



Louisiana Agricultural Statistics Service

5825 Florida Blvd.
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70806
Phone: (225) 922-1362

In Cooperation With:

Louisiana Department of
Agriculture & Forestry

Louisiana State University
Agriculture Center

Dear Friends in Agriculture:

At Louisiana Agricultural Statistics Service (LASS) we were pleased to have good news last year. After so many years of bad weather and worse prices, the year 2003 was a bright spot on Louisiana's landscape. Five commodities set records for yield in 2003. The final average cotton yield was 967 pounds per acre, shattering the previous record, 828 pounds per acre, by over a quarter of a bale. Soybeans set a new yield record with 34 bushels per acre. Sweet potatoes set a record with 175 cwt per acre. Rice ended the 2003 season with a final average yield of 5,870 pounds (36.23 barrels), and hay closed the season with a final average yield of 2.9 tons per acre.

Our mission is to *serve Louisiana, its agriculture and its rural communities by providing meaningful, accurate and objective statistical information and services.* Through our regular estimating program and the work we do by special request, we do our best to provide a critical service to Louisiana Agriculture. We were called upon several times in the past year to provide special data to help you, the Louisiana farmer, receive disaster payments as authorized by the federal government. We provided sugar statistics to the LSU AgCenter and the Farm Service Agency to aid in the calculation of loss payments. We provided special tabulations of sweet potato price information to the Farm Service Agency, Louisiana Sweet Potato Commission and the Louisiana Sweet Potato Growers Association in response to concerns from the industry that loss payment calculations were using incorrect prices.

Good information provides the strongest foundation for good decisions. *Whatever the immediate source of the data you use in decision-making, chances are we were the original source of those data.* Our staff works hard on behalf of Louisiana agriculture, but we are always aware that the quality of our statistics depends upon the data you provide. The support and cooperation of Louisiana's farmers, ranchers and agribusiness people are critical to our success. You depend upon the estimates and forecasts we provide, and we depend upon you to provide us with the data we need to make those estimates and forecasts. It's in every farmer's best interest to make sure our data are as accurate as they can possibly be.

You, the Louisiana farmer, rancher or agribusiness person are the main source of the information we use to provide the statistics upon which Louisiana agriculture depends. We thank you once again for your contribution to Louisiana agriculture and to the statistics we provide as a service to Louisiana agriculture. Through the cooperative agreements and the vital partnership we have with the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry, Louisiana State University and the LSU AgCenter, we are proud to provide you with this year's edition of Louisiana Agricultural Statistics.

Our reports and estimates are available at www.nass.usda.gov/la. E-mail subscriptions are available for many of our reports; instructions for subscribing are available via the *Publications* link on our website. Please contact us anytime for statistics, information, questions or comments.

Louisiana Agriculture needs and deserves the best, most accurate statistical information we can provide. We need your ongoing help and support to ensure that the information is available.

Louisiana counts on Agriculture.

Sincerely,

Dave Frank
Director