

2008 PEANUT, COTTON, AND TOBACCO PERFORMANCE TESTS

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The Season

Although the drought gripping Georgia that began in 2006 continued for the third straight year, the 2008 summer row crop seasonal planting progressed normally in some areas. Within other areas the dry spring caused planting progress to be much slower than normal. Above normal summer time temperatures (especially during very hot first two weeks of June) and drought conditions took their toll on the dryland crops. However, areas across the southern third of the Coastal Plain received some beneficial tropical storm rainfall. Greater amounts of irrigation were needed to produce what turned out to be a good year for Georgia producers.

Rainfall during the season was more than 13 inches below long term average at the row crop variety test location in the Piedmont region near Athens as listed below; however, hurricane Fay dropped heavy rains on the Coastal Plain region in late August. Thus, the season total in this area of the state was at or near normal.

2008 Rainfall¹

Month	Athens ²	Attapulgus ³	Midville	Plains	Tifton
----- inches -----					
March	3.02	3.90	3.82	3.18	3.17
April	2.71	4.93	3.91	3.66	3.02
May	3.05	1.76	3.65	1.82	1.83
June	0.91	5.63	0.61	2.93	2.28
July	3.32	6.10	4.37	2.76	3.31
August	3.43	22.48	6.31	11.77	12.32
September	0.13	0.61	0.60	1.61	0.16
October	4.02	3.71	2.10	3.88	6.41
November	2.89	5.74	3.78	4.08	3.88
Total	23.48	54.86	29.15	35.69	36.38
Normal (9 mo)	36.76	38.74	33.95	35.29	35.11

1. Data provided in part by Dr. G. Hoogenboom, Georgia Station, Griffin, GA.
2. Plant Sciences Farm.
3. Attapulgus Research Center is nearest location to the Bainbridge site.

There was another drop in some crop commodity acres this growing season when compared to last year. Cotton producers planted 950,000 acres, 8% less than 2007, and it was the first year since 1994 that Georgia cotton farmers last planted less than a million acres of cotton. 695,000 acres of peanuts were planted this year, an increase of

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165,000 or 31% over last year. Acres planted to tobacco this year were down 11% when compared to 2007.

Harvest was delayed late in the season due to cool wet weather. Because of adequate soil moisture, peanut producers did not have to irrigate prior to digging this fall, not so the past three years. 685,000 acres of peanuts (32% more than 2007) were picked during 2008 and per acre yield is set at 3400 lbs. This level of state peanut production (2.33 billion lbs.) is the most in 100 years since records began in 1909. It has been 14 years since Georgia cotton farmers harvested less acres than in 2008, but a surprising 843 pounds per acre lint yield produced 1.65 million bales, only a 1% reduction from 2007. Tobacco per acre yield increased 3% this year, but due to less acres harvested total production was pushed down 9% for the year.

Although producers received higher prices for their commodities this year, the steep increase in production cost reduced profit margins (related mainly to higher energy prices). It appears that production cost during 2008 for Georgia farmers will be the most expensive on record.