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TIMELY INFORMATION

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2002 Cotton Defoliation Expenses

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Listed below are the estimated costs for the treatments used in the 2002 Alabama Defoliation Trials. Rates and materials vary a good bit. Choice of defoliation method can be confusing, so I thought that it would be a good topic for an economist (especially one that doesn't know very much about cotton defoliation) to write about. So, which defoliant is best? It depends.

I learned from a talk by Mike Patterson the other day that there are three goals in defoliation: knocking the leaves off, controlling re-growth, and opening mature bolls. He also said he has discovered that you don't need to apply a boll opener if you don't have any bolls that it would open (ain't science wonderful). However, while boll opener costs about ten dollars per acre, I did a few calculations to see how much extra cotton you would have to pick to pay for the material (you don't have to pay for the application because you're going to be spraying the other stuff anyway). If you figure that a pound of lint in the field is worth about 50 cents a pound (if the market is about loan and the seed pays for ginning) you need about 20 pounds per acre extra to pay for boll opener. If the lint in a boll near the top weighs 2 grams, at 454 grams per pound, you need to open 4500 bolls per acre. If you have a plant population somewhere around 30,000 plants or so, you need to open one boll on every 6.5 plants. That's not much.

Another big plus to boll opener is timeliness. If a \$10 application of boll opener gets you out of the field before a major weather event (like a hurricane), it's well worth it. You don't want to be dragging around all fall with 90% of the bolls open waiting for those last few bolls. I know what would happen to that cotton if it were mine. It would end up as decoration on the trees bordering the field or in the next county. Besides, you paid a lot of money for that picker and you should keep it busy. After you get your crop in, maybe you can pick some cotton for somebody else.

So I guess you can add this to your list of cotton-picking rules: "Always use a good boll opener whenever you need to." You can label this rule number three. Number one is "Always plant in a well-fertilized field that will receive adequate rainfall throughout the season". Number two is: "Never listen to pin-headed agricultural economists".

Alabama Cotton Defoliation Trials Treatments and Cost

	Defoliant	Boll Opener	Total
1- Def, 1.5 pints/acre	7.88	0.00	7.88
2- Aim, 0.016 lb ai/acre + Harvade, 6 oz/acre + COC, 1 pint	8.83	0.00	8.83
3- Ginstar, 6 oz/acre	9.38	0.00	9.38
4- Dropp 50WP, 0.125 lb/acre + COC, 1 pint/acre	8.25	0.00	8.25
5- Def, 1 pint/acre + FreeFall 50WP, 0.125 lb/acre	11.88	0.00	11.88
6- Leafless, 10 fl. ounces/acre	10.00	0.00	10.00
7- Finish, 1.33 pt/acre + Dropp 50 WP, 0.125 lb/acre	6.63	13.47	20.09
8- FreeFall 0.125 lb/acre + Cotton Quik 2 quarts/acre	6.63	12.00	18.63
9- Ginstar 4 oz/acre + Finish, 1.33 pt/acre	6.25	13.47	19.72
10- Def, 1 pt/acre + Dropp, 0.125 lb/acre + Prep, 1.33 pt/acre	11.88	9.31	21.19