



Your Experts for Life

News Letter March 2006

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A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Richard L. Petcher".

To: Row Crop Producers,

I hope that this information will be helpful to you. There is quit a large range in technical knowledge among the producers in the Southwest Alabama area. In a way this makes it difficult to write when most of you may know this information already. If that is the case, just look at it as a reminder or a list to go over before planting your crop.

SOIL TEST: ONE OF THE BEST INVESTMENTS YOU CAN MAKE

This is the first step to having a successful growing season. Every grower should be a soil scientist to some degree. Soil testing will make the difference between having a good fertility program or a great one. Never let fertilizer be your crops limiting factor. And never let over fertilizing or the wrong fertilizer application, by guessing, drain your bank account. Research has shown that most growers who do not take soil tests and follow them are spending on average \$40.00 more per acre than if they would sample their fields regularly. Across 100 acres that would be \$4000.00 savings by simply soil testing. Auburn University has one of the most accurate soil testing laboratories in the world. Their recommendations are never a get by recommendation. Their recommendations are calibrated for your crop on your soil for 120 per cent maximum yield. Adding more fertilizer will make very little to no difference in your crop yield. This basic practice of soil testing is a major key to success in farming.

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

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STARTER FERTILIZER

CORN: Research shows the use of starter fertilizer to pay 80% of the time.

COTTON: When the soil tests medium or high in Phosphorus and Potassium or both a broadcast application is just as effective as band application. There is a benefit though to faster early season growth with band application.

POULTRY LITTER

Southwest Alabama is a poultry litter deficit part of Alabama. Other parts are looking for agricultural land to send it too. What is the litter worth? The University of Georgia and Auburn University in their publications have one ton of Broiler Litter being on a percentage 3 % Nitrogen, 3 % Phosphorus and 2 % Potassium. However, all litter is not the same. There is quite a range. Over the past year the broiler litter tested at the AU Soil Test Lab has averaged being a 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 Muriate of Potash \$305. Ammonium Nitrate AmN is 34 % N, DAP is 18 % N and 46 % P and Muriate 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 Muriate 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 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 soils 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.

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

CORN VARIETIES FOR THE 2006 PLANTING SEASON FOR SOUTH ALABAMA

One of the most important decisions in producing an excellent crop of corn is your decision on which corn hybrid to plant. At many of the Agribusiness Dealers and at the Extension Office is a publication of Auburn University Corn Hybrids and their performance in 2005. This information may also be found at www.alabamavarietytesting.com. It is also very important to talk with your seed dealer or corn representative to learn all that you can about a corn hybrid before making your selections.

Here is a list of most of the corn companies and a few of the top hybrids they are recommending for this area. It is difficult to list the full information on each variety. And of course these companies have many more varieties to choose from. However, this list should be helpful to you in your search for the very best corn hybrid for your farm.

Rod Higdon with Monsanto representing Dekalb lists the top varieties as DeKalb 697 as one of the best irrigated or dry land corn. Dekalb 743 is also an excellent 124 day hybrid which is an excellent choice for silage. DeKalb 69-72RR is the RR version of DK 697, and DeKalb 67-60RR with best rust and disease package better fit on irrigated land, DK 66-80RR for excellent drought tolerance. DK 69-71 YGRR has excellent yield and plant health. DK 69-68 YGRM/RR root word gene in 69-71. And DK 66-23 YGRR is a new hybrid with a good fit in Al.

Ryan McKenzie with UAP representing Dyna-Gro lists the top varieties as Dyna-Gro 58K40RR with an excellent disease package and high yield capacity under irrigation, Dyna-Gro 58K56 RR with and excellent disease package and stress tolerance for dry land, Dyna-Gro5518 a work horse for conventional, and Dyna-Gro 58P59BtRR with great yield potential for irrigation and silage..

Rob Duffield with Pioneer lists Pioneer 33V15 (114 day) for dry land and Pioneer 33M54 (114 day) as the best all environment high yielder. Pioneer 33M54 may be planted dry land or irrigated. Its Roundup version is Pioneer 33M53 RR. Pioneer 31N27 is the number one irrigated land only. Its Roundup version is Pioneer 31N26 RR.

Ray Kirk with Garst/AgriPro lists his top hybrids as Garst 8285 for dry land with the best disease and drought tolerance, Garst 8288 high yielding irrigated corn, Garst 8270RR (parent is 8285) as the number 1 RR hybrid, Garst 8287RR (parent is 8288) as best RR for irrigation, Garst 8292YG (parent is 8288), Garst 8204RR is the number 2 RR hybrid and is for irrigated land, and Garst8230IT is the number one silage hybrid.

Mike Daughtry with Crop Land lists Crop Land 830, Crop Land 799BT irrigated high maintenance, Crop Land 691LLBt, Crop Land 827RR. They also have a full line of Roundup Ready, RRBt and Liberty Link Hybrids.

Tony Pelham with AgraTech lists AgraTech 905RR (119 day) for grain or silage and AgraTech 733RR (113), AgraTech 755RR (115), AgraTech 999RR (118) for grain and for silage only AgraTech 110RR (130).

Raymond Taylor with FFR lists FFR 866RR (119 day) and FFR 835Bt. (117day).

Hugh Haynes with Southern States lists Southern States SS842RR, SS 894RR, SS900Bt, SS849CL and SS859CL.

The Terral Varieties for this area are Terral TV2160Bt, Terral TV2140nRR and Terral TV2155Bt.

I think this is a near complete list of the companies, however, each company has many more varieties and much more information you will need on these varieties.

In 2005 Alabama Cotton growers harvested 550,000 acres with an average yield of 749 pounds per acre. South Alabama had an excellent crop. Hurricanes caused the most yield loss in this area. Across Alabama nematodes are still the number one pest doing estimated 34 million dollar damage to Alabama's cotton crop. Stink bugs are the second largest pest. They are a little worse in the Wiregrass, but are still eating our profits in Southwest Alabama also. In North Alabama spider mites have been a late season pest for years. Last season was different in that they were an early season pest also.

WEED MANAGEMENT WITH ROUNDUP READY FLEX COTTON

By: Dr. Mike Patterson, Auburn University Cotton Weed Scientist

Cotton varieties with Roundup Ready Flex gene will be available for commercial planting in 2006. Should we manage this cotton, from a weed control standpoint, differently than the current generation of Roundup Ready cotton? No, but possibly yes. This sounds like a political response, but in reality the new Flex cotton should probably be used very much like the current Roundup Ready cotton. This means we should spray weeds early before they have time to compete with our crop. However, if we are delayed due to excessive rainfall or logistical reasons, we could spray the Flex cotton throughout the season without risk of crop injury or yield loss from glyphosate fruit abortion. The use of a yellow herbicide (Prowl, trifluralin) or a preemergence herbicide after planting (Cotoran, Caparol, etc.) will still be a good policy, especially in light of resistance management. Lay by herbicide treatments will still be important as long as cotton is grown in rows 30 inches apart or wider. Flex cotton will allow us to spray up the side of the cotton stalk with a directed or layby application, and this will work as long as we don't have glyphosate resistant weeds in the field. Resistant weeds will change the landscape. One website that contains valuable information on resistant weed

management is www.weedresistancemanagement.com. Monsanto and other Ag Chemical companies are concerned about managing weed resistance. We should be also.

COTTON THE PERFECT SEEDING RATE

Cotton growers know there is a tremendous amount of money to be saved by cutting back on seeding rates. There is also some money to be made on a good crop of cotton. Having a good plant stand is essential in cotton production. Seed with associated technology and treatments have become extremely expensive. So take some time and thought to your seeding rate seriously. Seeding rate also depends on weather, soil temperature and soil moisture, seedling vigor, seed germ and the possibility of seedling disease. A final plant population of 35,000 plants per acre is about perfect here. The range can vary as cotton is fairly forgiving. But going very far either way can hurt you. There are 43,560 square feet in one acre. On a 36 inch row spacing you divide the square feet in an acre by 3. That gives you 14,520 linear or row feet you are planting. Two seed every foot gives you only 29,040 seed per acre. That is low and probably would lower your yield. Two seed every 10 inches gives you 34,848 seed per acre. That is 2.4 seed per row foot. With an 86% germination and plant stand you would have about 30,000 plants per acre. This is basically the industry standard for the low end of the planting rate. Three seeds every 15 inches also delivers 2.4 seed per row foot. Many varieties are now sold by the count of 230,000 to 250,000 seeds per bag instead of a 50 lb. bag. If you are planting on a 2.4 seed per row foot, one bag would plant 7.17 acres. In one University of Georgia tests conducted in South Georgia three years in a row the 3.1 seed per row foot was the highest end of the seeding scale and gave very little profit over the 2.8 seed per row foot. The most profitable range is from 2.4 to 2.8 seeds per row foot. At the 2.8 seeding rate one 250,000 count bag plants about 6.15 acres. A grower planting 500 acres would use 70 bags on the 2.4 seeding rate and 81 bags on the 2.8 seeding rate. Getting a good stand is critical to cotton production. You might want to use a higher seeding rate planting early or during adverse conditions and then lower your seeding rate a little later. When in doubt it is usually best to plant under circumstances conducive to good stand establishment (if possible) or use a slightly higher seeding rate.

SCOUTING WHEAT AND OATS FOR INSECTS AND DISEASES

The Hessian fly has not been a problem here since 1989. Even if you planted late University Scientists say it is still a good idea to scout for them. Aphids are another to scout for as they spread Barley Yellow Dwarf. Army worms are another insect that can do us some damage. Stink bugs do infest wheat in South Alabama but rarely cause much damage. The damage comes when they move out of wheat and go into corn or cotton. Thrips are another small insect that enjoy feeding on wheat. Wheat is not a host for Tomato Spotted Wilt Virus. However, as wheat matures and dries down these thrips carrying the virus do move to adjacent peanut crops where they may cause some damage by spreading TSWV.

Rust, powdery mildew and leaf and glume blotch are the diseases to look for. Last year was the first time in many years that we also had yellow stripe rust. Applying Quadris, Tilt, Quilt, Stratego or Headline typically ups your yields by 18-20 bushels. In a bad disease year it will be more and in a low disease year the fungicides do very little. Read the labels of these products for timing and rates. Presently there are no fungicides labeled for use on oats.

SOYBEAN PLANTING DATES AND VARIETIES

Recommended planting dates for South Alabama:

- April 1-30 plant group IV
- May 1-30 plant group V and VI
- June plant group VI and VII

Soil temperatures need to be at least 55 degrees F at 2 inches depth before beginning to plant regardless of the recommended planting date. Germination will be much slower at 55 degrees than when planting later, so use a fungicide on the seed when planting early. Soybeans flower in response to day length, so it is important to plant the correct maturity group to fit your planting date and South Alabama's day length. In April plant Group IV soybeans. In May, plant Group V and VI. In June, or latter plant Group VI and VII. The latter you plant, go to a later group. July 15 is the last recommended day for planting. However, yields start dropping around June 15th on.

Recommended Varieties from University Tests and Company Recommendations:

The Alabama Performance of Soybeans Varieties for 2005 may be found at:

www.alabamavarietytesting.com

This is the list that I have as of today February 20, 2006. Will soon have more varieties to add to this list. There are many more varieties that are available and they may be better than some of these. This is a suggested list and it to be used as a start in your own search for the very best variety for your farm.

Group IV – Pioneer 94M90R yielded 75 bushels per acre in the Coffee County Test

- FFR 4922RR
- AsGrow 4801RR
- AsGrow 4903RR
- DeltaPine 4546RR
- DeltaPine 4724RR

Group V – Pioneer 95M80RR

- Pioneer 95M30*
- FFR 5225RR
- FFR 5663RR
- AsGrow 5903RR
- AsGrow 5905RR
- AsGrow 5702RR

Delta Pine 5634RR has consistently performed well in Al. trials including Fairhope.
Delta Pine 5915RR*

Group VI – Pioneer 96M20RR
Pioneer 96M60*
Delta Pine 6568RR*
Delta Pine 6880RR*
Garst 6333RRN
Garst 6112RRN
AsGrow 67-02RR
DeKalb 62-51RR

Group VII – Pioneer 97B52RR*
Delta Pine 7220RR*
Delta Pine 77880RR
AsGrow 7601RR
DeKalb H7242RR

“A REMINDER”

SOYBEAN PRODUCTION MEETING

Date: Tuesday, March 7, 2006
Place: Gulf Coast Research and Extension Center in Fairhope
Time: 6:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m.
Speakers: Dr. Ed Sikora and Mr. Dennis Delaney.
Sponsored Dinner

*** SOYBEAN PRODUCTION MEETING ***

Date: Wednesday, March 8, 2006
Place: Jalisco Mexican Restaurant in Evergreen. It is approximately ¾ mile from I-65 on Highway 83 going toward town and is on the right.
Time: 11:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m.
Speakers: Dr. Ed Sikora and Mr. Dennis Delaney.
This will be a Dutch Treat Luncheon.

The 2006 IPM “Integrated Pest Management” handbooks for Corn, Cotton, Peanuts, Soybeans and Small Grain are now available. We will have them at each Extension Row Crop Meeting. They are also available upon request at each Extension Office and can be found on line at <http://www.aces.edu/pubs/docs/A/ANR-500B/> .

ROW CROP PLANNING BUDGETS

These budgets are an excellent planning tool. They may be found by going to the Auburn University Home Page or going to www.aces.edu , then go to Financial and Business, then to Alabama Enterprise Budgets, and then to 2006 Row Crops. From time to time, just before going to visit with their bankers, growers call requesting these budgets.

