planted with native and

introduced grasses.

In the 2014 farm bill, the maximum CRP acreage was reduced from 32 million to 24 million acres, she said. As a result, landowners with expired contracts may find it difficult to re-qualify for program eligibility.

If they don't re-qualify, many producers are choosing to return their grass acres to crop production, Jones said. Growers who elect to put CRP acreage back into production should consider factors such as chemical applications, crop selection and tillage options.

Crops raised on converted CRP land are usually farmed dryland due to lack of water or irrigation equipment, she said. This means available soil moisture will be a major consideration in crop selection.

Also, soil moisture will determine the length of fallow necessary to rebuild soil moisture after grass kill-off, Jones said. Wheat and grain sorghum fit well into dryland rotation programs and are often grown on former CRP land.

Similarly, dryland cotton is an option, depending on the farm's location and current operation, she said. Producers should expect lower yields in the first year of production after CRP, but this

also depends on the amount of rainfall and existing soil moisture levels.

When it comes to economics, she said converting to dryland wheat or grazing can run between \$100-\$125 per acre. The cost depends on the amount of tillage and chemicals applied. The cost for converting CRP land to dryland grain sorghum should range between \$150-\$175 per acre.

Converting to livestock grazing will cost \$30-\$50 per acre using burning and fertilization, Jones said. Also, fencing and the development of a water source may be needed.

"Expect to pay around \$975 per mile for one-strand and \$1,223 per mile for two-strand electric fencing," she said. "Barbed wire fencing will cost approximately \$10,500 per mile, including gates and corner posts. A well with a solar submersible pump ranges between \$13,525 and \$23,676, depending on the depth required."

Jones said there are many other factors to be considered.

Local Natural Resources Conservation Service field offices can aid in understanding the issues of conversion and offer insight into any financial cost-share programs available to help offset expenses, she said.

# American Farm Bureau seeks change to tax proposal by IRS

The American Farm Bureau Federation is recommending the IRS change a proposed amendment to the tax code because it threatens the viability of key programs that work to preserve farmland and open space.

The proposed changes, would reduce the federal charitable deduction for a donated conservation easement by the amount of a state tax credit.

"Protecting and conserving farmland, pasture,

ranchland and woodlots is a priority for American farmers and ranchers. One way to do so is to permanently separate the right to develop property from the remaining property rights by entering into a conservation easement agreement with a third party such as a conservation organization," Farm Bureau explained in comments to the agency.

Conservation easements are valued at the difference between the market value

of a property before the easement and the market value of the property after the easement. The difference can be significant, and when donated, the conservation easement value may be eligible for state tax credits, in addition to a federal charitable deduction.

Farm Bureau asks the IRS to change its proposal so that a federal charitable deduction is not reduced by the amount of state tax credits for donated conservation easements.

Best wishes for a successful harvest season!

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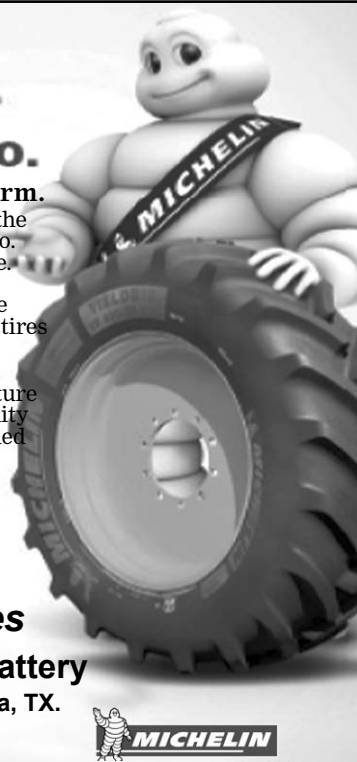
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**TURNING COLORS**

Fields of grain sorghum, planted in a number of fields after cotton crops failed during early summer, are now starting to turn colors as the plants mature.

LPR photo

# ‘Sorghum Smart Talk’ podcasts now available

The United Sorghum Checkoff Program (USCP) and National Sorghum Producers (NSP) launched the first installment of their joint podcast, Sorghum Smart Talk, on Oct. 8.

The podcast will primarily be hosted by John Duff, renewables program director for the Sorghum Checkoff and strategic business director for NSP.

Sorghum Smart Talk’s mission is to increase education on grain marketing in sorghum and to provide growers and industry stakeholders with applicable information from credible resources in a format accessible at home, on the road or in the tractor.

“The way farmers consume media is changing as fast as the technology on their farms,” said Jennifer Blackburn, external affairs director for NSP and USCP. “This podcast will serve as a new avenue for us to reach producers with timely, relevant information that will help make more informed decisions on the farm.”

The first series of podcasts will be over profit and risk analysis, contracting and other marketing related

topics. John Miller, owner of Southwest Agribusiness Consulting Inc., will be the show’s first guest. Miller has a Ph.D. in agricultural economics from Texas A&M University and started the firm, which provides comprehensive price risk management services to producers and users of agricultural commodities throughout the Southern Plains.

Future series will cover a variety of industry related topics such as grain marketing, agronomy, regulatory and legislative issues and will feature leading agricultural experts.

For updates regarding Sorghum Smart Talk, visit SorghumCheckoff.com, and follow @SorghumGrowers and @SorghumCheckoff on Twitter and Instagram. Updates are also available on Facebook.

Sorghum Smart Talk is available on iTunes, Google Play Music, SoundCloud, Stitcher, Spotify, Libsyn and SorghumCheckoff.com.

**Episode 1: Cash Marketing with John Miller**

This episode of Sorghum Smart Talk kicks off our marketing education series

and features information on cash marketing, market history and a look into focused price risk management at the farm level. Our guest is John Miller, owner of Southwest Agribusiness Consulting Inc.

**Episode 2: Meet Your New NSP Chairman – Dan Atkisson**

In this episode of Sorghum Smart Talk, we sit down with Dan Atkisson, newly elected NSP board chairman. Duff and Atkisson discuss farming, family, leadership and the importance of engaging in agriculture policy in Washington, D.C., and beyond. Atkisson is passionate about his new role within NSP and plans to use his past experiences to improve the agricultural industry and the sorghum industry.

**Episode 3: Cost of Production with John Miller**

In this episode of Sorghum Smart Talk, we visit with podcast guest John Miller, owner of Southwest Agribusiness Consulting Inc. about cost of production, accounting and cost tracking for your operation.

# Farm bill fluttering toward lame duck session conclusion

By Shawn Wade and Mary Jane Buerkle  
*Plains Cotton Growers*

Policy differences and a general lack of progress have significantly hampered efforts to complete the 2018 Farm Bill, despite the efforts of House Ag Committee Chairman Mike Conaway who had pushed to finish the bill prior to the September 30 expiration of the current legislation.

As it stands, the bill will now wait until after the November elections when Congress returns to complete its legislative business for the year. Work undoubtedly will continue among House and Senate staff throughout the month of October and November in anticipation of a return to the negotiating table by Conference Committee principles after the election.

“We are making inroads slowly but surely,” Chairman Conaway said in an emailed statement to PCG. “Unfortunately, getting the

farm bill done this month is not likely because I think some folks prefer to keep the issue open.”

Farm bill observers have noted repeatedly that differences between the two bills are not so great that they could prevent a final package from being put together. Unfortunately, the tense political landscape in Washington, DC has proven to be a major obstacle to getting the bill completed.

For the most part, negotiations have gone well with progress being made on the vast majority of the titles. However, House and Senate principals have a few items which remain in contention, and Sen. Debbie Stabenow has called out Conaway directly in news reports, saying that his push for cotton policy is impeding progress and comes at the expense of policy for other crops.

“We fixed cotton before the farm bill even started,” Conaway said. “If there is a tension in this process it is

this: I want to strengthen the safety net for all farmers and ranchers, regardless of crop or region. We need to do this because times are tough.

“But, others want to create new programs to fund rooftop gardens in Manhattan,” Conaway said. “That’s not the proper role of the Farm Bill. That’s a big distinction between my position on the farm bill and that of some others.”

PCG continues to be engaged in the process and is pushing for a bill to be completed as soon as possible.

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