

# Rains to help cotton planting

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COLLEGE STATION — Most cotton fields in southern and eastern portions of the state are faring well and recent rains have improved soil moisture indexes in portions of West Texas and the Panhandle in time for planting, said Dr. Gaylon Morgan, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service cotton specialist, College Station.

Morgan said he expects cotton acreage to be slightly lower than 2014, but nearly double 2015 acres planted in South and East Texas. Spring 2015 was extremely wet and prevented much of the Rio Grande Valley and Coastal Bend from being planted that year.

“The 2016 crop has had its challenges

with excessive rain, but nothing compared to the prolonged wet weather observed in 2015,” he said.

The bulk of Texas’ cotton planting in West Texas and the Rolling Plains will get underway shortly with adequate soil moisture across most regions.

Rain events in West Texas and the Rolling Plains over the previous weeks improved the moisture index in time for planting, but Morgan said another timely rain in mid-to-late May would help establish good cotton stands.

On the other hand, recent rains in the northern and southern blacklands have been detrimental to emerging cotton crops. Morgan said some crop land there would need replanting while others have not been planted due to inac-

cessible fields.

The planting window in those areas is around May 31, he said. “We are hoping to dry out enough to bring the cotton acres up to about 140,000 for Blacklands region,” he said.

Based on the Boll Weevil Eradication Foundation’s program estimates, cotton producers in the South and East Texas zones will plant around 800,000 acres this year.

By comparison, producers in West Texas planted 4.6 million acres of cotton in 2015 and are expected to be comparable for 2016, with some regions increasing slightly and other regions dropping slightly depending on concerns for input costs, sugarcane aphid and irrigation capacity.