Louisiana Crops NEWSLETTER

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LSU AgCenter Research · Extension · Teaching

CORN • COTTON • GRAIN SORGHUM • SOYBEANS • WHEAT

ISSUE HIGHLIGHTS

Consider the temperature, not the calendar, when deciding planting dates for corn

BY DAN FROMME

Temperature determines how fast corn plants grow. Day length does not control development, meaning the calendar date is not as important as soil temperature and air temperature when considering when to plant corn.

Good germination and emergence can be expected once the soil temperature at a 2-inch depth reaches 55 degrees Fahrenheit by 9 a.m. for three consecutive days.

This normally occurs in late February and March in Louisiana. In most years, the planting window for south Louisiana is Feb. 25 to March 20. For north Louisiana, it is generally March 10 to April 1. Planting past the last optimal planting date can result in losses of one-half to 1 bushel per day.

Frost sometimes occurs after these planting dates. However, corn typically withstands frost with little economic injury. Corn younger than V6 (six-leaf stage) usually can withstand a light frost if the temperature does not drop below 30 degrees. A moderate freeze will burn any existing leaves and cause them to drop, but new leaves can emerge in four to five days with warm temperatures.

Keep in mind that as the growing point moves upward and nears the soil surface, the possibility of injury increases.

Results from a study on planting dates follow on the next page. This study was conducted last year with dryland corn at the Dean Lee Research and Extension Center near Alexandria. §

PLANTING DATE	FINAL PLANT HEIGHT (INCHES)	EAR HEIGHT (INCHES)	BUSHELS PER ACRE	SEED WEIGHT (GRAMS; PER 300 SEED)
Feb. 24	76.49	36.31	178.1	99.49
March 20	83.75	42.50	181.9	93.76
April 6	86.23	43.98	164.6	87.39

Planting date study

Soil type: Coushatta silt loam

Hybrid: DKS62-08

Row spacing: 38 inches

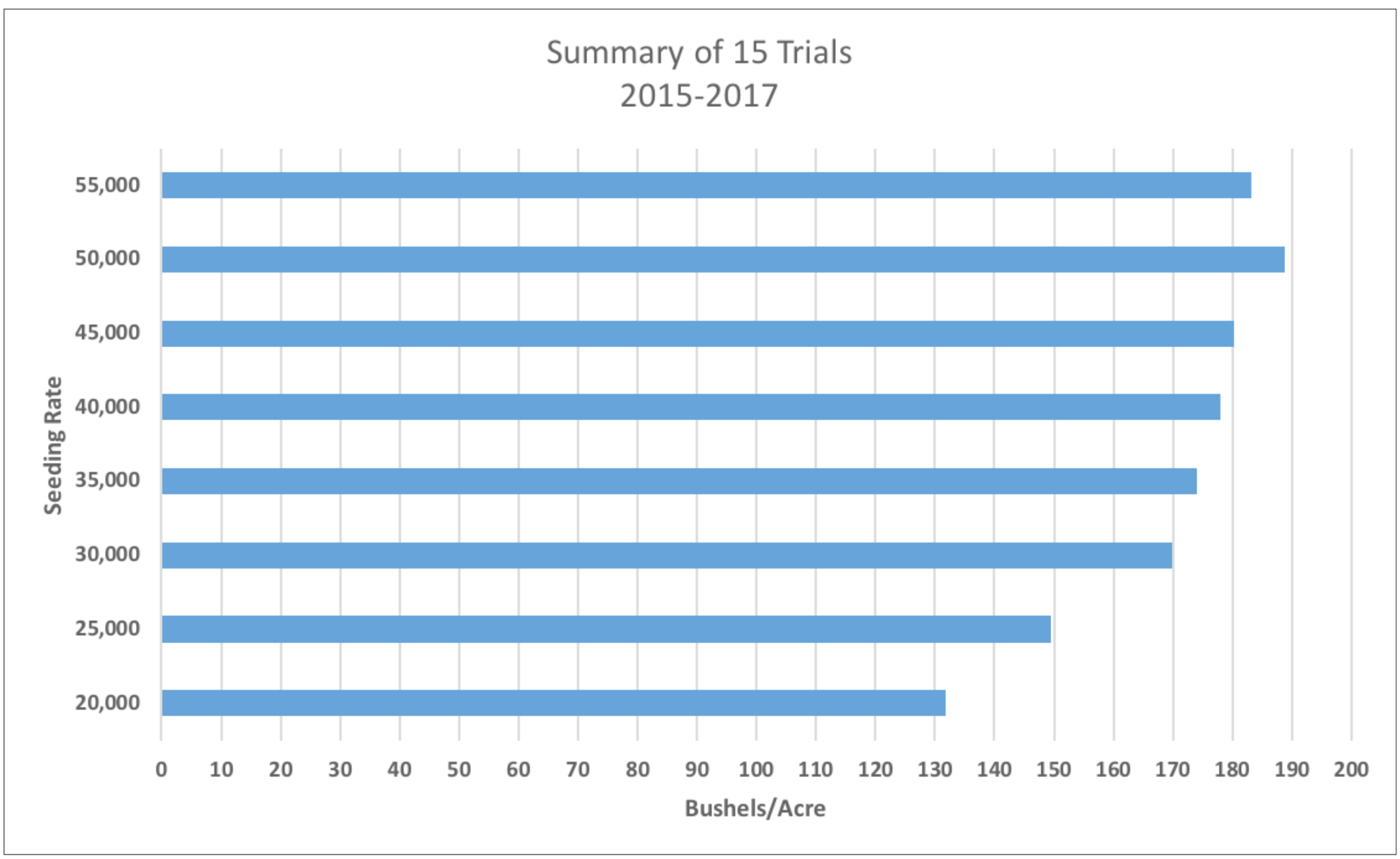
Seeding rate: 34,000 per acre

Optimal seeding rates depend on many factors

BY DAN FROMME

Optimal seeding rates vary from 30,000 to 36,000 seeds per acre, depending on specific field conditions, genetics and environments. Higher seeding rates can increase yields; however, the extra seed cost will reduce the net dollar return per acre. The lower end of the recommended range should be used when lower yields are expected due to soil type, late planting date, drought-prone areas or low fertility. Higher populations should be used on highly productive, deep alluvial soils or in irrigated fields where moisture will not be a limiting factor. Generally, a seeding rate to obtain a final stand of 27,000 to 30,000 seeds per acre will maximize yield.

The graph below shows results of 15 corn seeding rate trials conducted with dryland corn at the Dean Lee Research and Extension Center near Alexandria between 2015 and 2017. Rows were spaced 38 inches apart and were located on Coushatta silt loam soil. §



Seed depth influences corn root development

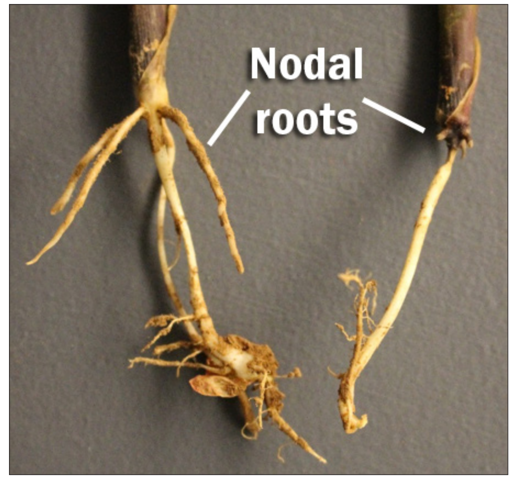
BY DAN FROMME

An old rule of thumb says to plant corn seed as deep as the second knuckle on your index finger. But not everybody's fingers are the same length. We need to be more accurate than this, as planting depth is an important management decision.

Seed must be planteddeep enough. Planting too shallow tends to lead to more problems. Typical recommendations call for a depth of 1.5 to 2.5 inches. Most people split the difference and plant at a depth of 2 inches.

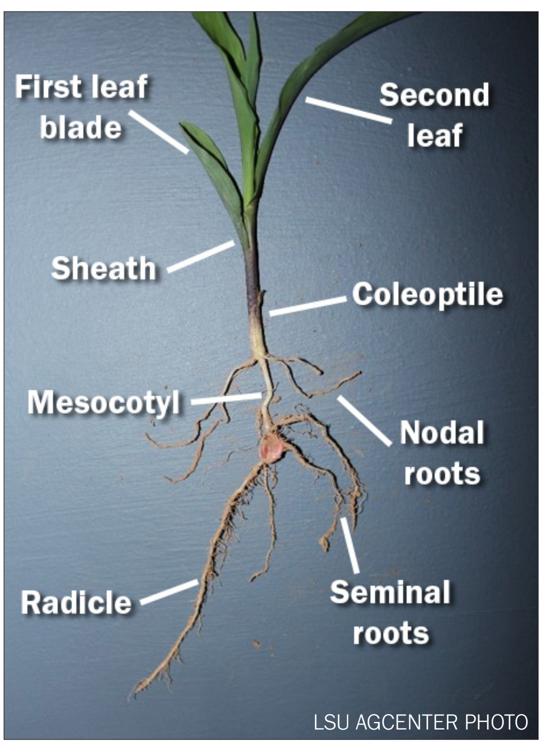
The first reason to target a 2-inch depth is to make sure you have good seed-to-soil contact. The seed need to be where moisture is most consistent. Uneven soil moisture throughout the seed zone is the primary cause of uneven emergence, which can result in yield losses of 10 percent or more.

The second reason is to establish a strong nodal root system. Nodal roots not only support the corn plant structurally, but also are responsible for much of a plant's uptake of water and nutrients. The nodal roots are essential in reducing early-season root lodging and rootless, or floppy, corn syndrome.



The plant on the left was planted 2 inches deep. It has a strong nodal root system. The plant on the right was planted 1 inch deep. It has no nodal roots. LSU AGCENTER PHOTO

We often plant deep enough only to have a heavy rain come right after planting. This can wash away soil and reduce the depth of the seed. Corn should never be planted less than 1.5 inches deep. An ideal target is 1.75 to 2.25 inches. However, depending on soil type and conditions, seed may be planted up to 3 inches deep without any effect on stand establishment. §



LSU AGCENTER PHOTO

Did you know? Corn has two root systems

BY DAN FROMME

Corn has two identifiable root systems: seminal and nodal.

The initial, or seminal, system helps anchor seedlings and provides nutrients and water for early plant growth.

The secondary, or nodal, root system forms where the mesocotyl and coleoptile meet. The nodal root system is usually visible by the V2 stage of development and becomes dominant by V6.

Seed should be planted about 2 inches deep for proper nodal root formation. §

Fungicide seed treatment considerations

BY TREY PRICE

Corn

There are several seedling diseases that may affect corn in Louisiana. Seed rots or damping off caused by many *Pythium* species ("water-loving" oomycetes) are favored by wet weather after planting and manifest in areas of fields that are poorly drained or are the last to drain (**Figures 1** and **2**). Some *Pythium* species prefer cool temperatures while others prefer warm temperatures; therefore, excess moisture is the driving factor for *Pythium* seedling diseases.

Fungicides (commonly metalaxyl or mefenoxam) classified in Group 4 by the Fungicide Resistance Action Committee (FRAC) are very effective on *Pythium* seed rot and damping off, and may be used in areas that historically have been affected by these organisms. Improving drainage, planting within the recommended window and timing for a favorable weather forecast will lessen the risk of damage caused by *Pythium* species.

Figure 1. Thin corn stand as a result of *Pythium* spp. infection in the last-drained area of a field. LSU AGCENTER PHOTOS

Figure 2. Corn seedling killed by *Pythium* spp.

Many other fungal species may cause seed rot and seedling blights in corn. Often, many ear rot pathogens — including *Fusarium* spp., *Penicillium* spp., *Rhizopus* spp., *Rhizoctonia* spp., *Bipolaris* spp., *Alternaria* spp., *Nigrospora* spp. and *Trichoderma* spp. — are involved with seedling diseases. However, the occurrence of seedling disease issues in corn in recent years has been exceedingly rare, and the overall impact is minimal.

Most corn seed sold in Louisiana is of high quality; that is, the seed has been cleaned, which eliminates most infested seed. Additionally, most corn seed is sold with a base fungicide seed treatment containing metalaxyl or mefenoxam and at least one broad-spectrum fungicide that protects against potential seedling diseases.

Data from many years of research trials conducted at multiple research stations in the state indicate that fungicide seed treatments result in increased stands under high disease pressure. However, fungicide treatments rarely make a difference in yields. Treating corn with fungicides in addition to base fungicide seed treatments is not economically justifiable.

Soybeans

Many of the same or similar pathogens affect soybeans. As in corn, *Pythium* and *Phytophthora* species may cause seed rot, damping off or root rot in areas that are not well-drained. Group 4 seed treatment fungicides will provide some protection against these species. If soils are well-drained and planting conditions are optimal, disease caused by these pathogens is unlikely.

Pre-emergence seedling disease or post-emergence damping off caused by *Rhizoctonia solani* is the most commonly observed seedling disease in soybeans in Louisiana (**Figure 3**).

Figure 3. Thin soybean stand as a result of *Rhizoctonia solani*.

Plants surviving the seedling stage may develop root rot, resulting in delayed development and stunting. Stresses such as cold weather, nematode and insect infestation, and herbicide damage may exacerbate *Rhizoctonia* damping off.

In recent years, significant stand losses have been observed in Louisiana due to less-than-ideal planting conditions. Seed treatments containing a strobilurin (Group 11) or SDHI (Group 7) compound effectively reduce incidence and severity of *Rhizoctonia* damping off. The pathogen population, which is soilborne, may be reduced during long periods of flooding, high soil temperatures or fallowing fields. Potential for disease is greater in lighter soils, and optimal conditions for disease development are 75 to 90 degrees Fahrenheit with 30 to 60 percent soil moisture. However, the pathogen is capable of causing disease at lower temperatures and in any soil type.

Base fungicide seed treatments — usually consisting of metalaxyl or mefenoxam plus at least one broad spectrum fungicide — have recently become more common in soybeans. In most cases, base fungicide seed treatments adequately protect seedlings under adverse growing conditions that are often encountered early in the planting window.

Results from many years of field research trials at multiple research stations in the state indicate fungicide seed treatments result in increased stands under moderate to severe disease pressure. However, realizing significant yield preservation and economic benefit in soybeans is the exception rather than the rule. If your seed company does not offer a choice of seed treatments, the base offering likely will be sufficient for establishing a stand under tough conditions. It is not necessary to over-treat base fungicides with additional fungicides in soybeans unless you are targeting a specific problem on your farm.

If seed companies offer “naked” seed, soybeans may be planted without fungicide seed treatment as long as you have no history of seedling disease issues, plant during the recommended window, achieve appropriate soil temperature and soil moisture, and schedule planting when the long-term weather forecast is ideal for soybean development.

If you prefer to plant fungicide-treated seed, significant cost savings may be attainable by allowing distributors to over-treat, or by treating naked soybean seed yourself with a product of choice.

Cotton

Many soilborne fungi — including multiple species of *Fusarium* and *Pythium*, *Rhizoctonia solani* and *Thielaviopsis basicola* — cause seedling diseases of cotton under optimal environmental conditions (**Figure 4**).

Cool and wet conditions encountered during planting and the early parts of the season immediately after seedling emergence often drive an increased incidence of seedling disease, which usually manifests as a complex of multiple pathogens. Seedling diseases may result in plant death, delay early season vegetative growth, delay maturity and ultimately reduce yield.

Seed companies usually offer base fungicide treatments containing one to four modes of action from Groups 3, 4, 7, 11 or 12, which are adequate for control in most cases. However, if adverse conditions are expected at planting, over-treatment of base seed treatments may be an option. Prior to ordering seed, or prior to over-treating, determine exactly which fungicides are included in base treatments. Pricing, options and availability may vary by the company.

There are also potential redundancies when over-treating; that is, treating seed with two different fungicides from the same FRAC group (same mode of action) likely will not improve efficacy. Some seed companies offer flexibility with seed treatment options, which may provide an opportunity to cut input costs.

In cases where seedling disease pressure is high, even the best seed treatment products — regardless of active ingredients — may fail. Therefore, using integrated disease management techniques in conjunction with fungicide seed treatments is recommended. Finally, fungicide seed treatments and in-furrow fungicide products should be considered beneficial for seedling disease management within two to three weeks after planting.


Figure 4. At left, soybean seedling infected by *Rhizoctonia solani*. At right, poor cotton stand due to lack of seed treatment.

Fungicide seed treatment take-home points

✓ Plant in recommended windows in well-drained soils with appropriate temperature and moisture, and a favorable weather forecast.

✓ Base fungicide seed treatments are usually adequate.

✓ Corn and soybeans may be planted without fungicide seed treatments under ideal conditions.

✓ Do not plant cotton without a base fungicide seed treatment.

✓ Do your homework! Determine exactly which fungicides are on the seed.

✓ Avoid redundancies. Multiple fungicides from the same FRAC group likely will not improve performance.

✓ Save input costs where possible. Product prices vary by company, while efficacy may not.

✓ Contact your local AgCenter agent or specialist if you need more information. Also, the resources below might prove useful.

AgCenter seed treatment publication

CDMS label database

Agrian label database §

Insecticide seed treatments are beneficial in some, but not all, scenarios

BY SEBE BROWN

Excess moisture, cold temperatures, insect pests and many other factors can adversely affect seedling corn in Louisiana. The complex of underground insects includes Southern corn rootworms, wireworms and white grubs, while the above-ground complex includes sugarcane beetles, stink bugs and cutworms.

Insecticide seed treatments (ISTs) are typically neonicotinoid-based insecticides that coat the outer layer of seed, offering protection from below- and above-ground early-season insect pests. The systemic nature of ISTs makes these compounds water soluble and aids the vascular movement of the insecticide into the plant tissue.

The value of ISTs in Louisiana varies among crops and environmental conditions. Most agricultural commodities usually do not benefit from ISTs when planted under optimal environmental conditions — meaning soil temperature and moisture are ideal, and pest pressure is low.

However, ISTs may offer an economic benefit when conditions are sub-optimal. These conditions include very late or early planting, reduced tillage field arrangements, double cropping systems (ex. soybeans behind wheat), pests that are present every year and consecutive plantings (ex. corn behind corn).

On the next page is a table compiled by entomologists across the Southern U.S. that outlines the efficacy of various ISTs to above- and below-ground pests in field corn. §

CORN SEED TREATMENTS AND THEIR RELATIVE EFFICACY FOR CONTROL OF SEEDLING INSECT PESTS IN FIELD CORN, 2018

Insecticide	Rate	Relative Efficacy of the Seed Treatment[1]											
		Corn Billbug	White Grubs	Wire-worms	Seedcorn Maggot	Cutworm[2]	Sugar-cane Beetle	Southern Green Stink bug	Brown Stink bug	Chinch Bug	Southern Corn Rootworm[2]	Western Corn Rootworm	Lesser Cornstalk Borer
clothianidin													
PONCHO 250 or ACCELERON[3] or NIPSIT INSIDE	0.25 mg a.i./ kernel	NL	F	G	G	P-F	F	F	NL	G	E	NL	G, NL
PONCHO 500 or ACCELERON with PONCHOVOTiVO 500[4] or NIPSITINSIDE	0.50 mg a.i./ kernel	F	E	G	E	P-F	G	G	NL	G-E	E	P, NL	G, NL
PONCHO 1250 or ACCELERON with PONCHO VOTiVO 1250 or PPST+ PONCHO 1250/ VOTiVO or NIPSIT INSIDE	1.25 mg a.i./ kernel	G	E	E	E	F-G	G	G	G, NL	E	E	F-G	E, NL
thiamethoxam													
CRUISER MAXX CORN 250 [3]	0.25 mg a.i./ kernel	NL	F	G	E	P	P	P	NL	F	G-E, NL	NL	G, NL
PPST 250 [6]	0.25 mg a.i./ kernel	NL,F	F	F[7]	F[7]	P	P	P	NL	F	G-E, NL	NL	G, NL
CRUISER MAXX CORN 500 [3] or AVICTA COMPLETE CORN [4]	0.5 mg a.i./ kernel	NL	G	G	E	P	F	F	NL	F	E	NL	G, NL
CRUISER MAXX CORN 1250 [3] or AVICTA COMPLETE CORN [4]	1.25 mg a.i./ kernel	G	E	E	E	F	F	G	NL	G	E	P	E, NL
thiamethoxam + chlorantraniliprole (Rynaxypyr)													
PPST 250 PLUS LUMIVIA [6]	0.25 mg a.i.+0.25 mg a.i./kernel	F-G	G	G [7]	E	E[7]	P	P	NL	F	G-E, NL	NL	G, NL
imidacloprid													
AXCESS, MACHO 600 ST, NITRO SHIELD, NITRO SHIELD IV, GAUCHO 600, DYNASHIELD IMIDACLOPRID 5, SENATOR 600FS, SHARDA IMIDACLOPRID 5SC	0.60 mg a.i./ kernel [5]	NL	G	G	E	P, NL	P, NL	P, NL	NL	F	G, NL	NL	NL
LATITUDE [5]	3.5 oz./ hundred-weight	NL	F, NL	G	G	NL	NL	NL	NL	F, NL	G, NL	NL	NL
CONCUR [3]	1.5 oz./42 lb. seed	NL	F	G	G	NL	NL	NL	NL	F, NL	G, NL	NL	NL

1 E = highly effective, G = effective, F = inconsistent results, P = not effective, based on trials in the Southeastern U.S.; L = insect is on the label for this product; NL = insect is not on the label for this product. In this case it is best to assume that the product is ineffective against that particular pest, unless there is specific knowledge to the contrary about product efficacy in the Southeast.

La. cotton variety estimates released

BY DAN FROMME

Last fall, the U.S. Department of Agriculture released estimated amounts of cotton planted in specific varieties in Louisiana in 2017. The USDA Cotton Program Classing Office conducted informal surveys of ginners, seed dealers, extension agents and other knowledgeable sources to make the estimates shown below. §

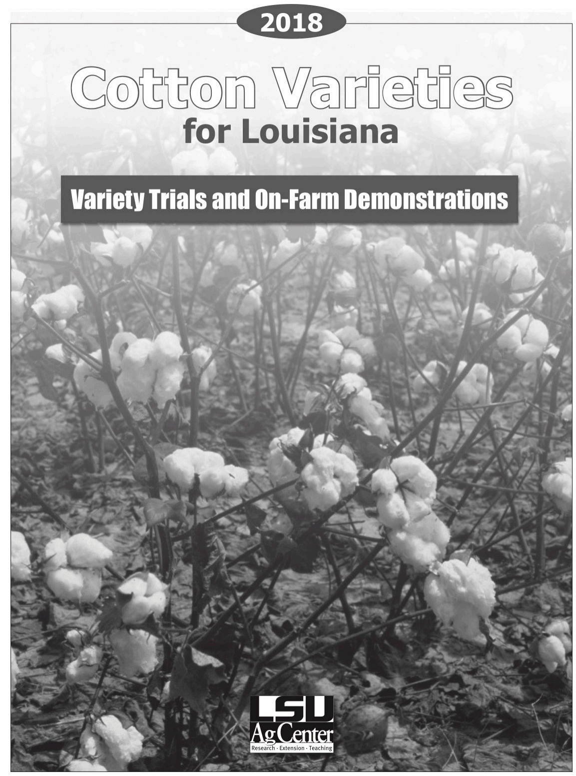
VARIETY	PERCENT
DG 3385 B2XF	0.18
DG 3526 B2XF	0.90
DG 3645 B2XF	0.32
ST 4848 GLT	0.96
ST 4946 GLB2	2.41
ST 4949 GLT	4.87
ST 5289 GLT	0.15
ST 6448 GLB2	4.92
CropLan 3787 B2RF	0.54
CropLan 3885 B2XF	0.23
DP 1133 B2RF	1.51
DP 1321 B2RF	0.16
DP 1518 B2XF	1.49
DP 1522 B2XF	6.19
DP 1549 B2XF	0.21
DP 1555 B2RF	22.90
DP 1639 B2XF	9.35
DP 1646 B2XF	13.58
DP 1725 B2XF	0.92
PHY 312 WRF	5.39
PHY 330 W3FE	0.32
PHY 333 WRF	7.69
PHY 340 W3FE	0.10
PHY 444 WRF	9.26
PHY 450 W3FE	0.27
PHY 490 W3FE	0.26
PHY 496 W3RF	0.25
PHY 499 WRF	4.48
Miscellaneous	0.19
Total	**100**

2018 cotton variety publication available

BY DAN FROMME

The LSU AgCenter's "2018 Cotton Varieties for Louisiana" publication is now available. Results on all the cotton variety trials conducted in 2017 are summarized in this publication.

Click here to access it. §



LSU AGCENTER PHOTO

Wheat needs adequate, well-timed fertilization

BY BOYD PADGETT AND STEVE HARRISON

Nitrogen (N) fertilization can be a challenging aspect of wheat production. Total N application normally ranges from 90 to 120 pounds per acre, depending on the previous crop, soil type and rainfall after applications.

Timing of N application depends on several factors. Wheat needs adequate N in the fall and early winter to establish ground cover and properly tiller. However, excessive levels of fall N can result in rank growth, which increases lodging potential as well as the probability of spring freeze damage from early heading.

If the wheat crop is following soybeans, soil residual or mineralizable N should be adequate for fall growth, and no pre-plant N is needed. However, if the wheat crop follows corn, sorghum, rice or cotton, applying 15 to 20 pounds of N per acre is typically beneficial.

If the wheat crop is planted later than the optimum date, additional N may be necessary to ensure adequate fall growth prior to winter conditions. If the wheat crop did not receive a fall application and appears to be suffering from N deficiency in January, the initial top-dress N application can be made early to promote additional tillering.

The majority of N should be applied in early spring. There is no universal rule on how early spring N should be applied. Each field should be evaluated based on tillering, stage of development, environmental conditions and crop color. A crop that has good growth and good color should not need N fertilization prior to the erect leaf sheath stage (Feekes 5), which usually is in early to mid-February.

However, the first spring fertilizer application should be applied prior to first node (Feekes 6) to ensure optimum head development, tiller retention and head size. N-related stress around jointing (Feekes 6) will result in yield loss. Any additional N applied following flag leaf typically contributes very little to crop yield.

Wheat in a field in Chase, Louisiana. LSU AGCENTER PHOTO

Splitting top-dress N into two or three applications is common in Louisiana due to the risk of N losses from heavy rainfall and our long growing season. Typically, N is first applied at or just prior to jointing, and a second application is made 14 to 28 days later. About 50 percent of the top-dress N is normally applied the first time, but this may be decreased if the first application is early and plants are not well enough developed to take up that much N.

Phosphorus (K) and micronutrients should be applied in the fall based on soil test reports. All fertilizers as well as lime should be incorporated into the soil prior to planting. Required lime should be applied before planting because it takes time for it to neutralize the acidity of most soils.

The application of sulfur is a growing concern in Louisiana, with increasing deficiencies appearing every year. Early spring sulfur (S) deficiencies are sometimes mistaken for N deficiencies, so additional S is not applied. Because sulfur is mobile, much like N, applying it solely in the fall is not adequate. Supplemental applications of S with the first spring N applications often are warranted. §

Make irrigation plans for the upcoming season

BY STACIA DAVIS

Unpredictability may be the only predictable characteristic of weather. However, management strategies for potential weather scenarios can be planned ahead of time. Minimizing risks associated with crop production in non-normal weather conditions should be a priority and can be accomplished using historic averages and reasonable variations to those averages. As Alfred Wainwright wrote, "There's no such thing as bad weather, only unsuitable clothing."

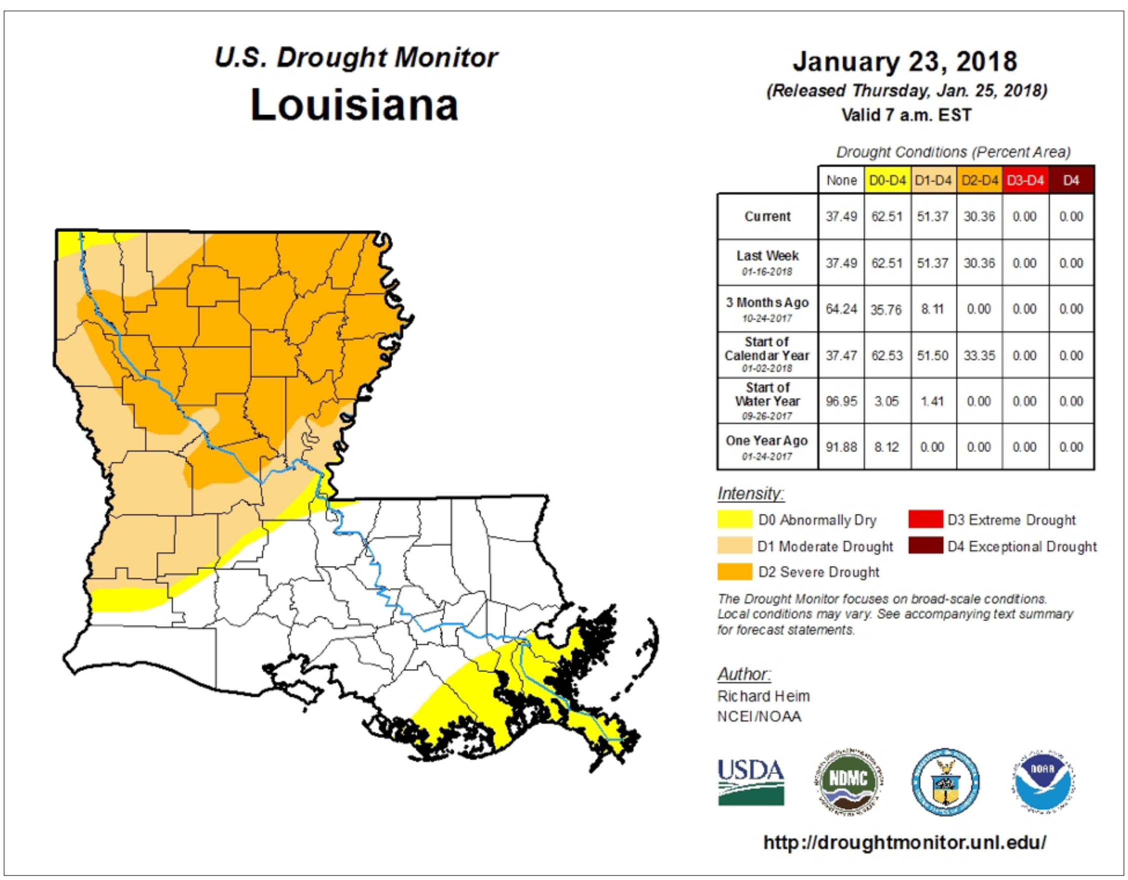
The weather pattern for most of Louisiana is rainy during the winter, spring and most of fall, with a dry spell sometime in July and August. In the past two years, there's been one major difference in this weather pattern for crop production: unprecedented rainfall in August.

There has been little rain this winter, resulting in drought conditions in more than half the state. The U.S. Drought Monitor released information at the end of January showing more than 30 percent of the state falls within the drought classification of severe or worse (**Figure 1**). Much of the severe classification falls over northeast Louisiana, which is known for intense crop production.

In Louisiana, typical winter rains replenish the water stored deep in soils. Plants depend on this water when surface water is unavailable. Thus, we must prepare for continued deficits in soil water storage as we enter the 2018 crop season.

Though winter rains are not a clear predictor of summer rains, the combination of entering the crop season with deficit soil moisture and not knowing if or when the summer rains will begin means there is a high chance for a long irrigation season this year.

A farm-level irrigation plan should be developed during the off-season so water can be applied in a timely manner to meet crop production needs.



	None	D0-D4	D1-D4	D2-D4	D3-D4	D4
Current	37.49	62.51	51.37	30.36	0.00	0.00
Last Week 01-16-2018	37.49	62.51	51.37	30.36	0.00	0.00
3 Months Ago 10-24-2017	64.24	35.76	8.11	0.00	0.00	0.00
Start of Calendar Year 01-02-2018	37.47	62.53	51.50	33.35	0.00	0.00
Start of Water Year 09-26-2017	96.95	3.05	1.41	0.00	0.00	0.00
One Year Ago 01-24-2017	91.88	8.12	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

Figure 1. The U.S. Drought Monitor map for Louisiana shows increased drought conditions across the northern half of Louisiana compared to last year.

What should you put in an irrigation management plan?

✓ Anticipated crop water needs based on crop selection and planting dates.

✓ Limitations of the irrigation delivery system. (How many acres can you irrigate at one time? How long does it take?)

✓ Management options and costs. (Should you run two pipe sets or pay for the labor to plug holes for one irrigation event? Does that change for 10 irrigation events?)

In Louisiana, the primary method of irrigation is by furrow. The efficiency of this method, which depends on many factors, ranges between 30 and 70 percent. This means 1.4 to 3.3 times the water actually needed is being applied.

Maintaining hydraulic integrity from the water source to the tailwater ditch is one of the most important things you can do. This can be accomplished by running a computerized hole selection (CHS) program. The two currently available CHS programs are PHAUCET, developed by the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Pipe Planner, developed by Delta Plastics in Little Rock, Arkansas.

These programs were developed to provide options for improving efficiency based on field-specific characteristics such as flow rates, elevations and row lengths. Practically, CHS is a great management tool for selecting appropriate hole sizes in the lay-flat pipe to maintain proper hydraulic function. Improperly sized holes can lead to pipe bursting (too much pressure) or deflating (too little pressure), and decreases overall efficiency. This software also can predict approximate times for watering each field — a key piece of information for a management plan.

Luckily, these programs are available for free, and there are many options for help and education in this area. The PHAUCET software, originally developed in Windows 95, is a downloadable program that does not require the internet. As a result, all farm information is stored on the computer locally. Pipe Planner is a modern version of PHAUCET that lives on the internet and requires account registration with Delta Plastics. Many users prefer Pipe Planner over PHAUCET because of its simplicity, point-and-click operation with map functions and more resources for help.

For more information on creating an irrigation management plan or using computerized hole selection software, feel free to contact me or your parish extension agent. Information also is available from the H2O Initiative, a regional collaborative effort to address water efficiency in the mid-South. §

Poly pipe is used to irrigate a soybean field near Ferriday, Louisiana. LSU AGCENTER PHOTO

LSU AGCENTER SPECIALISTS

SPECIALTY	CROP RESPONSIBILITIES	NAME	PHONE	EMAIL
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Grain sorghum	Agronomic	Dan Fromme	318-880-8079	DFromme@agcenter.lsu.edu
Soybeans	Agronomic	Todd Spivey	919-725-1359	TSpivey@agcenter.lsu.edu
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