



Season 2 Episode 6 – Peanut Update

June 9, 2022

Announcer:

The Alabama Crops Report Podcast, your trusted information source for Alabama agriculture.

Scott Graham:

Hey everybody. Welcome in to another episode of the Alabama Crops Report Podcast. Scott Graham and Adam Rabinowitz behind the microphone today. Adam, how's it going?

Adam Rabinowitz:

I'm doing really well, Scott. How are you doing?

Scott Graham:

Oh, pretty good. Pretty good. Taking advantage of some of the rain that we've got here going across the state as we're recording on Thursday, May 26th. A lot of rain across most of the states. So we're on Zoom today. And we've got our peanut guru, Kris Balkcom on Zooming in from Headland. Kris, how's it going?

Kris Balkcom:

It's going good today guys. How about y'all?

Scott Graham:

Pretty good. So what's going on down in the peanut world?

Kris Balkcom:

Well, things has kind of been at a standstill here recently this week, due to all the rain that we've had, which has been some much needed rain. We've been really dry. May's typically a drier month anyway, and moisture was really gotten limited across the state everywhere. And most people had kind of even stopped planting cotton or was even dusting some in. And peanut planting was, had really slowed down to just about a halt here. People needed some moisture. And so we got some much needed rain this week. It's we probably got a little more than what we needed right here recently, just to slow things down a little much. A lot of guys were going to be out for the whole week here with it raining. But it's crunch time. We're right here at the end of May and we got to hurry up and get the rest of these peanuts planted.

Scott Graham:

Yes. There's always a fine line between; dang it, we need some rain, we're far too dry to, we got too much rain now we can't get into the field.

Kris Balkcom:

It seems like as a farmer, that you can never be happy. You know, I know everybody thinks we're always wanting it to be the other way. But it seems like we certainly have flipped the switch from dry to really wet here.

Scott Graham:

And one thing that I've observed a little bit, you and I have kind of talked about this the other day some, is some herbicide injury from these pre-plants of peanuts maybe that were, that we planted. Started to get some emergence and we got this rain and you have some splash-up burn and stuff like that. If some folks are seeing that in spots and fields, is that something to be concerned about or?

Kris Balkcom:

No, it typically happens. We've got to put out these pre-emergent herbicides and, to give us some kind of defense against these Palmer amaranth Pigweed. They're atrocious and they give us a fit out there in the field. And we can't make the peanuts if we got a bunch of Pigweed out there in them anyway. So we're forced to put out these pres. And going through May, like what we've been, we just hadn't had much rain, so we hadn't got those incorporated into the ground. So then the peanuts were down in the moisture, they came up and emerged to a good stand. And then we followed up with this rain and all that pre-emergence was on top of the ground. So it splattered up there and burned, or moved it around and ponded it around in places there, had to move it in those low spots. So, but it's just a simple burn. It looks really bad on these young plants, but they will come back out of it and be fine later on.

Adam Rabinowitz:

Well, that's certainly good to hear that there's no lasting effects with that. I mean, I know I was a little concerned about the lack of rain coming through and all the dry weather and, throughout the peanut belt, not just in Alabama, but in other areas too. And kind of looking at what those planting intentions are for this year. Do you want to talk a little bit about that in terms of planting intentions for peanuts this year?

Kris Balkcom:

Yeah, Adam. That's good topic. And that's kind of changed here throughout the season. Obviously we were really looking earlier on. Alabama's been planting about 180,000 acres the last two years, and we were in a position to plant another 180,000 acres plus there this year. We had a lot of high inputs. Everything was up as far as our cost on our inputs this year.

Kris Balkcom:

And a lot of times farmers typically lean on peanuts, especially here in the traditional belt where they've been growing them a long time. Mainly because they don't require a lot of fertilizer. And that's a huge expense in these other crops with the cost of fertilizer. So they could kind of get by. Peanuts serve as a scavenger crop like that on nutrients. And they don't require any nitrogen, obviously. So that makes them a lot cheaper to produce right there. Not having to put that out on a high cost here, like where we're looking at.

Kris Balkcom:

But what's changed is, and I thought we would be that 180,000 acres and as we rocked along there, cotton market stayed in there and kept climbing and kept pushing up. And we got up to a hundred, a \$1.33 on cotton for next year in December. And that's certainly competed with some of these peanut acres. And people have pulled back some peanuts and have sent some seed back to the shellers and swapped over to cotton on some more acres. That allowed them to keep their rotations good, take a chance with the cotton, even though the inputs are higher. But they feel like the price is good enough that they can cover those increased costs there if they make the crop. So they've cut their peanut acres. So we'll be down some, but hopefully everybody, we'll have some good weather throughout the year and make a good crop. Cause it doesn't matter what you're growing this year, when you got these high input costs, you're going to have to produce a yield and produce a crop and take it to the market.

Adam Rabinowitz:

Oh, absolutely. I mean, I think producing the yield this year was something that I was looking at as being really important. Just because, the expectations from the USDA's Perspective Finding report was to see lower acres throughout the total US. And I think we've been in a good situation in terms of total production based on where yields were last year. But there's certainly a need to see those acres this year. And the competing prices though, of other crops, exactly what you talked about, even though we're seeing these fertilizer prices up. The crop prices for cotton and others have been, just skyrocketing. And certainly not where we expected to be right now, but it's a situation we've got. And I think it's a question of what happens to that yield, is going to be the next, I think, big market mover for peanuts.

Kris Balkcom:

Oh yeah, no doubt. You know, I never dreamed we would see these high prices in the corn, and in the cotton, but I never dreamed we would see as high input cost either.

Adam Rabinowitz:

That's right. And those, hitting those margins, even though it's a higher price to higher costs, it's the margins that are continuing to suffer.

Scott Graham:

About how far along are we with planning?

Kris Balkcom:

Scott, I would say we're between 60 and 70%. We would be a little further along, but we just really didn't get started planting these peanuts till the end of April this year. Just the weather temperatures just wouldn't get right. So we started there at the tail end of April and started moving through a few of those acres and getting them in. A lot of the bigger acreage producers started there then at that time, to start getting that crop in the ground.

Kris Balkcom:

And more of the other guys, smaller acreage, they kind of held back to more optimum planting time and let it warm up a little bit more. And then, like I said, we just turned too dry. Some people had to stop planting because, we just don't put peanuts in dry dirt, like some gamble with and dust in cotton. We just can't do that with the peanuts. That just doesn't turn out too well. So we kind of slowed up on the peanuts. So we've lost some time there on planting this crop and getting it in the ground.

Kris Balkcom:

But the good thing is now, when we start back here, after this week of rain, we'll have some good moisture. So, with the size equipment that we've got out there now, the number of planters, we could roll pretty quick and get them on in the ground here.

Adam Rabinowitz:

So really there's not, doesn't sound like there might be a concern at this point that we're going to get too late. I mean, push a little bit of acres back from the dry weather. Now we've got this rain here. That's going to push us back a little bit further, but are you concerned that we're going to get too late?

Kris Balkcom:

Only Adam, if we turn around there and go to get rain next week. Once we get dry enough next, we can start getting in the field first part of the week and we get to rolling. And then we hit another couple of days of rain there then. That's going to slow us up and delay us. But a weeks' time we can plant a lot of acres across the state and we'll be in good shape. If we just get a quick rain there later, hey, that'll be fine.

Scott Graham:

Do you have kind of a cutoff date in your mind when maybe it's too late to plant peanuts, particularly I guess in south Alabama, where most of our peanuts are?

Kris Balkcom:

That's a good question, Scott. Our crop insurance deadline is, for full crop insurance, is June the fifth down on the south end. Now, they get up, they get docked on their insurance coverage 1% per day. So they have a ten day grace period. So that rolls to the, about June the 15th. All right. Now, as far as some research that we've done and looking at things, and you just never know exactly what kind of weather you're going to have that year, even where we've done some of these tests under irrigation. So we've had plenty of water to produce that crop. You just don't know what kind of fall you're going to have. When's that cool, when those cooler temperatures going to roll in and the fall, and kind of slow up maturity and not allow that crop to fully mature and get the weight that it needs there and the full taste there.

Kris Balkcom:

So, but planting on out there, even though you have that crop insurance cutting that back on the percentage of your coverage up to June the 15th. We still see, even at that time, we can make two and a half tons plus, if we have the right kind of fall. And the weather then, if we have warm enough temperatures. So for a farmer out there that's got somewhere, it's not the end of the world. It's not going to be a disaster if he gets out there that late. Yeah, it's not what he wants, but chances are, he still can make a really good crop.

Scott Graham:

And of course, something to consider with something like thrips, we're probably, my guess is we're not going to see a lot of thrips injury. If we get into some of that first week, second week of June planted peanuts, they won't look stunted. But they can still spread the virus though. Right? We get into those later planting dates, and even though the peanuts are taken off, we've got a lot of thrips in the field. They're still transmitting that virus. So that's something else to consider. You're not going to, you might get out of the thrips window in terms of seed damage, but that doesn't mean you're eliminating the risk of virus by pushing planting dates, of course. Once the furrow's closed, there's nothing we can really do for Tomato spotted wilt virus. We feel like we're at risk, throw in Thimet, something like that can help reduce incidents. But that is something that to think about. Don't cut back on your thrips control, because you're still going to have the potential to get virus.

Kris Balkcom:

Yeah. You're exactly right.

Scott Graham:

What about with all this, it's not cold. I was listening to something the other day from some colleagues and they were in the Mid-south, they were calling it cold; which to me, cold's a little bit lower than seventies. But with these cooler temperatures, I'll say, and all this wet weather we're getting, are you concerned about seedling diseases at all?

Kris Balkcom:

We certainly, these conditions like this could pose some issues obviously to these coming up right now. The other thing is, you've been in that soil's been really dry and warm. And of course maybe some saw this rain coming, they went ahead and stuck them in the ground there then. They said, "Well, fixing to get some moisture, let's go ahead and stick them in right now versus being later and going in there and planting after it.

Kris Balkcom:

You're a little bit concern there too of that shock there. Cause we were really hot, we were in the 90s there then. Soil temps were really warm and then we get this rain, all of a sudden cools things down. We could see some seedling disease out there after this. But I'm not too alarmed there with it right now. A lot of people putting some fungicides in for as well, just like you're talking about with those insecticides and that'll help there with our seedling diseases as well too. And we've got some new seed treatments there too. So, you never know what you're going to get, but they're doing all the can like that to try to prevent those type things.

Adam Rabinowitz:

So what's your overall outlook on the peanut season for this year?

Kris Balkcom:

I certainly hope that we continue to get the rain there throughout the growing season. We've been wet the last couple of years. We've had good growing conditions. Probably even last year, we were a little excessive on the moisture throughout the year. We probably hurt our yield some there just because we were just too wet. But May has certainly been more to normal, or lower than average on the moisture till right here at the tail end is going to bump it up. We just really didn't get much rain at all throughout May until here this last week. So you kind of say, well, yeah we see in that little change in the weather there. We were still coming off a lot [inaudible 00:14:07] year here where we were drier and warmer here in the spring.

Kris Balkcom:

Summertime always goes uncertain. It could go either way. They just can't predict what kind of showers we have. Looking at the forecast, the estimates of hurricanes and damages of storms like that, still look to be about the average. So there'll be that to contend within the fall. So that's also going to bring some rain on. So hopefully the summertime will be the showers that we need when we need it. If we got everything done. If we can stay on schedule with our spray program, like Scott said. We put our insecticides in for, to try to manage our thrips and

reduce Tomato spotted wilt. If we can stay on schedule with our fungicides throughout the growing season, follow up with the rain that we need. Maybe we'll put up a good yield for the year.

Adam Rabinowitz:

Sounds like a nice optimistic forecast.

Scott Graham:

All right, Kris. Well, we appreciate your time today. Is there anything we missed or anything else we need to talk about?

Kris Balkcom:

Sounded pretty good to me. I think y'all covered everything.

Scott Graham:

All right. Well we appreciate your time today. Recurring guest, Kris Balkcom, a peanut specialist. Of course, if anything any of us can ever do, please don't hesitate to reach out and let us know. We're here to help in any way we can. And thank you to our listeners, folks who listen to us every week. If you have any topics or ideas, things you'd like to hear, please let us know that as well. So with that, we'll say goodbye. I hope y'all have a great week. And if we can ever do anything again, please let us know.

Adam Rabinowitz:

It's been great. Thanks a lot, Kris.

Kris Balkcom:

Thanks a lot, guys.

Announcer:

The Alabama Crops Report Podcast is a production of the Alabama Cooperative Extension System and is sponsored by Alabama AG Credit.