

Feature Story



A wet spring tests Arkansas growers early in the season

Growers in Arkansas often see their fair share of inclement weather during the growing season, and this year is proving to be no exception. Thanks to a couple of different weather systems, some parts of the state received more than 10 inches of rain this spring. Undoubtedly, the heavy amount of rain has resulted in some early flooding around the state, particularly in the lower-lying areas of Lawrence and Randolph counties.

Due to a warm, early start to spring, most of the fields in these areas were already planted, putting growers in a predicament as to what to do next once the flood waters began to recede.

“The season got off to one of the best starts we’ve ever had, and we were well on our way to having most of the state planted very early,” said Bob Scott, Extension Weed Specialist with the University of Arkansas. “Now, as these flood waters are coming off, we’re starting to decide whether to manage or replant.”

Dr. Scott believes the biggest impact will be on the state’s rice acres and estimates this will be the first year in a long time that rice acres fall below 1 million for the state.

“Rice acres were going to be low to begin with,” said Scott. “Now, we’ve had a lot that didn’t get planted and a lot that went under water that will be replanted as soybeans.”

In addition to rice, Dr. Scott believes there will be more soybean acres across the state in fields that would’ve been planted with corn and cotton – a result of the late planting window.

Despite these early season troubles, much of the growing season remains on the horizon. With the flood waters going down, growers in the area are getting back to work replanting and managing the crop already in the ground. However, this frequent rain presents a whole new set of challenges that growers need to be aware of.

Weed Control

In the areas in which growers planted a crop and applied a herbicide, it’s crucial they remain cognizant of what herbicide was already applied to the field before they replant. Re-crop intervals will be a factor growers must keep in mind while replanting. Additionally, growers must be careful with the herbicide they select for their second crop to minimize any risk of exceeding the maximum allowable limit for the season.

Existing Crops

Most of the fields a grower might decide to replant will have surviving plants. Dr. Scott recommends growers destroy the existing crop if they decide to replant. By doing this, growers will prevent any existing plants from becoming a weed and affecting yield of the new crop.

Lingering Effects as Growers Move Forward

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Aside from early season watch outs, the later planting date will keep growers on their toes throughout the year. Pigweed is already starting to emerge in the area, and its herbicide resistance will be an issue throughout the season.

Probably the biggest obstacle growers in the area must overcome this year is time, something that Dr. Scott says their crops don't have a lot of.

"We're going to be dealing with a later crop, everything is just delayed," said Scott. "With every day that goes by, most of our university data will say that our yield potential for that crop goes down."

Quickly adapting to Mother Nature is something every grower is used to. This season, growers in Arkansas will need to quickly rebound from the wet spring and manage their fields as quickly and effectively as they can.