

August's USDA Crop Acreage Report Confirms local planting trends for 2018

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Farm Service Agency policy requires that producers participating in several programs submit an annual report regarding all cropland use on their farms. These programs include Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC). Reporting also applies to those who receive marketing assistance loans or loan deficiency payments. Failure to file an accurate and timely acreage report for all crops and land uses can result in loss of program benefits. Producers are required to self report all cropland on each farm to FSA annually. FSA uses these data to determine payment eligibility (land must be in an eligible agricultural use to qualify for payments) and to calculate losses for various disaster programs. Data are reported in the following categories: planted; prevented planted; and failed. In addition, the National Agricultural Statistics Service uses FSA planted acreage data to complement their survey data.

USDA Farm Services crop acreage data for the 2018 crop year was first posted on August 10, 2018. Updates will be released on the following dates: Sept 12th, Oct. 11th, Nov 8th, and again in January. USDA-FSA posts these acreage reports at: <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/news-room/efoia/electronic-reading-room/frequently-requested-information/crop-acreage-data/index>

Every year I get asked just how many acres of each crop was planted in Wharton County. Each year we have an idea from surveys and other sources, but to know the exact number I have to wait for USDA to release their crop acreage data beginning in August. For example, we knew cotton was going to be up in 2017, and by seed orders we knew to expect an increase in total cotton acres in 2018. The Prospective Planting Report released on March 29, 2018 indicated that nationwide cotton acreage in 2018 would be up 7% (National Cotton Council predicted up 3.7%); corn acreage down 2%; and soybean acreage down 1%. So let's take a look at the local planted acreage numbers from the August 10th crop acreage report for 2018 and see how Wharton County stacks up to the national prospects at the beginning of the year. The numbers are interesting!

For 2018 Wharton County reports 89,801 acres of cotton, which is up 13% from 2017's 79,271 acres; 69,174 acre of corn, which is down 7% from 2017's 74,688 planted acres; 19,767 acres of grain sorghum, which is down 3% from 2017's 20,444 planted acres; 16,532 acres of soybeans is down 13% from 2017's 19,175 acres; and rice in 2018 is reported at 37,187.9 acres in Wharton County, up 3% from 2017's 35,975 acres. However, the Texas Rice Crop Survey (<https://beaumont.tamu.edu/CropSurvey/CropSurveyReport.aspx>) currently reports that 2018's rice acreage in Wharton County is 38,602, up 7.6% from 2017's 35,892 acres of rice. USDA's 2018 crop acreage report also shows an additional 3,871 acres of rice intended for seed this year. Maybe we see this number change as USDA updates their acreage report in the coming months?

Matagorda County cotton acres shows to be up 37% over 2017 acreage; corn acres down 37% from 2017. Jackson county cotton acres shows to be up 63% over 2017 acreage; corn acres down 24%. I decide to take a look at how much more cotton we have in 2018 in the three county area of Wharton, Matagorda, and Jackson Counties combined. The answer is.....54,202 more acres of cotton in 2018 than in 2017! And as it relates to corn acres, we have 36,262 fewer acres of corn in this three county area than we did in 2017.

There could be many reasons why we have seen such an increase in cotton acres in our area, but the short of it is that crop producers simply sought more profit potential from cotton this year than from producing corn. These numbers simply verify our local planting trends for 2018 and that our local acres vary significantly from the

national trends. Cotton prices are expected to remain strong in 2019. Does this mean that we'll see more cotton acres in 2019? Economics will certainly weigh heavy next year in cropping decisions to be made, yet crop rotation is still a vital part of the full, sustainable agronomic picture – providing reduced disease pressure, fewer weeds, less insect damage, and improved nutrient levels.

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