



Season 6 Episode 11—Planting Progress in the Wiregrass

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Announcer:

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

Scott Graham

Hey everybody, welcome in the Alabama Crops Report Podcast. Coming to you today from the auditorium in headland, Alabama at the Wiregrass Research Center. Just wrapped up our first Scout school of the year, here in headland. And so we're going to get a little roundtable update with the Wiregrass guys. How's everybody doing?

Sedrick Mack

I'm good.

Aaron Wells

Just wet.

Sedrick Mack

Yeah.

Kris Balkcom

It's always good to have moisture at this time of year, so we'll be ready when this humidity breaks a little bit, though. This is bad for us. Oh, fat guys out of shape.

Scott Graham

What, where we want to start. How about we got. You just heard the voice of Mr. Peanut. A little late here Kris how we looking?

Kris Balkcom

Well, we certainly going to have a later crop than what we wanted, because due to finally getting that moisture, it's been about ten days everybody's been out of the field across the south. So, we probably have 35%, 40% of the crop left to plant currently right now. So, you know, we would always like to be further down the road than where we are, but, we certainly needed that rain and moisture because we've been in a drought and, huge deficit so, that was much needed.

Simer Virk

Whats our, I was asking Aaron earlier, what's our cutoff look like?

Kris Balkcom

Well, crop insurance cutoff is June the 5th, so, but that doesn't mean that your insurance ends then it it decreases each day from after then until you're, down to a zero. So that gets you to about, I think around the 15th, middle of the month. Now, we've done some research with peanuts planted middle of the month in June. Depending on what kind of rainfall you would have and what kind of, fall we would have, temperature wise, moisture wise, we could, we've still made 5,000 pound peanuts planted the middle of June before, so there's still a good potential there. But, you know, we have to have that cut off for crop insurance at June the 5th, because it's just like when we tell them about a time to get here or show up I mean people going to be late and they're behind so if you told him it was the 15th is the deadline you know, they'd be stretched out and then it's going to be too long. You know, that's you. You know that that that's about the drop dead date is the 15th. And that's the reason why there's zero coverage after then. Okay.

Simer Virk

What's the math you did earlier?

Aaron Wells

The math we did earlier. We were talking about just from a weather standpoint. You know, typically we start to see November rainfall start picking up in November, so and temperatures cooling off in November. So we wanted to have that peanuts dug by the end of October. If you go back 140 days backwards, that puts you at what you say, you know June the 12th. Yeah. So that that falls right in line. But then that like, like you said, that's still needing a little bit of rain in the month of October to finish those peanuts out. Yeah. That's is historically our driest month of the year.

Kris Balkcom

That's right. Depending on part any storms that we get. Yeah. That's the reason why you could see a really good crop. Like we had some storms you know, we hadn't had any storms the last few years. We've been really dry falls. So, you know, you would think just like this weather we were in extreme

drought. Then finally we swung. We've been really wet for ten days. In the same way. I look at it with the storms we've been without for a while, we probably going to start getting some, you know, don't go a long period without them. You know, you know.

Scott Graham

A peanut is different from a cotton plant. You can't manage for earliness with a peanut, right? It just pretty much.

Kris Balkcom

You can. But it's going to cost you cost too much money. You just say,

Scott Graham

I've never I've never heard it. And why are you just going to promote earliness right.

Kris Balkcom

Yeah yeah yeah. It's not like a PGR you know, put on there like we did with the cotton and try to, you know, cut out that vegetative growth and make it reproductive. Yeah. We can't really do that. And we do have some PGRs for that. But they they're they're set a little different work different than what we see with the cotton.

Aaron Wells

And they're not as forgiving as cotton do when it's time to plow them up. They need to be plowed up. They can't really sit there and wait.

Scott Graham

The cotton contracts are going up a little bit. Right.

Aaron Wells

They have of, I would say, we were talking about this before we started recording. Usually, I don't know, curious what January or February folks to start asking growers, you know, what kind of seed variety wise, you know, how many tons do you think you'll need for seed and then that kind of rocks along, and that kind of gives everybody a good idea about how much they need to shell and what varieties they need to shell. We didn't really see any contracts for the most part during that time, and there's really not many contracts. There was a talk of a maybe \$415 a ton contract, early on, but I don't think that was widely offered. And then, you know, we had the cotton ran up to 85, maybe got as high as 88 cent, and somewhere in there, some of the sellers decided we need to offer a contract here. The ones I heard of were \$440 a ton. So I don't know how many people took advantage of that. I don't know if that contract still out there available. I'm not sure on that. There's been a few rumblings in the in the background about some other stuff possibly coming in, but that's all just hearsay at this point.

Kris Balkcom

Yeah. So I think, you know, predicted we plant 203,000 acres of peanuts, which was up from 195,000 acres last year. I always thought that was going to be high for the year, considering thinking about, where people have been and peanut acreage over the past three years and knowing that they, needed

to decrease and, supply peanuts out there. I thought that was a little farfetched. I think we overthought what was going to be planted there as far as the amount of seed it was around and what they were predicting. Now, obviously, when we got later and we saw the cotton price, so we already knew Peanut Acres were declining that, that also decreased probably a little bit more when it was hovering around that 87, 88 cent and took some acres away. So I think, reality sitting in that, hey, they really are going to plant less peanuts than what we thought they were going to plant. So there you see some of those contract prices coming back out there now to ensure some sales that they've got committed.

Simer Virk

Do you have any estimate on how much lower we may be?

Kris Balkcom

You know, I thought before that this is just, I guess, you know, I thought we could easily get back to 175, 180, you know, in the acres for the state.

Simer Virk

Okay.

Aaron Wells

I was going opposite boat with Kris back during the peanut production meeting time, I was thinking we're going to actually increase just a little bit just because the cotton prices were so poor at that point. But, I'm. We're in the same boat now, so.

Kris Balkcom

That's where Nash got their estimate, I guess.

Scott Graham

Yeah, they call me, yeah, I just.

Simer Virk

Know or maybe Cedric. Yeah.

Sedrick Mack

Oh, they didn't call me.

Simer Virk

So what else we got going on right now here in the Wiregrass area? We know we got to finish planting, right?

Kris Balkcom

Yeah. We've had some late fronts to come through here the last, couple days late in the day coming from the north, which is, you know, kind of odd this time of year. I seay, and, yeah, that one Sunday was pretty good. Rain, throughout the Wiregrass area. Yesterday was way more wind than rain and was predicted again this afternoon. I don't know if it's going to happen or not, but after today, the weather

looks open. You know, humidity's going lower. It's going to be a little bit cooler. Lower 80s. So that'll be nice. And, you know, that's what we need. Some sunshine, some open weather for a week or so to hurry up and get these other peanuts in. And, you know, and I think and to finish up all planning on there's probably a little bit of cotton, but for the most part it's peanuts left out.

Simer Virk

Yeah and I'm going to say as a reference today we're recording this on June 2nd so

Scott Graham

Yeah.

Simer Virk

Just activity here on.

Kris Balkcom

I think everybody's been proactive on the cotton to plant it first this time and to get it and, you know, with the talk what y'all were saying back. Scott was promoting the plant early. Prevent the jassids in case we do have them. And I think for the most part, everybody jumped there and got the cotton in first and manage that too and now they're now planting peanuts later.

Sedrick Mack

Some struggle and say, I know some guys are having issues. You know, they got to planting but couldn't get back across the field to spray. We do have some dirty fields out there, you know, it dries up a little bit. We seem to get rain right back again. And delays that.

Kris Balkcom

And a lot of times what happens. You know, when we were through that drought, you know, we got peanuts now that are, 40 days old and, it's, back then we weren't getting any rain. So you just putting out those pre-emergent and you didn't get any rain to incorporate them. And, so we're going to have some weedy fields in those situations, too. We don't have anything to activate that.

Scott Graham

What's the corn look like around.

Sedrick Mack

We're tassling, looking pretty good. Thankful for that rain that we're getting with. Does it. Sure. Helping that out.

Simer Virk

Yeah.

Aaron Wells

Just before it started raining, it was the dryland corn. You could start to see some dryland corn starting to wilt. I gone by a field over in Geneva County. It kind of like pineapples out there. But then since it

started raining, everything kind of perked back up. Irrigated corn looks pretty good. Cotton is just a mixed bag on the cotton at this point. You know, most of it has been planted. Some of it's going to have to be replanted, depending on when it was planted. And then there's some that they just, they hadn't gotten the, gotten to it yet or hadn't been able to get to it. I was talking with a guy earlier or late last week. Earlier this first part of it, I can't remember what date. Well, anyway, he said for the month of May he'd been able to actually work in the field about ten days because he sat there and counted up. Only planted how many days he planted cotton, how many days they've been trying to plant peanuts and came up to about ten days in the month of May.

Simer Virk

Is our optimal window still the same for cotton, or we can go a little bit farther than peanuts.

Aaron Wells

I would say that's going to depend on your variety, you know. You know, you got a shorter season, your mid to full maturity varieties. You probably it's kind of like what we did with the peanuts. But we used 140 days. If you use 150 days then you know that even push and push you back to today or yesterday. Yeah. And so, I don't know, it's just.

Scott Graham

Depends on September.

Aarn Wells

Yeah. Really it will, for the late planting stuff. How. Because typically usually like, I say, August is can make or break us and our crops that are planted timely on time yeah.

Scott Graham

Except for late stuff it just

Aaron Wells

It just. Yeah. It's just you just shift the calendar back another 3 or 4 weeks.

Simer Virk

What about managing the crop that's already up?

Kris Balkcom

Yeah, we got some guys are now doing, Some already been. And burning down those peanuts. Clean them up herbicide wise. And someone's getting ready that to not burn them, but go in there and just do a little bit of post, apply herbicides and put a little fungicide with it there at that 40 day mark.

Simer Virk

That gets maybe starting to get the beginning of the fungicide application. Yup.

Kris Balkcom

You know, I think as a whole really I mean, we're pretty good shape, you know, by, by getting this moisture when we did here the end of May to, it to get some good cotton stands. You know, overall, there's been a bit of a replant on peanuts as well. Aaron mentioned that on the cotton, and there's been some replant on peanuts, but, as a whole, you know, we're in pretty good shape. Everything looks pretty good. And the crop in the field from corn, cotton and peanuts, maybe the markets are a little bit suppressed. That's that's probably one thing that will weigh in on some. But, you know, it's not as much as it should be with the price of everything. What it cost.

Simer Virk

So I was asking Aaron earlier, I know in cotton, we always kind of we've been hearing and we had Wendy in on the podcast, and I heard this number a few years ago, and said, like, right now with all the inputs, it's like \$0.90 before you make money or break even stuff like that. Is there a certain number range in peanuts before, you know, to have growers thinking about like, hey, it's got to be at least above this or what for us to make any money or break even or.

Kris Balkcom

Yeah, well, I guess, yeah, it depends on where you put and what you're expecting the yield to be. You know, so before we were. I'd say that's gotten up now to, you know, about 3,500 pounds is what people are looking at there so.

Simer Virk

Aaron did the math on what do you do with 750?

Aaron Wells

Yeah, I just threw out 750 an acre and that's that. Even that is kind of a loaded number. Okay. You know, depending on your rotation and seeding rates and things like that, but and land cost, equipment cost, but I think and we were figurin 3,000 pounds to the acre roughly. Yeah.

Simer Virk

And you were saying that was still it needed to be like \$480.

Aaron Wells

Yeah. It was, it was four I think the number was 483. By the time you back out a little bit of money for drying and cleaning, that was about 483. If you've got 750 an acre in it. So that number, I mean, if you look at some of the extension budgets, it's that number is way higher than then.

Simer Virk

Yeah. So that's what I was going to say if that numbers somewhere even close and were even sitting at what you were saying, go even 440. Yeah. The prices are really down. Yeah. Right.

Kris Balkcom

Cost of living is too high right now for where commodities are. For farmers in Macon.

Scott Graham

Tell me something good.

Simer Virk

Well, weren't you looking at some cotton?

Scott Graham

Yeah, I saw pink blooms today. On June the 2nd. If you plant cotton on. March 1st year, pink one by June 2nd. If you planted on, February the 18th, you did not get a.

Aaron Wells

You do not get a bloom. Yeah. Do you have any cotton left at February the 15th. February 18th.

Scott Graham

It's there is there. Yeah. But

Sedrick Mack

Compared to the rest of it

Scott Graham

It is behind, you know, planted two weeks later, you know,

Aaron Wells

Is it even out of the cotyledon stage?

Scott Graham

Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. This is good. Okay. Not doing good. Yeah. You.

Sedrick Mack

I know we got some acres left to plant. What are y'all seeing in here? And especially you throughout the state. Well, I guess on southwest, I talked to a guy yesterday. He said they got about 150, and if it ever stop raining, we can be done. And they're pretty decent sized farmers. Yeah. So they, you know, started in April and got on it and they can get off of it.

Kris Balkcom

Yeah, yeah. I'll be there later this week. Planting a test over there in southwest Alabama. And I was over there up, you know, before the rain started, you know, ten days ago, planting. But, you know, and most of the guys, it's still like somewhere in the bigger farmers that, you know, have a wider planting window when they do get everything in, but they can also plant a lot of acres in a hurry. So, you know, 150 acres, 200 a day with some you can plant. So it's not a problem.

Simer Virk

Here with the forecast I guess we were looking at earlier. It's supposed to have a few good days now, but after Sunday, even for Headland and around here it was showing 50% or higher chances every day. I think that's going to push some.

Kris Balkcom

Well I think that'll be good really from the from the perspective. Yeah. We've had ten days of rain, but really Sunday evening when we got the 7/10 to an inch, that rain a few days before that was just really light. You know, it was really Saturday before when we got the big rain Saturday and Sunday. So by the time we go from now on to first of next week, you know, we're seven, eight days, it'll be good to get a little shower because it's not only keeping that moisture there, keeping the other stuff that's older. It has 40 grow. And it's also incorporating those pre-emergent chemicals right here on this other that's been planning because like we said earlier during that meeting, the absolute worst time to get a rain is when the peanuts are coming up and you get that moisture rain in there. Then to put those pre-emergent herbicides in there right on them crack and coming up. We don't want that. So it'll be good to get a little rain there. The first week.

Aaron Wells

We did, maybe we'll miss the rain this afternoon. I don't know. It seems it just, I have no scientific basis for this, but for our our area, it seems like about for every half inch of rain you get that's going to put everybody out of the field for one day. So and anything over about an inch and a half. Y'all may disagree or agree. I don't know anything. Usually about over an inch and a half. We typically see it run off. So if we get two inches of rain we can absorb about an inch and a half. The rest runs off. So inch and a half puts us out of the field about three days for it to dry out, or we're not making an absolute mess in the field. Yeah. You know, if you got some land that's got some play in it, you're not out there making bricks and you know you're not compact in the sand down and anything like that. So, you know, like Kris said Sunday, I think at my house we got right at three quarters of an inch. And then we got an inch last night. So if it didn't rain today at my house, somebody would be looking at, Wednesday, Thursday for I know today is Monday. I'm sorry. What is Tuesday? We're late. If it didn't rain today, Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday or Friday, you know, we you can do some field work.

Sedrick Mack

That same half inch you got Sunday in Pike County. They got two and half inches and a half. Yeah. So it's been very inconsistent.

Simer Virk

We've been very bad in central Alabama. Look I know especially around there Auburn got a good bit of rain I don't know how much total, but it's been wet haven't been able to get out in the field up at E.V. Smith and Shorter in over a week.

Kris Balkcom

Yeah yeah. Some of the growers I talked to earlier this morning there around Montgomery that they've had, 3.5in or so in the last couple days. It rained this morning, 3/10 or 4/10 up. There this morning. Yeah. So yeah, they've been really wet.

Sedrick Mack

Right. Corn crops should be alright shouldn't it. Hopefully. Yeah.

Simer Virk

All right. So what, we got a few more minutes here. What what are some of the things growers should be thinking to to kind of start the season to a good start, I guess.

Sedrick Mack

I think a good fungicide program, especially peanut. I ain't saying break the bank, but, talking like it's gonna be a wet year.

Aaron Wells

I would say the big thing. Peanuts, cotton, whatever is have footprints in your field. Make sure you're out there looking and seeing what's what's going on on the field this year. Especially in the cotton world. But, I'm kind of like kris. I think folks may have to resort to a little bit of a different herbicide program for their peanuts this year because, just the way it's been wet. You know, if Pre-Emergent didn't get applied to the field before the crop comes up, you might have to leave some things out, which, you know, may create some problems later on with pigweed and things like that. So knowing what's in the field, you know, whether it be weeds or insects or whatever disease, whatever, it's going to be really important this year.

Simer Virk

Talking about the inputs, like, I know you said fungicides, I'm kind of referring back to with all this war and other stuff going, we were talking about fertilizer price about a month ago, and they were really high and all that. Does it also have an effect or which I believe it does to some extent. But are pesticide especially fungicides and all that? Are they also higher than what growers got them last year or or are they still about the same? How are they going to manage that? Is it so I guess.

Kris Balkcom

Yeah, I think depending on certain companies and the products that come from overseas could be, you know, different.

Simer Virk

So that makes it more expensive to do that this year. Yeah.

Kris Balkcom

You know, I think, you know, as you think about coming up, to the growing season, you know, I think, you know, timely is, is important in farming, no doubt. You know, whether, Cedric mentioned fungicide

program, you know, a good fungicide pro I think, you know, we focus on a fungicide program on because, you know, we talk about cost and you don't want to break the bank and stuff, but if you go early and go, you know, you can get by with some cheaper products and stay in, in the field. And then that way, if you do run into trouble with a lot more pressure, if we're looking at a Rainier season, yeah, then we can still switch to something else and increase that. And, the problem is, is if we sit back and we don't do anything and then we start out behind, we're in trouble. You know, it's hard to recover, so I think, you know, it'd be timely to begin with. And, and, you know, don't be so cheap that we we trying to save so much that we cost ourself.

Simer Virk

That's a, that's a good message. And then I'm going to share \$0.02 from what I shared at the Scout's school today that make sure you calibrate your sprayers properly. Because one thing, and that number of somebody was telling me and I don't know, maybe Kris, I was talking to you last year or about some spray application. Like, how many acres do we spray? And it's not about it's not like planting. You only plant once, right? And you say, hey, we we sprayed 200,000 acres. It's like, hey, we sprayed a million acres because the amount of times you go over them, right? So that kind of makes me think a lot of time, like the implications of, a bad sprayer set up or a wrong nozzle or something. When you keep going back over the same fields again, again, it adds up so much. Right? Yeah. Because of the amount of times you're going 7 to 10 times with that, that there's a lot bigger implications than just making one bad application there.

Kris Balkcom

You know, that sprayer is one of the most important tools on the farm. I mean, is use the most of anything. Like I say, we use the other stuff like once. Yeah. And we use that multiple times.

Simer Virk

In peanut specially know like you are back on that sprayer every 10 to 14 days. If not you know, you know, earlier, in the same field. But Scott, what did you what's your \$0.02 from the scout school today?

Scott Graham

Get out and scout.

Simer Virk

Okay.

Scott Graham

I mean. At the end of the day, whether that's insects, diseases, weeds, stands, weird stuff. Like Aaron said, you got to be in the field every week looking or you don't know what's going on. You think you do, but you don't.

Simer Virk

Yeah. Tell me why people should pay for a scout.

Scott Graham

Why should people pay for a scout? Well hopefully. Right. You're you're timing your insecticides better instead of spraying on a schedule which may work for fungicides. Really doesn't work for for bugs. They're in some fields and not others. That might vary. Planning dated might vary on neighboring fields. You know, another crop. What that is. So. So you're timing your sprays better. Hopefully you're saving some sprays because maybe you would have made an automatic spray that there were no bugs there anyway. Right? So you're, you're you're maximizing your input. You're reducing your input on top of that. It's obviously better for the environment if we don't spray as much. Right. And so I just, you know, those things all together has a big impact there from whatever the, the fee a scout charges. I promise you, he's making you a lot more money than that.

Simer Virk

Oh, that's what I keep. Hear you saying that. Return on investment.

Scott Graham

The return on investment of a good scout is significantly more than whatever his fee is.

Simer Virk

All right. Any last thoughts?

Aaron Wells

I would say just, for folks who want to use certain herbicides this year, don't forget, there's, you know, we did get the dicamba label back for this year. There's some training that folks need to do before they stay in compliance. They need to do those trainings in the state of Alabama. They'll accept ag and industries. That said, they decided they would accept the manufacturer's training. You can do that. It takes, I don't know, maybe a hour, hour and a half or so, sit down and do that training online. It's free. And then if anybody's using paraquat in their peanuts or something like that, there's annual training that has to be done with that, and that's, that's free training also. But, we definitely want to be able to hang on to those products. I mean, I know paraquat, it's a different situation, but the dicamba, you know, is, is highly, dependent upon in cotton in our area especially. So we want to make sure we, we don't do anything to jeopardize that in the future because I think this current label is at a three year label. It's what we have right now Dicamba, I think is just three years. And they're going to kind of see we'll drop back and punt and see how it goes after this first three.

Scott Graham

All right. Well appreciate your time today after scout school. Good information and and hopefully the weather will continue to be in our favor from today on. Right.

Aaron Wells

And nobody's equipment to break down. That's right.

Scott Graham

Appreciate you all time. Appreciate our listeners. If there's any thing we need to talk about, you know, reach out to us and let us know. And of course, anything. Any of us with Alabama Extension could do to help. Please don't hesitate to reach out.

Announcer:

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