

by
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The best way to describe the 1999 crop year is to divide it into two halves. The season got off to a good start with ample amounts of precipitation. Planting progress lagged slightly behind the 5-year average. By mid-summer, however, precipitation grew scarce over most of the state and soil moisture supplies declined. Hot, dry conditions hastened maturity of cotton and soybeans and harvest progressed ahead of the 5 year average. Nothing illustrates the split more than the exceptional corn crop. Corn growers harvested a record 103 bushels, compared with 63 bushels in 1998 and the previous record of 96 bushels in 1994. The wheat yield of 48 bushels tied the record set in 1994. These record crops were established before adverse conditions hit. Oat yield was set at 44 bushels per acre. Unfavorable conditions of the latter half of the season are reflected in the cotton yield of 549 pounds and the soybean yield of 16 bushels. Yields for the 1998 crop were 559 pounds and 22 bushels respectively. Cotton and soybean acreage in North Alabama was hardest hit, with some farmers cutting their beans for hay. Ron Weeks, Extension Entomologist at the Wiregrass Research and Extension Center, said "Summer rains in June and July provided good crop development and the potential for peanuts and cotton looked good up to that point. The lack of rainfall and extreme heat stress through August and September however, were devastating to the Wiregrass crops in general. The lack of late August and early September rains was especially hard on the peanut crop." Peanut growers managed a yield of 2,175 pounds, 105 pounds higher than the previous year's drought affected crop. Pecan growers experienced a relatively uneventful year after enduring hurricanes that affected the previous two seasons. Growers harvested 13.0 million pounds total production. This "on year" production was 8.0 million pounds more than the "off year" production of 5.0 million pounds a year earlier, and equal to the 1997 crop. Peach growers also had a good year. According to Bobby Boozer, Auburn University Area Horticulturist, "It appears from hind sight that some of the chill hours after February 15th were beneficial to the peach trees and helped set fruit on the trees. What did occur was a long extended bloom period, extremely slow leafing and new shoot development, but fruit were present and often for an extended period of time before the leaf canopy developed. As a result, many growers experienced severe sizing problems and harvest shortages or gluts during certain periods of the growing season." Dry land vegetable farmers experienced a poor production year with extreme heat and dry weather exacting a toll in the absence of irrigation.

Normal Crop Progress

Crop	Planting Begins	Planting Ends	Harvest Begins	Harvest Ends
Corn	Mid-March	Early June	Late July	Early Nov
Cotton	Early April	Mid-June	Mid-September	Mid-December
Hay, first Cutting	---	---	Early May	Mid-July
Peaches	---	---	Mid-May	Mid-July
Peanuts	Late April	Mid-June	Early September	Early November
Pecans	---	---	Early October	Mid-December
Spring Potatoes	Mid-January	Mid-March	Early May	Early July
Summer Potatoes	Early March	Early April	Early July	Late August
Sweet Potatoes (South)	Mid-March	Late June	Mid-July	Early-November
Sweet Potatoes (North)	Mid-May	Early July	Mid-September	Late October
Soybeans	Late April	Early July	Late September	Mid-December
Wheat	Early October	Late-November	Mid-May	Mid-July