

## Crops Review 2003

Frequent spring rains brought much needed soil moisture but delayed land preparation and spring planting. As the wet weather continued into the early summer, growers were looking for a few dry days in order to complete planting, catch up on weed and insect control and harvest hay. With an abundance of soil moisture throughout the state, row crops were in mostly fair to good condition on June 1. The rains slackened off in the late summer and early fall allowing for favorable harvest conditions. As a result, yields were up for all of Alabama's major field crops with **corn** and **soybeans** setting new records. By August 1, 87 percent of the **corn** crop was rated in good to excellent condition and yield was initially forecast at 104 bushels per acre. Prospects increased through harvest with a final record yield of 122 bushels per acre. This yield was 15 bushels per acre higher than the previous high of 107 bushels set in 2001 and 40 bushels above the ten-year average. Rains prevented **cotton** seeding in some fields and only 525,000 acres were planted, 11 percent below 2002 planted acres. By August 1, bolls were setting on 85 percent of the cotton crop and 23 percent of the crop had open bolls by September. Harvest was completed on schedule with an average yield of 772 pounds per acre, 265 pounds per acre more than 2002 and only 23 pounds per acre less than the 795 pound record of 1985. By mid July nearly 100 percent of the 170,000 acres of **soybeans** had been planted. Harvest started the beginning of September and was three-fourths complete by the middle of November. The year-end yield estimate was a record 36 bushels per acre, one bushel above the previous record set in 2001 and 12 bushels more than previous year's yield of 24 bushels per acre. **Peanut** growers planted 190,000 acres from the end of April through the beginning of June. By August 1, 96 percent of peanuts were pegging and condition was 88 percent good to excellent. Conditions dropped some at the end of August and ranged from 65 percent to 73 percent good to excellent throughout the harvest season. Harvest was completed by the middle of November. Reported yield was 2,750 pounds per acre, 700 pounds per acre above the 2002 yield and 633 pounds per acre more than the ten year average. Only 60 percent of the **hay** had been harvested by the middle of June compared with five year average of 89 percent. The first cutting was not completed until the end of July. Generally, hay quality was down due to delayed harvest and insufficient drying time caused by the wet weather. An estimated 780,000 acres of hay were harvested. Yield, at 2.6 tons per acre, was up 0.4 ton per acre from the 2002 yield and the ten year average yield. Excessive moisture caused much of the **Irish Potato** crop to rot and go unharvested. Only 2,100 acres were harvested of the 3,500 acres planted. Yield was 185 cwt. per acre, same as in 2002. Of the 2,800 acres of **sweet potatoes** planted, 2,600 acres were harvested. The average yield on those harvested acres was 190 cwt. per acre, equal to the previous record yield reached in 1994.

Pecan production for 2003 was 8.0 million utilized pounds, 3.0 million above last year. A late March freeze and late season rains had many pecan growers report a poor quality crop. Rains prevented them from spraying. Many comments included scab infestation, their trees were diseased, the pecans just dried up, and their pecans turned black and just fell off the trees. Few producers were able to estimate the amount of unharvested pecans. Bad weather was the cause of a decrease in 2003 pecan production potential.

Peach production for 2003 was 7.7 million utilized pounds compared to 20.3 million pounds above last year. Aside from the freeze and a couple of hail storms peach conditions were good this year. Fruit size was good and quality was good for those peaches that were produced. The peach quality suffered some in transit because of high moisture content.

### Normal Crop Progress

Crop	Planting Begins	Planting Ends	Harvest Begins	Harvest Ends
Corn	Mid-March	Early June	Late July	Early Nov
Cotton	Early April	Mid-June	Mid-September	Mid-December
Hay, first Cutting	---	---	Early May	Mid-July
Peaches	---	---	Mid-May	Mid-July
Peanuts	Late April	Mid-June	Early September	Early November
Pecans	---	---	Early October	Mid-December
Spring Potatoes	Mid-January	Mid-March	Early May	Early July
Summer Potatoes	Early March	Early April	Early July	Late August
Sweet Potatoes (South)	Mid-March	Late June	Mid-July	Early-November
Sweet Potatoes (North)	Mid-May	Early July	Mid-September	Late October
Soybeans	Late April	Early July	Late September	Mid-December
Wheat	Early October	Late-November	Mid-May	Mid-July