



Arkansas Rice Update

Dr. Jarrod Hardke & Scott Stiles

March 29, 2019 No. 2019-06

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The Dust is Flying

“Listen! Do you smell that?” That’s the smell of freshly turned soil. Finally a decent run throughout much of the state for getting fields turned around and ready to plant.

Most still don’t have any seed in the ground, but overall statewide progress is probably over 5% with certain areas at 10% or greater. Some growers have half their rice planted already.

It can’t be stressed enough – don’t plant so much rice in a week that will take a month to harvest. That may not be much of an issue soon, however, as the long-term forecast points toward a rainy window returning once again.

Hopefully this weekend’s rainfall totals are minimal so we can keep moving, or maybe that far off rain will disappear. Read quickly and get back to it!

Figure 1. 14-d forecast.

DAY		DESCRIPTION	HIGH / LOW	PRECIP	WIND
TODAY		Cloudy	70/60'	↙0%	SSW 18 mph
MAR 29					
SAT		PM Thunderstorms	69/37'	↙90%	WSW 19 mph
MAR 30					
SUN		Partly Cloudy	54/34'	↙0%	NNE 17 mph
MAR 31					
MON		Cloudy	54/39'	↙10%	NE 10 mph
APR 1					
TUE		Sunny	64/43'	↙0%	NW 7 mph
APR 2					
WED		Partly Cloudy	70/54'	↙10%	S 12 mph
APR 3					
THU		Showers	73/56'	↙40%	S 14 mph
APR 4					
FRI		Showers	73/53'	↙40%	WSW 10 mph
APR 5					
SAT		PM Showers	72/55'	↙40%	ENE 11 mph
APR 6					
SUN		Scattered Thunderstorms	75/57'	↙40%	SE 11 mph
APR 7					
MON		Scattered Thunderstorms	76/58'	↙50%	SSW 12 mph
APR 8					
TUE		Scattered Thunderstorms	75/54'	↙50%	WSW 12 mph
APR 9					
WED		AM Showers	74/55'	↙40%	SSW 10 mph
APR 10					
THU		Scattered Thunderstorms	76/58'	↙40%	S 12 mph
APR 11					
FRI		Scattered Thunderstorms	77/59'	↙40%	S 12 mph
APR 12					

Figure 2. The only good snake in a rice field.



Cutting Fertility to Save on Input Costs

If you eat less, you’ll eventually lose weight. The same is true for rice plants and fertility (their food). We all want to make more crop while spending less money, but we need to spend less wisely.

First, I’m still surprised at the number of growers who call that don’t conduct standard soil testing on their fields. It’s difficult (impossible?) to know if you’re doing the right thing if you don’t know where you stand. Soil test, even if it means the fertilizer will have to go out by air or ground after the rice is planted.

Contrary to the belief of many, there is not much soil level “build” in our current fertilizer recommendations. Soils falling in the Very Low or Low soil test categories should be fertilized as recommended. Period.

For soils falling around the Medium category, some slight reductions from the recommendations may be possible without any negative impact. This means for phosphorus (P) a reduction of no more than 10% or for potassium (K) a reduction of no more than 20%. Keep in mind these reductions may put you in the “pay for it now versus pay for it later” situation.

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Environmental conditions will always be the unknown variable affecting how much of these nutrients are lost or made unavailable, so there is still risk with these reductions.

Zinc (Zn) fertility is a little different animal. Generally speaking there is no substitute for 10 lbs of Zn applied as zinc sulfate. It's not cheap, but it's not really any more expensive than other Zn products, which provide much less Zn and don't build the soil at all. In addition, distribution is key because Zn doesn't move from where it lands. Running 5 lbs of Zn may be adequate in many situations but is difficult to blend and get the desired field distribution.

So, stick to the soil test recommendations when fertility levels are in the Very Low to Low categories and only consider deviating slightly at higher category levels. Be mindful that areas in the field may have lower levels and deficiencies can still show up as a result. At the end of the day, fields with higher fertility levels will readily benefit from a maintenance rate of 0-30-60 or 0-45-60 (N-P-K). A rice plant is happiest with a full belly, feed it!

Seeding Rate Studies

The results of seeding rate studies from the past few years, including seeding rate by planting date, can be found here: <https://www.uaex.edu/farm-ranch/crops-commercial-horticulture/rice/2016-2018%20Rice%20Seeding%20Rate%20Studies.pdf>.

Keep in mind that all seed in these trials received insecticide and fungicide seed treatments. The general take-home message is that 30 seed/ft² is needed for varieties to maximize yield and may need to be adjusted upward based on conditions at planting.

2019 Rice Acres

USDA issued its *Prospective Plantings* report on Friday (March 29). The survey for the report was taken during the first two weeks of March. New crop rice futures have moved higher since then. New crop soybean futures have traded lower since early March on ideas some corn acres may be switching to soybeans.

Ahead of today's report, the average of private estimates for total U.S. rice acreage was 2,801 million, down from 2.946 million in 2018. The range of guesses was from 2.58 to 3.0 million acres.

	All Cotton	Sorghum	Barley	Oats	Rice
Trade average	14.498	5.777	2.561	2.747	2.801
Trade Range	14.1 – 15.4	5.4 – 6.5	2.5 – 2.656	2.56 – 3.00	2.58 – 3.00
USDA 2018 Final	14.099	5.690	2.543	2.746	2.946

Data sources: USDA, Reuters @kannbx

Results of NASS' survey were very close to the average pre-report guess at 2.87 million – a decline of 76,000 acres from last year. Louisiana and Arkansas are both expected to decrease rice plantings by 40,000 acres.

	2018	2019	Change
	<i>million acres</i>		
Arkansas	1.441	1.401	(.040)
California	.506	.485	(.021)
Louisiana	.440	.400	(.040)
Mississippi	.140	.150	.010
Missouri	.224	.229	.005
Texas	.195	.205	.010
Total	2.946	2.870	(.076)

Source: USDA, NASS.

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By class, Arkansas is expected to reduce long-grain acreage by 50,000 acres. Again, these numbers are based on NASS surveys taken in the first two weeks of March. Since then both the weather and prices have improved with new crop September futures trading up to \$11.20/cwt just a week ago. In total, U.S. long-grain acres are projected to drop 47,000 acres in 2019. Recall in February that USDA had long-grain acres falling 300,000 to 1.9 million in its *Ag Outlook Forum Grain Outlook*. The complexion of the rice market has turned a bit more positive, while soybean futures have drifted lower and new crop soybean basis has remained weak. The price competitiveness of soybeans is very much a factor in rice planting decisions this year.

U.S. Long-Grain Planted Acres.			
	2018	2019	Change
	<i>million acres</i>		
Arkansas	1.250	1.200	(.050)
California	.011	.011	-
Louisiana	.395	.370	(.025)
Mississippi	.140	.150	.010
Missouri	.215	.220	.005
Texas	.187	.200	.013
Total	2.198	2.151	(.047)

Source: USDA, NASS.

Arkansas has increased medium-grain acres the last two years. The trend is expected to continue for a third year in 2019. Medium-grain acres are projected to be up 10,000 to a total of 200,000 acres. This would be the first time since 2015 that medium-grain acres have hit 200,000 acres. Total U.S. medium-grain acres are expected to drop 29,000 acres with notable reductions in Louisiana and California.

U.S. Med. /Short Grain Planted Acres.			
	2018	2019	Change
	<i>million acres</i>		
Arkansas	.191	.201	.010
California	.495	.474	(.021)
Louisiana	.045	.030	(.015)
Missouri	.009	.009	-
Texas	.008	.005	(.003)
Total	.748	.719	(.029)

Source: USDA, NASS.

The first 2019/20 supply/demand projections will be released in the May 10th WASDE report. These projections will incorporate the 2019 planting intentions from today's NASS *Prospective Plantings* report. NASS will provide an update on U.S. and state acres on June 28th in the annual *Acreage* report.

Planting Progress:

The table below includes the states reporting rice planting in last Monday's *Crop Progress* report. Rice, corn, and soybean planting is kicking off in the Mid-South. Rice planting progress is in-line with the historic average pace. The jump from 5 to 25% planted in Louisiana last week is a good illustration of how fast the crop can get planted given a dry stretch of weather.

Rice Planting Progress, 2019.				
	As of 3/24	Last Week	Last Year	5-Yr Avg.
	<i>Percent Planted</i>			
AR	2	0	4	2
LA	25	5	35	23
MS	3	0	1	1
TX	15	0	44	16

Source: USDA, NASS.

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U.S. Rice Exports:

The eye-catching item in Thursday’s *Export Sales* report was a large sale of 140,770 MT of medium-grain rough rice to Mexico. Thus far in the 2018/19 marketing year medium-grain export sales are running 41% ahead of last year’s pace. By comparison, USDA projected in the March WASDE that medium-grain exports would be up 27% in the 2018/19 marketing year.

U.S. Rice Export Sales, thru March 21.				
Unit: MT	2018/19	2017/18	Change MT	Change %
Long-grain rough	1,071,008	886,970	184,038	21%
Long-grain milled	706,620	721,351	(14,731)	-2%
Long-grain brown	35,336	15,406	19,930	129%
Total Long Grain	1,812,964	1,623,727	189,237	12%
Med.-grain rough	208,225	42,887	165,338	386%
Med.-grain brown	141,335	65,845	75,490	115%
Med.-grain milled	529,129	514,174	14,955	3%
Total Med. Grain	878,689	622,906	255,783	41%

Source: USDA Foreign Agricultural Service.

Long-grain export sales to date are also outpacing the USDA’s March projection of a 7% increase in 2018/19. As of March 21, long-grain export sales are 12% ahead of last year for the comparable week. Better rough rice sales to Mexico are a key feature so far in the 2018 marketing year – up 48% over last year.

Of note, the Midwest flooding is creating logistics issues, especially along the Mississippi River. Barge rates have been increasing and grain basis has weakened considerably this week. Mississippi River barge traffic is still restricted to daylight hours through St. Louis, MO; Memphis, TN; Vicksburg, MS; and Baton Rouge, LA. Widespread flooding is slowing barge and rail movement of grain and fertilizer.

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Diesel Outlook:

IT would be a good idea to visit with your fuel dealer about the International Maritime Organization’s (IMO) new regulations on sulfur emissions. In general terms, marine ship operators are being required to significantly reduce sulfur emissions. Low-sulfur diesel is an acceptable alternative fuel that many (likely most) ship operators will turn to. Thus, demand for it is expected to increase and push prices higher.

The IMO regulations go into effect January 1, 2020. The Energy Information Administration (EIA) expects “shifts in petroleum product pricing” to begin as early as mid-to-late 2019. However, the effects on petroleum prices will be felt most in 2020. Link to the (EIA) report: [IMO 2020](https://www.eia.gov/analysis/special/2019/03/20190301_imo.php).

Additional Information

Arkansas Rice Updates are published periodically to provide timely information and recommendations for rice production in Arkansas. If you would like to be added to this email list, please send your request to rice@uaex.edu.

This information will also be posted to the Arkansas Row Crops blog (<http://www.arkansas-crops.com/>) where additional information from Extension specialists can be found.

More information on rice production, including access to all publications and reports, can be found at <http://www.uaex.edu/rice>.

Acknowledgements

We sincerely appreciate the support for this publication provided by the rice farmers of Arkansas and administered by the Arkansas Rice Research and Promotion Board.

The authors greatly appreciate the feedback and contributions of all growers, county agents, consultants, and rice industry stakeholders.