



## **Season 3 Episode 8 – Crop Updates from the Wiregrass**

**May 30, 2023**

Announcer:

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

Scott Graham:

Welcome into another episode of the Alabama Crop Report podcast. Scott Graham and Adam Rabinowitz in the studio today. Adam, how's it going.

Adam Rabinowitz:

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

Scott Graham:

I'm good. I'm good. We've got a recurring guest, but first time here in the studio with this, Sedrick Mack, one of our REA's out in the wiregrass. Sedrick, how's it going?

Sedrick Mack:

It's going great, man. It's a little cold this morning, but it's all right.

Scott Graham:

Yeah, we're recording this on May the first, and it was chilly this morning when we woke up. 49.

Sedrick Mack:

That's what my temp gauge told me. 49 degrees.

Adam Rabinowitz:

Yeah, but it's nice. It was a nice, quiet night last night, and we've had some rain lately, but things are looking good.

Scott Graham:

Time to get rolling with that. Sedrick, what's it looking like in the wiregrass?

Sedrick Mack:

It's looking good, man. You know, some guys are still trying to finish corn planting. You know, it's May 1st. I imagine in the past you've said and you still planting corn in May, but I think they still find as of now to continue planting is still caused on extremely hot. Now, I think the only major concern would be is towards the middle part of May is heat during pollination but you know keep planting is all I'm saying but it's looking pretty good guys do a prepping for their land from peanut production and cotton production.

Scott Graham:

Yeah we planted some thrips trials at the research farm in Hedland last week and you know, I talked to a couple of folks who are like, man, it's way too early to plant peanuts. I said, Well, we're trying to get to leaf spot wilt virus.

Sedrick Mack:

That's right.

Scott Graham:

What do you think our acreage splits are going to be like this year?

Sedrick Mack:

I don't know. Some statistician, she sent out something to me. I think Corn Acres is going to go up from what she has reported about 12% is what I'm seeing. And, you know, just talking to farmers that grow corn and you know, some that grow, that don't grow it. Just listening to them talk some more planting corn so that. 12% might be true.

Adam Rabinowitz:

Yeah. We're seeing, you know, the expected acreage throughout the U.S. or corn is going to be up 4%. But in Alabama, it's actually projected the USDA has projected it up 17% to 350,000 acres. And so you know, there is some expectation that we're going to get a higher amount than last year. But it only I mean, that goes back to about what it was two years ago.

Scott Graham:

You think Sedrick, they'll be pulling some irrigated cotton fields out and putting that in the corn, or you think it'll be dry land?

Sedrick Mack:

Dry land and irrigated. If you got irrigation, that's the way to go. You know, because we can't predict and control the weather for sure, don't I? We can predict there's not much, I guess, you know, if we don't know what this corn would do. But yes, sir, I do think a lot of it is going to be irrigated the majority of it will be.

And you will have some guys that they're going to plant some dry land for rotation or, you know, I mean, cotton, you know what cotton prices look like. You know, the inputs are dropping a little bit, but it's more of the price. I mean, just getting a return. And you hear guys with the peanuts. I mean, the long value, you know, that is it just is rough right now for a lot of them. And people just doing what it takes to survive. And I understand it.

Adam Rabinowitz:

Absolutely. I mean, if folks have locked in some of the high corn prices over the past year, that's certainly a good opportunity you know, as you said, we've seen some of the the fertilizer prices start to come down and even some gas prices come down. And so, you know, that that is very much correlated with where corn prices can be.

And so we're seeing those corn futures come down over the past year were almost \$2 a bushel, down from where it was a year ago. That's right. But the problem is we've also seen cotton prices down, too. So, you know, Scott, to your point about sort of where those acres coming from, we're going to get a little bit of that shift from potentially from cotton to corn.

But growers do need to remember, of course, the rotation. Long game.

Scott Graham:

What about peanuts, Sedrick? Looking pretty static there or?

Sedrick Mack:

I talked to one man in particular. He ain't in my region. He's over there in more areas. I guess it'd be Southwest. You crossed it state line. Everything he said is going to be peanuts. Peanuts behind peanuts. We got to he said we got technology to to handle nematodes if need be. He just going to be very proactive. He got to survive. He said his peanut fingers paid off, his equipment is paid off. He got to do what's best for him. And I understand. But to answer your question, you ask what Peanut Acres will look like. There's a lot of land being broke for what I see. So I imagine it's either going to be the same, it won't be down. If anything, it may be up. So you probably can answer that. But I think we're going to be consistent still. Maybe just like last year. I don't think they're going to flood the market with it. I just think they're going to do what they've been doing.

Scott Graham:

Yeah.

Adam Rabinowitz:

Yeah. I think we're going to be looking at a little bit up in terms of the peanut acreage this year. You know, again, thinking about those competitive prices shifting potentially away from cotton and to more peanuts, even in a with the corn prices that have come down again, potentially moving some of those acres into peanuts. Although, as you know, we talked about, there's, you know, the expectation of higher acreage on the corn side, too.

But, you know, the peanut prices have kind of held a bit stronger than some of the other commodities.

Scott Graham:

And speaking of prices said, you know, the folks I've talked to have been pretty pleased so far. What are you hearing about, you know, any concerns with pesticides shortage or anything like that? Seed shortage is everything seem to be pretty good demand.

Sedrick Mack:

Yes, sir. I think we do have a you know, demand is fine. It's just one of them things to grow a good crop. You know, we can't predict two and a half ton acres. You know, we can't control the weather. The biggest thing is being proactive. We don't know when leaf spot is going to come in. And so another thing, you just got to take your crop and just hope for the best and just be on top of things.

But I think from what I'm hearing, just talking to a few guys that have been stocking up, things are in the warehouse. If you need it, it's there. You know, prices are what they are, some cheaper here. So, you know, not by much, but it's there in the warehouse. So I haven't heard a complaint about there isn't something out there yet.

Scott Graham:

That's mostly what I've been hearing too, is that unlike the last couple of years, most of these retail distributor folks are pretty happy with where they are, right?

Sedrick Mack:

That's right. That's right.

Adam Rabinowitz:

Cedric, you mentioned a couple of times already of the weather. Can you talk a little bit about some expectation here as we're into May now, how the weather ultimately is going to affect some of the crop, maybe what we're seeing out there?

Sedrick Mack:

I'll start back with my corn because I got guys that on the ground now still trying to finish up. And it's not that they're trying to plant too many acres just when it was dry at one point and it was too cold. And what it was, I just didn't want to do it because they were afraid of frost.

So when they finally got started really good, it rained on us. And that set us down for about a week. And then once it dries out, the time to start planting again, it rains again. So it set them down again. So that's the biggest thing with a lot of them. But some guys are, you know, deeper sandy soil types, they're getting faster. But it's more of the heavy soils that are having this concern is getting to the point now where they're just about to put the corn up and move on to something else, planting cotton in the field or peanuts. But overall, weather has been fine. I mean, it is out there right now in some areas, more freedom and concern.

Adam Rabinowitz:

Expecting certainly this time of year, it's going to get hot.

Sedrick Mack:

Soon. I was going to get hot. You know, I've been here June to three years and, you know, I've been watching it pretty hard. June 2020 was May was extremely dry. 21 was extremely dry. 22 was the same. I remember last year we're doing it scout and school. Y'all were talking about this year's different it could be wet the entire May I hope you know I don't want it to wear I don't know if moisture from guys to be working you know going on my third year here for sure two consecutive years has been dry. So I don't think that's true there's nothing surprising to most of the farmers I know is probably going to be extremely dry and they're operating around that.

Scott Graham:

You know something else with that too Sedrick I'll just plug your concerns with spider mites if we do turn off hot and dry in the water, grass has been kind of a pocket this last couple of years where we were fighting mites in a lot of fields. And that goes back to what we're doing this time of the year for spraying thrips you know, we're knocking out beneficial insects if we're using, you know, things like asphalt, maybe not causing termite issue in that field, you know, that we but maybe a month later we see mites or worsened fields that were sprayed.

So that's something folks need to consider if we do get hot and dry here early season, think about beneficial insects to some degree. Now, I'm not saying let thoroughbreds eat your field off because you're scared of my dried out. I'm very much a believer and well, we'll take care of today's problem, the day we're about next week and that's really great. But those are just some things to consider with weather. Also, you know, things like three corn and alfalfa hoppers tend to be worse. And in Dry Springs there's not as many available for them out in the landscape. Should you like cotton or peanuts or soybeans, whatever it is, it's coming up. It's the most tender thing around. And that's where they flock. Just some things to think about there with weather as well.

Sedrick Mack:

I keep a view quite a bit on Twitter and just, you know, I call every blue moon to just check in on you and see how things are going. What do you think? Insect perch? I'm turning, of course, don't you know? What do you think is insect pressure bee like this year? I saw when your grad students post something and just maybe think about it, the.

Scott Graham:

One thing that we can predict about insects is that they're unpredictable.

Sedrick Mack:

You just never know.

Scott Graham:

Right? Well, you just never know. You know, it's very easy right now to go out in crimson clover and stuff like that. And collect plant bugs. I mean, it's very, very easy, but that might mean it's a big plant bug. You may not. A lot of that is going to depend on the weather. Between now and June. What that Daisy Flea band does. They're about to start moving off of these, you know, flowering cover crops that we have. And they're going to start going to flea buying. And then depending on how long it lasts out there, depends on when they migrate in so that, you know, we've got some time there for that to happen. Bugs, you know, with all last year was going to be a big year. It got so hot and dry there. And in May and June when the corn was attractive to stink bugs that we think it just basically killed them the weather killer and those immature that were developing. So they never really materialized in the cotton like we thought they would based on what we saw in in the corn earlier in the year.

Scott Graham:

But yeah, you know, it's like I say, it's the one thing we can predict is we can't predict them.

Adam Rabinowitz:

Predicting what's the end predictable. Yeah. Right. That actually, you know, kind of leads to a really good question, I guess, which is what can our growers really focus on to help deal with that uncertainty.

Sedrick Mack:

Stay proactive because kind of like what Dr. Graham just said. It's unpredictable. You know, most of them know throughout the growing season at different plant stages where the plant is as far as they know what insects are are going to be a concern. And it's a little different from weeds. You know, I can tell you I've got Palmer Amaranth, nuts sage, you know, X, Y, Z, grown is filled with insects. They just come from all over. You know, we are like that. They're kind of they're not like that. So just stay out there and just stay on top of it, I think.

Scott Graham:

I think your message here, Sedrick, is have a scout. Have somebody that walks your fields every week that knows what they're looking for, for insects, diseases, weeds, fertility, issues. Have somebody walking those fields who can help you identify a problem so you can be as reactive as possible, as timely as possible, when you react.

Adam Rabinowitz:

That's right. That's definitely good advice. Stay in aware of what's actually happening.

Scott Graham:

Yeah. Well, Cedric, let's take just a couple of seconds here. A couple of minutes and then you've been on before you've introduced yourself. But just tell the folks out there what role the here the regional agent serves farmers and you don't necessarily have to be specific to the wiregrass for yourself or you can, but just in general, kind of give a plug for that position because we know how important that is for us.

Scott Graham:

Yeah.

Sedrick Mack:

Yeah. Oh, and my position is seven is six or seven others out there as well. Our job is to be on the ground to work with these farmers the best we can and figure out what their needs are and just help them out, answer questions. You know, there's a lot of things that I don't have an answer to, but I know who to call to get an answer yeah.

Adam Rabinowitz:

No one where those resources. That's right. And then and how to get those answers and that's right. That's really critical.

Sedrick Mack:

You don't have to know everything. And the biggest thing is just knowing those resources. Like you said, we're an extension. I guess you can say we're probably the middlemen just knowing those resources.

Scott Graham:

Absolutely. Well, Sedrick, we appreciate you coming down to the main campus and coming in in the studio to record a podcast with us. As always, we appreciate our listeners and everybody who tunes in every episode to hear what's going on. The Alabama Crops Report podcast Adam. I enjoyed it today.

Adam Rabinowitz:

Enjoyed being here. Sedrick, thank you very much for coming up here.

Sedrick Mack:

Absolutely. I'll do it again. You guys just call. And when y'all want to know something, I don't mind coming back. Maybe maybe y'all this is preseason, but I guess after the things slow down. Maybe November I come back and give an update on what we really saw.

Scott Graham:

Yeah, maybe an end season update.

Sedrick Mack:

That's right. Yeah, we can do a mid season and of at the very end and see what what sounds good.

Scott Graham:

As always, if we can ever be of any help to anybody out there, please don't hesitate to reach out and let us know.

Announcer:

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