



The University of Georgia

Cooperative Extension Service

College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences



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Georgia Cotton

www.ugacotton.com

Points for Justification for Prevented Planting Decisions on Cotton

Many County Agents will be asked to write letters for producers as it relates to crop insurance claims. Agents are among those considered local “agricultural experts” and, as such, the USDA-Risk Management Agency and the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation will require that growers call upon you to provide critical evidence as to what factors prevented a producer from planting by the May 31 crop insurance deadline. Here are a few pointers to consider when formulating a letter for that purpose.

- 1) Tillage associated with seedbed preparation requires adequate soil moisture for both ripping-bedding in conventional systems and subsoiling in strip tillage conservation systems. In many fields, soil moisture levels have been depleted to the point that extremely hard, dense soil profiles have formed, preventing normal tillage of any kind. In some situations, tillage equipment cannot go in the ground; in others, attempts to run subsoil shanks produces huge clods, preventing good seedbed formation and needed soil/seed contact.
- 2) When sandy soils are extremely dry as has been case in parts of the state for some weeks now, it is not possible to control planting depth. Dry soil caves into the furrow as soon as disk openers create the opening, preventing normal coverage of seed. This prevents normal planting.
- 3) As dry as it has been, a single rainfall event of 0.75 inch or less could be more detrimental than beneficial because of the lack of moisture in the top 6 to 8 inches of the soil. The risk of a minor shower is that it could create sufficient moisture to swell the seed but not enough to establish the seedling. A grower could have reasonably decided to delay planting until significant rains provided ample moisture for germination and establishment.

The *Prevented Planting Loss Adjustment Standards Handbook* provides the interpretation of RMA regarding the question of differing planting actions by farmers in a community. It states on page 76:

The decision by some producers to plant in conditions where the crop could not germinate and make normal progress toward maturity may not preclude other producers in the area with acreage with similar characteristics from receiving prevented planting payments.

In many areas across the state, soil moisture has been insufficient for cotton germination for a number of weeks. Some growers have chosen to plant anyway. For the large acreage producer for whom multiple weeks are needed to plant the crop, such a decision makes sense. For the grower who could plant his crop in just a few days, it was quite reasonable to “wait for rain” before proceeding. Unfortunately, rains have not come. Proceeding with “dusting in” the crop or delaying planting until significant rainfall occurred were both acceptable, reasonable management decisions. Some producers, fearing they might be disqualified from insurance coverage (prevented planting), planted only because neighbors did. In some cases, this was compelled by “coffee shop talk” and in others by statements from crop insurance representatives.

The intensity and duration of the drought with its depletion of soil moisture for crop establishment and maturity overwhelmingly support the decision by many dryland producers to choose not to plant through the end of May 2007.

Documentation of weather is among the easiest aspects of required information. Check the Georgia Automated Environmental Monitoring Network, which can be reference at www.GeorgiaWeather.net. There are numerous other excellent weather references.

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[Special thanks to John Beasley, Extension Agronomist-Peanuts for input pertaining to this information.]

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