

College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences

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NEWSLETTER HIGHLIGHTS

- **COTTON SEASON
IN NEW MEXICO**
- **FALL WEED
MANAGEMENT**
- **REDUCED TILLAGE
TRIAL IN COTTON**
- **2019 NM COTTON
CONFERENCE**
- **COTTON PRICES**

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COTTON SEASON IN NEW MEXICO

Cotton season in New Mexico has been going very well, with the cotton crop looking excellent in many fields. Bolls are filling rapidly and some fields already have open bolls. The lack of surface irrigation water has created water management challenges as farmers have had to rely heavily on wells thereby increasing operating costs. If favorable weather conditions continue into the fall, New Mexico is set for an above average yields this season. Please, send your comments and contributions to John Idowu (email: jidowu@nmsu.edu; phone: 575-646-2571).

FALL WEED MANAGEMENT

It's that time again! Time for growers to switch gears in their weed management practices from focusing on summer annual and perennial weeds to winter annual and cool-season weeds. One of the most effective ways to get ahead of weed germination is to prevent their introduction to your field in the first place. As cotton crop management and harvest practices are underway, take care to make sure that you are preventing the movement of weed seeds from one area to the next. Clean equipment prior to moving from one field to the next, and continue to be diligent about controlling weeds in surrounding fields, bar ditches, along fencerows, etc. Anytime a weed seed is prevented from entering into your field, it's one less weed to have to manage later, especially since that one weed is likely capable of producing thousands of offspring that can become more troublesome in future generations.

Cotton growers can also be diligent about scouting for germinating weed seeds in cotton fields. Regardless of management practices, weeds are always going to be easier to control when they are young; thus, early detection and rapid response is the key. In the case of winter annual weeds, seed will start germinating in the fields when soil temperatures get down to approx. 60-65°F. If these temperatures are paired with a rain or an irrigation event, then growers need to be on the lookout for these germinating weeds. It is good to pay attention to these seasonal weather changes, along with how specific population of weeds are building up in your field. Based on your need, you can schedule applications of preemergence herbicides, such as Prowl H2O or Treflan to help prevent successful weed germination. We can also time shallow tillage events for when the plants are young and vulnerable with diligent scouting to further improve management.

The time and cost of weed control only increases as the population is allowed to successfully germinate and spread. Cotton growers should control weeds early in the fall growing season to effectively avoid the development of troublesome weed populations! It's always better to manage a young, small population of weeds, rather than to fight a large, mature infestation which can have detrimental effects on crops.

Dr. Leslie Beck – Extension Weed Specialist (NMSU)

REDUCED TILLAGE TRIAL IN COTTON

Reducing tillage is an important strategy for building soil health and resiliency into the farming systems of New Mexico. Reduced tillage can be achieved by reducing the tillage intensity or frequency of tillage. Tillage systems that breaks up the whole soil such as moldboard plowing and disking often lead to soil erosion by wind and water. Erosion is accompanied by removal of topsoil sediments from the field. Sediments removed by erosion include clay and organic matter particles which hold water and nutrients in the soil. Therefore erosion events lead to soils that are depleted of nutrients and with lower water holding capacity. By reducing tillage, the field is better protected from soil erosion, because the soil is not broken up to produce small particles that can easily be removed by wind or water. In fact many studies have shown that reduced tillage systems can lead to higher soil organic matter, better nutrient cycling and higher moisture retention, in contrast to conventional tillage systems where the soil is plowed and disked multiple times.

A study was conducted in Las Cruces, New Mexico, to evaluate the effects of different tillage systems on growth and yield of cotton. The first tillage treatment was plow till which involved 5 tillage passes (plowed, twice disked, subsoiled and harrowed), with the cotton planted on flat. The second tillage treatment plow till + beds involved 6 tillage passes (plowed, twice disked, subsoiled, harrowed and bed shaping), with the cotton planted on beds. The third treatment was strip tillage (ST), involved only one pass for creation of strips 10 in wide as seedbed, using Orthman Manufacturing 1tRIPr strip tillage equipment, with the cotton planted within the strips. Cultivar tested was NM 13P1117 glandless cotton specifically developed for high desert Southwest.

Our first year results show that there were no significant differences in seed cotton, lint and cottonseed yields of the variety tested (Figure 1).

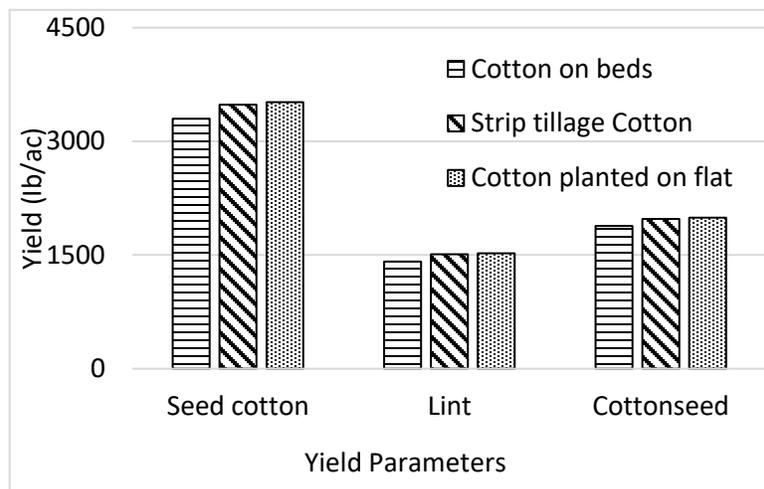


Figure 1. Seed cotton, lint and cottonseed yields under different tillage treatments

Fiber quality parameters were also not significantly different among the tillage methods. Economic analysis of the net returns after deducting land preparation costs, show that the strip tillage system was more profitable than both conventional tillage treatments (cotton on flat and cotton on beds) that were tested, due to much lower land preparation cost. This study shows that reducing tillage can be promising for cotton production in the Southwest. More years of testing will continue.

Dr. John Idowu – Extension Agronomist (NMSU)

2019 NM COTTON CONFERENCE

The 2019 New Mexico Cotton Growers Conference will be taking place on **JANUARY 23, 2019** at the **RUIDOSO CONVENTION CENTER**, Ruidoso NM. More information will be provided as the meeting date draws nearer. Registration information will be sent out with the December newsletter. Please, save the date!

COTTON PRICES (2017/2018)

	2017		2018	
	Upland Cotton "A" Index*	ELS (Pima) Spot Price*	Upland Cotton "A" Index*	ELS (Pima) Spot Price*
January	82.33	124.20	91.06	124.70
February	85.15	124.20	88.27	124.70
March	86.79	124.20	92.14	124.70
April	87.04	124.20	92.24	123.7
May	88.64	124.20	94.48	117.6
June	84.76	124.20	97.71	116.7
July	84.09	124.20		
August	79.34	124.20		
September	80.60	124.20		
October	78.60	113.30		
November	80.41	113.90		
December	85.42	122.60		
Average	83.60	122.30		

*Source: National Cotton Council of America and prices in (cents/pound of lint).

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