GAINES COUNTY IPM NEWSLETTER

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Volume II, No. 16 October 27, 2009

General Situation

A majority of the peanut crop is harvested and cotton harvesting is progressing as fast as the weather will allow. Recent rainfall events have slowed and delayed harvesting schedules. Wheat producers are thankful for the recent rainfall.

Agronomics for Wheat for Grain

Reported by Dr. Calvin Trostle in the October 26, 2009 edition of FOCUS on South Plains Agriculture

With this week's rains many South Plains acres now have moisture to plant wheat at an optimum time for establishment and yield potential. The optimum range of planting date for wheat grain in the lower South Plains is around October 25. This target represents a typical planting date that would allow for good stand establishment before cold can diminish germination, stands, and tillering. On the other hand significantly earlier planting may not enhance yields and can in fact reduce yield or economic potential due to more water use, more insect pressure in warm temperatures, etc. Producers can achieve similar yields in most years planting after this dates, but at some point yield potential does decline.

Recent recommendations for irrigated wheat at optimum planting dates target 60 lbs of seed per acre. Research has consistently shown that little to no yield increase has resulted from seeding rates above 60 lbs per acre. If you have top end irrigation, you might bump it up a bit. Planting more than 3 to 4 weeks after your optimum planting date may require you begin increasing the seeding rate. If seeding after Thanksgiving it is advisable to increase the target seeding rate 50% to compensate for potential lack of tillering.

For dryland seeding rates 30 lbs per acre should be adequate for most conditions, however, if seed bed and soil moisture is only fair, then a producer should err on the safe side to 40 lbs per acre to ensure the stand is achieved.

There are two rules of thumb for nitrogen (N) in wheat depending on if you have soil test information available:

- No soil test: 1.2 lbs N per bushel of yield goal
- With soil test: 1.5 lbs N per bushel of yield goal, then adjust fertilizer N according to soil test results

If residual fertility is good then you may choose to delay all N till you topdress in February and early March. Otherwise 1/3 of N in the fall pre-plant or at planting will ensure that tillering, etc. is not limited.

In future newsletters we will discuss the critical timing of topdressing N for late winter applications before and up to jointing, which will affect potential seed number per spikelet and spikelet number per head. Applications after this growth stage will not have as much potential impact on yield.