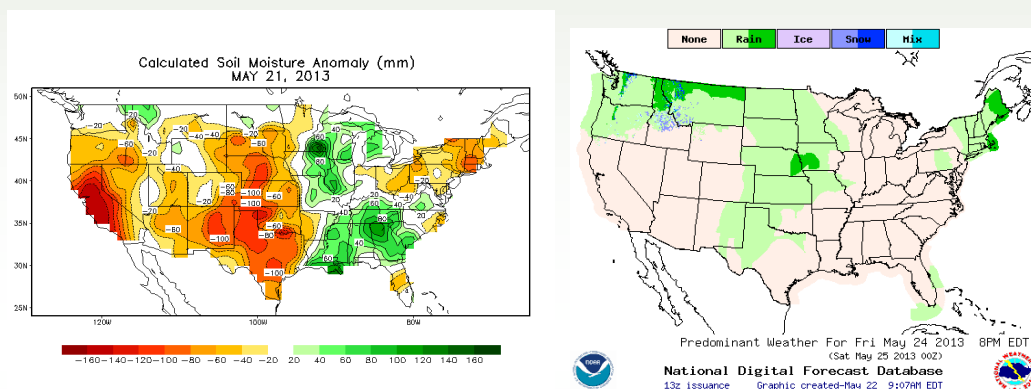


General Status

Tuesday, May 21, Hale & Swisher County received a surprise rain event. Amounts varied anywhere from a cruelly tantalizing sniff near Petersburg to just under a half inch near Tulia. It was enough to make about half the producers in the two counties grin for a few hours. Conditions remain so dry that by mid-afternoon several of the producers receiving some of the heavier amounts of rainfall were already able to get back into the fields to plant or plow.

It remains doubtful that any of the rainfall received on the 21st would be enough alone to establish a dryland field. Sub-soil and seedbed moisture remains dreadfully low without full irrigation. Multiple rain events are needed before the second week of June if the area is to have any hope of making a dryland crop. I would rate fields having received heavy pre-irrigations to only have moderate sub-soil moisture available. Several producers already report irrigation and pumping capacity dropping this year. Luckily, more rain is in the forecast this week, some of which could be severe. I hope everyone has joined me in prayers for those hit by severe weather in Oklahoma as we look to the skies here for something other than that type an event.



Despite being dry, producers are pressing on in one of their busiest times of the year. Many are jumping from plow, to planter, to spray rig, to irrigation system and back again with multiple crops needing lots of attention.

Cotton

I am estimating that half to two-thirds the area cotton has now been planted. If planted in good conditions, fields appear to be off to a good start, establishing solid stands only eight days after planting in some cases. Cold weather at the start of May delayed most producers' plantings. Despite this, I do not feel that our area's crop should be considered late yet, especially if fields get as good a jump start as many have. Historically, cotton planted in our area the last week of May that gets off to a good start has just as much yield potential as cotton planted during the first week of May. If irrigated cotton planting bleeds over into June, then there could be lateness, yield, and maturity issues. Dryland cotton established in early June rarely has planting date related yield or quality problems.

As of this date, cotton pests remain relatively quiet as the most mature fields are only at the cotyledon stage. There is some light wireworm pressure attacking seedlings. So far the problem appears to be field dependent. These subsoil pests are mostly targeting some of the earliest planted fields that have already experienced delayed emergence from cool soil temperatures. Often this is the type of problems light populations of wireworms cause. Rarely are they an issue for cotton post-emergence, but do attack seedlings before emergence. If fields experience any delay in emergence,



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wireworms are given an opportunity to either significantly reduce stands, or even finish the field off in more serious cases. Damage is often hard to evaluate as both pest and seedling remain below the soil surface. I encourage producers and consultants to evaluate seedling development and wireworm damage starting 5 days post planting and continuing until stand establishment. If damage appears severe enough, the best option is likely a replant with some added preventative measures taken. Most of the labeled insecticide seed treatments and hopper box insecticide treatments for preventative thrips control have proven some level of protection from wireworms also with the only exception being the older Acephate type seed treatments.

It remains a little early to determine thrips pressure. Thrips remain in abundance in our area wheat fields that are enduring for grain production. We expect these populations to move into nearby cotton as the wheat begins to dry down. Late this week we need to begin scouting emerged cotton fields for thrips. The economic threshold remains at one thrips per leaf stage until about the fifth leaf stage. Fields treated with insecticide seed treatments should be scouted as well. We expect these fields to exhibit less thrips damage by offering thrips control and severely lessening thrips reproduction until at least the 2nd leaf stage. But treatment does not guarantee the field from overwhelming infestations or accumulating thrips damage over time .

Corn

Area corn is up and mostly doing well. The fields I scouted this week ranged from V2 – V6 stage. Some of these fields are already bumping up against the maximum stage of several of the good residual corn herbicides application windows. Even though producer’s time is already short, I do not recommend missing an opportunity to get some fresh MOA on these fields, especially with glyphosate resistant weeds proven to be in the area.

Some of the earlier planted corn seems very slow in developing due to an underdeveloped root system that was likely caused by cold temperatures early in its development and a dry environment. At this time we should be keeping an eye open for the occasional early season pests such as cutworms, rootworms, and armyworms. Variety and type depending, Bt should offer some level of protection for all of these pests at these stages. In other corn producing regions corn rootworms have proven resistance to the traits designed to control them. If there are any area fields where corn was planted behind corn, we will need to watch these fields very closely for rootworms regardless of type of corn planted. We are also watching for early infestations of spider mites. I have not seen any notable populations of any of these pests in corn so far this year.

Sorghum

Early planted sorghum is up and doing well also. The vast majority of sorghum will not be planted at least until after cotton establishment. Early sorghum ranged from V1 – V3 and should now be determining their head size and subsequent yield potential for the year. If any extra water inputs can be given to sorghum at this stage, now is the time to apply it. The sorghum pests to watch for at this time are identical to corn without the luxury of Bt. I have not seen any notable pest issue in sorghum yet either.

Please call or come by if I can help,

Blayne