



*Your Experts for Life*

January 8, 2007

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### **Row Crop News Letter January 2007**

Most Farmer's Motto: I will make a better crop this year.

### **UPCOMING PRODUCTION MEETINGS FOR SOUTHWEST ALABAMA**

#### **PEANUT PRODUCTION MEETING**

Speaker: Dallas Hartzog, Auburn University Peanut Agronomist  
Topic: Peanut Varieties for 2007, Planting Dates, Peanut Fertility and Production Practices  
Date: Wednesday, January 17, 2007  
Place: Creek Family Restaurant in Atmore  
Time: 12:00 noon until 2:00 p.m.  
Dutch Treat Luncheon

#### **PEANUT PRODUCTION MEETING**

Speaker: Marshall Lamb, with the USDA Peanut Lab in Dawson, Georgia  
Topic: Peanut Outlook for 2007  
Date: Wednesday, January 24, 2007  
Place: Creek Family Restaurant in Atmore  
Time: 12:00 noon until 2:00 p.m.  
Dutch Treat Luncheon

ALABAMA A&M AND AUBURN UNIVERSITIES, AND TUSKEGEE UNIVERSITY, COUNTY GOVERNING BODIES AND USDA COOPERATING

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### **SOYBEAN PRODUCTION MEETING**

Speaker: Dr. Ed Sikora and Dr. Dennis Delaney, Auburn University Soybean Specialist

Topic: Asian Rust and Soybean Production.

Date: Monday, January 29, 2007

Place: Fish Camp Restaurant in Summerdale, Baldwin County.

Time: 12:00 noon until 2:00 p.m.

### **2007 GULF COAST COTTON EXPO**

**Location:** Atmore Lions Community Center, 501 South Pensacola Avenue, Atmore, Alabama

**Date:** Tuesday, February 6, 2007

**Time:** Registration 8:00 a.m., Program 8:30 until 2:30

**Topics:** 8:20 Welcome:

8:30 a.m. Cotton Varieties and Weed Resistance Management, Dr. Dale Monks and Dr. Mike Patterson, Auburn University Cotton Specialists.

9:00 a.m. Cotton Nematode Control, Dr. Bill Gazaway and Dr. Kathy Lawrence, Auburn University Plant Pathologists.

9:30 a.m. Cover Crops and Tillage to Supply Nitrogen, Up Yields and Cut Costs. Dr. David Wright, University of Florida Cotton Agronomist

10:00 a.m. Break and Visit with Exhibitors

10:15 a.m. Producers Tell Their Story, Shep Morris and Jerry Davis.

11:00 a.m. Cotton Insect Control, Dr. Ron Smith, Auburn University Cotton Entomologist

11:20 a.m. Precision Ag., In Time, Module Cotton Picker, Auto Steer and Cotton Yield Monitor, Hank Van Riesen

12:00 noon. Sponsored Dinner and Visit with Exhibitors.

1:00 p.m. Harvest Timing: A Hidden Issue, Mike Donahoe, Santa Rosa County Extension Director.

1:30 p.m. Marketing Cotton and Cotton Economics, Dr. Don Shurley, University of Georgia Cotton Economist.

2:30 p.m. Visit with Exhibitors and Adjourn

### **PEANUT PRODUCTION MEETING**

Date: Thursday, March 1, 2007

Place: ALFA Building in Summerdale

Time: 5:00 p.m. until 9:00 p.m.

Speakers: Auburn University Peanut Specialists

Sponsored Dinner

### **PEANUT PRODUCTION MEETING**

Date: Friday, March 2, 2007

Place: Creek Family Restaurant in Atmore

Time: 9:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m.

Speakers: Auburn University Peanut Specialists

Sponsored Dinner

## **CORN PRODUCTION TIPS**

Corn is the next crop planted in South Alabama. In 2006 there were 8,611 acres of corn in Southwest Alabama. Due to drought the average yield was around 35 bushels per acre. Fertilizer prices were high and are still high. Corn prices are up and also predicted to stay up. Dr. Erick Larson, MS Corn Specialist predicts acres in MS will go from 300,000 acres last year to 1 million acres in 2007. Corn acres in Georgia are expected to double. Corn acres in Southwest Al are expected to go up by 50 %. Corn prices are up. Corn is a good rotation and has less inputs of time and money than cotton or peanuts. The risk of drought is a real downer with corn, unless you have irrigation. Hopefully this year will bring a bumper crop with no droughts or hurricanes and decent prices. .

Weather is the biggest factor affecting your corn; however, there are a number of things that a grower can do to up his odds of making a good crop.

Selecting your corn hybrid is one of the most important decisions for you. There are some excellent varieties to choose from. Is it worth spending ten dollars more for one variety over another? If that variety yields 10 more bushels per acre than a cheaper variety, over 4 acres that would be 40 more bushels. At \$4.00 per bushel that would be \$160 minus the \$10 difference in purchasing cost which would be \$150 more profit to you by planting the higher yielding, more expensive variety. If you are planting very much corn, 100 acres or more it is also important to select several hybrids with different maturities to spread out your risks.

Fertility, of course, is a major key to making good yields. Know your soils and their yield potentials. One of the best ways to do a good job and save money is to soil test. Be sure to take a good representative sample. If you are using poultry litter, this is the place to use it. Corn needs 1.3 units of Nitrogen for every bushel of corn produced. In lower yielding environments growers typically apply 140 units of Nitrogen. Three to three and a half tons of chicken litter will usually supply this. Watch your corn, if you get plenty of rain you may still need to side-dress with some nitrogen. Corn grown on sandy soils often suffers from sulfur and zinc deficiencies whereas on clay soils it is usually fine. Remember to add these nutrients, especially when planting on deep sandy soils. Research shows the use of a starter fertilizer to pay 80 % of the time.

Another key is earliness. It is very important to book your seed corn early. If you want to get the varieties you want it is a must. Plant early. Plant as soon as the soil temperature is 50 degrees or more at two inches depth for at least four days before planting. Planting early helps you escape insect, disease and heat pressure. When planting very early plant a full season corn as they will have more strength to go through the stress of cold weather than the early season hybrids. Plant early, harvest early, sell early and take to the market early.

Planting depth is also important. One and a half inches is perfect. Planting deeper gives stand problems, and planting shallow gives stalk anchoring problems. If you plant shallow, plan to harvest early.

Planting speed is important. Going too fast can be a problem.

Rotation is another key. Not only is rotation good for peanuts and cotton, but it is also important for corn.

Irrigation is another real plus. If you are irrigating, remember to irrigate when ear size potential is determined. That is at leaf stage 12-17. Don't wait until corn is tasseling and expect to make much of a difference then. Corn only takes 25 inches of water to make its maximum yield. The problem is we get plenty of rain, but not at the right time to always benefit the corn.

Soil insecticides or seed treated with insecticides can pay off especially if planting no-till, behind pasture, using a lot of manure or planting late.

Keeping your corn weed free is a must. There are many herbicides labeled for corn. Atrazine and or Dual preplant, then Atrazine, Accent or Beacon post are some of the standards. Roundup on Roundup Ready corn is also very effective. Research has shown that the Roundup Hybrid usually out produces its parent conventional line by about two bushels per acre.

Harvest on time. Starting harvest when corn is 21 % moisture will give you a better yield because of less shattering and better quality than if you wait until it is 15 %. This added yield will usually pay over extra drying costs.

There are many other strategies to making a good corn crop, but these are just a few tips that may be helpful to you.

The University Corn Variety Testing Web Sites may be helpful to you:

Alabama: [www.alabamavarietytesting.com](http://www.alabamavarietytesting.com)

Georgia: [www.griffin.peachnet.edu/swvt](http://www.griffin.peachnet.edu/swvt)

Mississippi: [www.msucare.com/pubs/crops3.html](http://www.msucare.com/pubs/crops3.html)

## **POULTRY LITTER**

Southwest Alabama is a poultry litter deficit part of Alabama. Other parts of the state are looking for agricultural land to send litter to. What is the litter worth? The University of Georgia and Auburn University in their publications have one ton of Broiler Litter averaging 3 % Nitrogen, 3 % Phosphorus and 2 % Potassium. However, all litter is not the same. There is a broad range. Over the past year the broiler litter tested at the AU Soil Test Lab has averaged 2 % N, 3 % P and 2 % K. Therefore there would be 40 units of N, 60 P and 40 K in one ton of litter. Each lot of litter should be tested. But this is a close figure to calculate with. After calling several companies for prices on fertilizer sources everything is high and getting higher. These prices are not quotes just some average figures to work with. Ammonium Nitrate \$350 per ton, DAP \$350 and Murat of Potash \$305. Ammonium Nitrate AmN is 34 % N, DAP is 18 % N and 46 % P and

Murat of Potash is 60 % K. In Ammonium Nitrate the N costs 50 cents a pound, in DAP the N is 27 cents and the P is 27 cents per pound and in the Murat of Potash the K is 25 cents per pound. One ton of 2-3-2 broiler litter in nutrients would be worth \$20 in Nitrogen, \$16 in Phosphorus and \$10 in Potash. This would give it a \$46 value per ton nutrient value. Of high value in broiler litter are the organic material benefits. Another factor is that commercial fertilizers continually lower the soil pH while broiler litter raises the pH requiring much fewer applications of lime.

Broiler litter trucked into this area would probably cost \$40 per ton. It could be a little cheaper. It usually costs another \$5-7 an acre to get it spread. The Farm Service Agency has had a cost share program of \$7.00 a ton to help with the trucking costs. You need to check your local office.

Broiler litter would best be used by applying it to land that needed P and K as these nutrients leach more slowly when applied as litter. Corn is the crop that responds the most to litter. Cotton does very well also. With cotton on first time land after applying 2 tons the first year you will still need to sidedress with additional Nitrogen. The second year of applying litter to the land the cotton should do well with just litter and no additional N. The purpose for applying 2 tons per year is to prevent excessive P and Copper and Zinc buildup in your soils.

The price advantage of using broiler litter is marginal when having to truck it in from long distances. It is also time consuming if you are doing your own spreading. For building up your soil's organic matter and Phosphorus it may be a good way to go. I recommend you get your litter tested as the Nitrogen content of poultry litter varies widely. Also use your own fertilizer prices (not mine) as these too vary. You will then need to do a little calculating. This article was intended to be of help to you.

Publications ANR 244 the Value and Use of Poultry Manures as Fertilizer would provide you with some more in depth information.

I know of two poultry litter suppliers. They are Mitchell Coaker in Fruitdale (251-827-6738 or 601-410-0028) and Bryan Hastings in Mobile [bjett@bellsouth.net](mailto:bjett@bellsouth.net) (251-591-7807). If you are a supplier and would like to be added to my list please let me know.