



Season 3 Episode 5 – Peanut Update

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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. Today we're in the virtual studios. Me and Amanda Scherer here with you. We've got Kris Balkcom, our Extension peanut man. I think he covers just about every aspect of peanut production for us here in Alabama. Amanda, Kris, how y'all doing today?

Kris Balkcom:

It is great to be here with y'all.

Amanda Scherer:

Yeah, I'm excited to get you on the podcast, Kris. You're always kind of a regular, so our listeners, you know, kind of already know you. We kind of wanted to start with, you know, what were the final numbers for the peanut crop in 2022?

Kris Balkcom:

We were a little bit disappointed with the final yield there, but all in all it wasn't that bad. We were around 3,400 pounds to the acre. Certainly could have been a lot worse when you think back on the growing season that we had, and the extreme heat, you know, we had several weeks at that 100 degree temperature and we

were really spotted rains throughout Alabama, and you know we could have really saw a lot worse yields, actually. All in all, it wasn't terrible. Not what we needed, you know, with a high input year like what we saw last year, but certainly could have been worse.

Scott Graham:

Last year was pretty crazy to me, particularly down in that wiregrass area where it seemed like, you know, phone calls always getting on spider mites and stuff across crops was like, some fields were getting really good rain patterns and really doing good, and other fields, you know, just a mile down the road never could catch a rain. It's pretty weird.

Kris Balkcom:

You know, that's the way those summer thunderstorms are, unfortunately. If you're under one, you're getting a lot of rain, and if you're not just right down the road, you're wishing you could get a little bit. You know, last year the weather, like I said, was completely different. In '21, here at the Wiregrass Substation we recorded around 33 inches just during the growing season. And last year, during the growing season we were just under 14 inches. So a huge difference there, not to mention that that was even spotted around the area. That's just what we recorded here, you know, some places were even lower than that.

Amanda Scherer:

I would say that one of the good things for producers last year with it being so dry that kept, you know, leaf spot pressure down a little bit there. But I did see, you know, a lot of the dry land peanuts really affected by that, even on the station, where they looked very sad in our dry land fields. You know, still better yields than what I anticipated, but you could definitely see the impacts there.

Also, kind of sticking on you know impacts of disease and kind of leaning into seed quality, how does seed quality look for 2023? We've been pretty lucky, you know, the last couple of years, you know, especially compared to 2020, where we saw a lot of issues with some seed quality. Kind of what are your thoughts, what have you been hearing, you know, from producers and seed companies in terms of quality?

Kris Balkcom:

You know, all in all the quality looks pretty good, surprisingly, you know, with the year that we had. Of course, obviously, we pulled our seed production fields out from irrigated areas. But you know, when you kind of have the weather, that what we face you could still be challenged there. Just like, for instance, we had, overall we experienced lower grades, especially in the beginning of harvest last year. So in turn, those lower grades would translate out into a lower turnout there when you think about selling that crop. The percentage would be a lot lower.

And so as far as that quality of that, just because it's a lower shell out doesn't mean that that's going to be bad quality, you know. We could be looking at mature peanuts inside those pods, and they could just be single nuts versus being double nuts. So it just throws off your ratio to change that percentage, you know, when you think about hull to meat ratio. You could have it just one solid, mature nut versus having two in there. So you never

know, and just that weather that we had could have caused that to abort out that other nut. So you know, if it's that, or if it's just, you know, early cold then, or just the rain just shut off, and the nuts were premature, that's obviously going to change the quality there. And then look at probably different germination for that seed as well as other potential issues. But then that's about as spotted across the map as the rain showers are. So you know, hopefully we don't have much of that in those pockets, in those areas. We seem to have probably more of the one sided nuts than anything, so that won't affect us there other than just the lower turnout.

Scott Graham:

Speaking of that, and being a little disappointed last year. As we're recording this, today's April the 4th, the USDA Prospective Planning Report just came out on March 31. They got us up a little bit from last year up to 170. Do you think that's a pretty good number?

Kris Balkcom:

I do. We're certainly going to increase, Scott, I think for the state. I really think that's probably a little bit light. I think we could probably go back up to easily a 180,000 acres there for the state.

You know, I know probably a lot of interest in corn as well as probably even more interest in soybeans> You know, you got a lot lower cost of production, probably, with the soybeans versus the peanuts and less work out there and trips across the field, and they they're certainly going to gain some interest. But I think the peanut number, probably acreage-wise, is a little bit light at 170. I know I gave the US Crop report back to the National Peanut Buying Points Association as well as the American Peanut Shellers association back in February and then in March. And I know we were forecasted then for the state around 180, and then, as far as for the US, to be about a 1.5 million acre crop. Certainly the interest is there.

And you know, in the traditional growing areas of Alabama and in our neighboring states, Georgia and Florida as well, we have a tendency to lean on peanuts during these years like this when inputs are high, because, you know, peanuts has kind of been the bread and butter on the farm as far as in these traditional growing areas, so they have a tendency to kind of rely on them and stick to that. That's what they like to grow, and that's what's, you know, kept them in the dance for so many years per se. So especially now with cotton, a cheap price, you know, economically that doesn't look near as good as it did last year. You know, last year was a high input year, but we kept the peanut acres down, and that was good, because cotton price was good and strong. You know, we were looking at dollar cotton, and that's what we needed. But now you know we're in the low eighties, and that's a lot of difference.

Amanda Scherer:

So in terms of for 2023, I know that we've had one change in terms of seed treatments that are available. Is there, you know, any thoughts you have on the new seed treatment, and what do you kind of recommend going into 2023 for producers?

Kris Balkcom:

There is one new treatment that's out there that'll be on a limited availability there from Syngenta, Trebuset. We got to look at it just a little bit last year, and we'll look at it certainly more in depth in '23, but that's going to be available on a limited supply through just a few shellers that'll be testing it and running it through their plants, and that'll get some looks at it out there on the farm, as well as more researchers like ourselves will be able to take a look at it.

Certainly, as technology progresses and research continues, we're always looking for new things down the road to help keep these producers viable and be able to economically make it better on their farms. So hopefully that'd be a good product that'd be very beneficial, so time will tell as we look at it in '23 season.

Scott Graham:

As you said, you know, we're starting to think about this things. We're April 4th, so when do you think the first peanuts are going to be stuck in the ground?

Kris Balkcom:

Oh, my, that's a good question, Scott. You know, everybody had been really early on the corn this year, you know, we've had some really warm days, and even the soil temperatures have been warm, you know. I obviously we hit some cool weather just a little while back, but those guys that jumped out their way early on some corn, you know. Traditional corn growing guys is very similar, just like our peanut guys. They're going to hold back and try to plant at a more optimum time, you know, when maybe those temperatures balance out and we won't be bouncing back and forth and hitting those cold temperatures and causing us some problems. So you know, I've seen this go and get a plant and some peanuts as early as April the 9th in the last few years, but it certainly brings on some concerns as we think about tomato spotted wilt number one has been increasing the last 2 years.

We've got so much in this crop now as far as our inputs and our labor and stuff, you know. We only want to do it one time and do it right. So I certainly hope they wait to at least the end of April before they start.

Amanda Scherer:

It all depends on, you know, when the peanuts are going to start going in, but we do know that those earlier planted peanuts are going to be more at risk for tomato spotted wilt, and you mentioned that we have seen an increase in incidents the last couple of years. So for those producers that are going to be planting early and kind of diversifying those planting dates, what do you kind of recommend for varieties to kind of minimize their risk there?

Kris Balkcom:

They need to take advantage and take a look at the risk index. You know, all of us researchers from all the neighboring states here in Georgia and Florida and Alabama, Mississippi, and we've all, you know, grouped together, as well as the Carolinas, and you know, developed this peanut Rx and we continue to look at that each year, and make adjustments and fine tune it, as y'all well know, and are very much involved in.

When we think about planting early, we obviously need to take advantage of some of those varieties that have more resistance than others. Certainly a difference between them. There's no doubt, hands down, 12Y's got the most resistance of any variety probably out there available in the current marketplace. And you know even with that, they don't need to just exclude the insecticide. You know, some producers feel like, hey, I got a good variety of this. Strong resistance, you know, I'm going to plant that first, I'm not going to put the insecticide out. You can't look at it that way. You've got to take every precaution necessary right there as you do that because we're still vulnerable. You know, we said the optimum planting time is probably mid-May, and that probably still holds true now. And so any other time when we're out there way early in April, doesn't mean we can't get by with it, but we need to take every precaution. We can take a strong variety with a lot of resistance, use a good insecticide at planting, Dichlorvos, Zephyr, and try to prevent that virus. You know, obviously twin rows, strip tilled, both of those or other advantages to depending on the virus and reducing three ups. That's certainly something to be mindful of when they're out there, because, you know, we've got a lot of producers here as we change and go through time, we've got fewer producers with more acres. So we've got a lot more larger producers now than what we used to have.

With that being said, they've got to cover a lot of acres, so they have a long spread out planting time, and they they've got to go in there and take some risks and plant some early.

Amanda Scherer:

So, Scott, I'd like to ask you, you know, kind of based on what Kris was saying about they can't forget about the insecticide, even if they have a good, you know, resistant variety. What would be your recommendations, you know, to help producers minimize their risk there with their insecticide choice, you know, and how we kind of differ from maybe Georgia in terms of what they use? Because we have seen more incidents here in Alabama than Georgia maybe in the last couple of years.

Scott Graham:

Yeah, to me, the easiest thing to do for both thrips and virus is planting day, you know. Try to, I know we can't do everything there, but try to avoid those April plantings if we can. If that's not an option, and just, you know, that planting day is not going to avoid viruses. Thrips are still going to be out there, there's still going to be transmitting it. So we know that according to everything I understand, Thimet is insecticide, that has the best ability to reduce incidents of the virus. So we talk about folks, if you're worried about virus that that's what you ought to do.

And I think, Kris, a lot of folks are running the Midicloprin. Pencils out pretty well, and it generally does good enough on thrips. It has a little to no impact on tomato spotted wilt virus, and it might could potentially, I don't know, make it worse with anti-feeding things. Maybe they're probing a little bit more and spreading it out even more. I don't know if that's true or not, but it's certainly possible. So again to me, as far as managing virus, planting date is my number one thing, and then the use of Thimet if you're concerned about it is another.

Amanda Scherer:

So, Kris, just some final thoughts on variety selection, you know, we kind of talked about if you're going in early, and you're worried about tomato spotted wilt with Georgia-12Y, but of course they're going to, you know, kind of diversify those planting dates. Are there any final thoughts you have on variety selection, you know, going past that, you know, aside from tomato spotted wilt?

Kris Balkcom:

Like we mentioned there earlier, the 12Y was the excellent choice early in the season. You know, 06G is a variety that's dominated the acreage all across Georgia and Florida and Alabama for a number of years. It's been out for a long time. Obviously, we've had that variety for 17 years, and we're going to continue to see it for a few more years. When we think about the certified seed acres there in Alabama and Georgia and Florida last year, 06G was 74% of the seed acres, so we'll continue to see it for a while longer.

And now, obviously, we mentioned, you know, just like if you're planting early, that's not going to be a variety that you want to plant early with, because of the risk with tomato spotted wilt virus. But they are more in that mid-season, and with a good insecticide and a good program, the right time going out there to plant, and especially, you know, late season. There's probably not a better variety to plant late than 06G is, and you know there's reasons why it's been around so long. You know, it's a high yielder, it's always been pretty good as far as leaf spot. Gosh, when you think about tomato spotted wilt, when we got that variety, that's when we forgot about tomato spotted wilt, because we just didn't see it there then for the longest time. So you know, 12Y only has probably 7% of the acres in 12Y seed production, followed by Georgia-16HO with about 7%.

AU17 is a new variety that's been coming on, that's been kind of a slow starter. There's only 2% of it followed by the rest of the varieties, and I said they're very minimum, but when you think about AU17, you know, it's not going to dominate and win all of the yield trials. But as far as the [indistinct 15:23] variety, it's probably the best disease package in a [indistinct 15:25] variety that's out there currently available. And if you have some disease pressure, that's when it's going to shine, and it's going to show its capability to yield, and the reason why they aren't available. So you know we've got some options, but we're just going to have to continue to pick and choose them and stick them in where we need them. And you know we're going to be planting the 6G for a little while longer it looks like.

Scott Graham:

It's been a good one for sure. So you know, if you got all the trust that you keep, keep riding it.

Kris Balkcom:

That's right.

Amanda Scherer:

So, Kris, what are your final thoughts for the upcoming 2023 peanut crop?

Kris Balkcom:

I certainly hope everybody has a good season. I know here currently, you know, people have been trying to get corn in, and here in southeast Alabama we probably had 7 inches in the last week. So we had been relatively dry early, and so lately we've been really, really wet. And you know, it seems like we always, one pattern follows another, so we'll probably dry up here soon, and we'll be looking for rain. You know, as we think about that, we think about the cover crops out there, you know, I would advise those people, hey, if you got them headed out right now the first of April, just get out there and burn them down, and let's start conserving that moisture because those cover crops can suck a tremendous amount of moisture out of the ground. And right now we've already got them headed out, and that's when we need to go in there and terminate them. So let's hurry up and get in there and terminate them so that we can go to conserving that more throughout there and have some later. If we get sparse and these rains get spotted, and we'll probably be begging for rain here later, but we need to be able to have some moisture to work with, to strip till in, so that that's number one, I'd say, let's get some burn down out. Hopefully we have a good forecast, you know, everything seems to be normal when you look at the climate forecast, rainfall, temperature, so hopefully that that's going to happen. It seems like we're cycling out of La Niña. That'll put us more to a normal pattern, hopefully. Maybe everybody'll have a good growing season and we'll have some good harvest weather and everybody'll have a really good yield this year.

Amanda Scherer:

Well, that's definitely what our stakeholders want to see, and fingers crossed for them and for us, too, for our research trials. We really appreciate you coming on the Alabama Crops Report Podcast today, Kris. It's always great to have you and hear your expertise in terms of peanuts.

Kris Balkcom:

Hey, always good to be here with y'all.

Scott Graham:

Thanks, Kris.

Amanda Scherer:

And with that, if we can ever be of any help to anybody, don't hesitate to reach out.

Announcer:

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