

Hoke Tobacco Farmers Look For Good Year

Despite changes in federal subsidy laws and a doubling of the cigarette tax, Hoke County tobacco farmers will probably have a profitable crop this year.

Tobacco markets are still open, but most local farmers are likely to make at least one cent more per pound than they did last year, Hoke County Agent Willie Featherstone Jr. said.

Profits would have been higher this year, however, a new federal subsidy law allows the deduction of 3 cents per pound at the market.

The law, which was passed this year, shifts the burden of subsidizing tobacco farmers from the

taxpayer to the grower. Buyers have also been reluctant to purchase higher grades of tobacco used in cigarette production this year, Featherstone said.

A recently passed federal tax package which increased the levy on cigarettes from 8 to 16 cents per pack is causing buyers to hold back purchases of the better leaf, he said.

"They are going to wait and see if the consumers are going to cut back," Featherstone said.

If consumption does not drop off for cigarettes, the buyers will come back to the market and purchase the better grade of tobacco, the county agent said.

Many Hoke tobacco farmers may be able to sell the better leaf at a reduced price in order to pay bills, and will not be able to wait for the market to pick back up, Featherstone added.

Now that the tobacco crops are harvested, farmers are being encouraged to uproot the remaining stalks and to replant fields with a cover crop.

By reworking fields after the tobacco is harvested, farmers will prevent diseases and insects in future crops and will improve next year's yield.

This year most Hoke County farmers have averaged about \$1.70 per pound for tobacco, and after

the subsidy deduction, they received about one cent more than last year's average of \$1.66 per pound.

Depending on how the tobacco operation is set up, raising the crop could cost local farmers as much as \$1.50 per pound, Featherstone said.

During 1981, tobacco planted on the county's allotted 1,950 acres brought in about \$6.5 million here.

The total income for all agricultural products in Hoke County was

approximately \$22.5 million in 1981, Featherstone said, adding that the figure included \$14 million for all field crops.

The balance of county's farm income comes from livestock, poultry, fruits, nuts and forest products.

Featherstone noted that he is concerned about this year's soybean crop in the county.

"A lot of our soybeans are not filling out," he said.

Adding to the local farmers' woes

is a nationwide bumper crop of soybeans, which means a poor price at the market.

About 29,000 acres are planted in soybeans in Hoke County, and last year's crop brought in about \$3.5 million.

Some county corn farmers, who have livestock, will probably be better off using this year's crop for feed, Featherstone said.

However, it would not pay farmers to buy feeder pigs or other livestock now, he added.



QUESTIONABLE SEASON -- Although Hoke County Soybeans looked good earlier in the season, some farmers are beginning to worry that the crop might not fill out. Soybean farmers also are faced with a low market price this year.

Hoke ASCS News

1983 WHEAT PROGRAM SIGNUP RESCHEDULED

Secretary of Agriculture John R. Block recently announced that because of legislation proposed by Congress in the Omnibus Reconciliation Act, he has rescheduled the signup period for the 1983 wheat program to begin Oct. 1 instead of Sept. 7. It will continue through March 31.

Spring and winter wheat producers must comply with the program provisions to be eligible for the wheat reserve program, loans, and purchases and payments for the 1983 wheat crop.

The 1983 wheat loan rate will be \$3.65 per bushel. The target price will be \$4.30 per bushel.

Instead of the 20 percent acreage reduction program announced by the USDA on July 14, the reconciliation legislation provides for a combination 15 percent acreage reduction and five percent paid land diversion.

The land diversion payment is based on \$2.70 per bushel times the farm yield times the acres diverted.

Producers must limit the wheat acreage planted for harvest to no more than 80 percent of the farm's wheat base. They must also devote to conservation uses and acreage equal to both the acreage reduction and land diversion requirements.

Block noted that any changes in the program are contingent on President Reagan signing the reconciliation legislation.

Producers, at the time they sign up for the program, may request an advance of 50 percent of the diversion payment and of any projected deficiency payment. The projected deficiency payment rate will be announced before signup begins.

A producer accepting an advance payment, but who later does not comply with program provisions, must refund the amount of the advance payment with interest. Interest charged will be the rate in effect for commodity loans on the date of the advance payment, plus five percentage points.

The Omnibus Reconciliation Act requires the 1983 wheat acreage base to remain the same as the base established for the 1982 wheat crop.

Land designated for conservation use must have been devoted to row crops or small grains in two of the last three years. Land use for conservation use acreage in 1982 will be regarded as having been cropped in meeting this requirement.

There are two exceptions.

The first is for a summer fallow farm for which the cropping requirement is for only one of the previous two years.

The other exception is for crop

land which met 1982 eligibility requirements for conservation use and was devoted to a permanent conservation practice.

If the permanent conservation practice is maintained, such acreage will be eligible as conservation use acreage through the 1985 crop year.

These conservation practices may be eligible for cost-share payment under the Agricultural Conservation Program.

Neither cross compliance nor offsetting compliance will apply to the 1983 wheat program.

Block also said he will announce the 1983 feed grains program in Sept. with signup starting Oct. 1. Signup for 1983 upland cotton and rice programs will be announced

later. The 1983 wheat and feed grains crops will again be eligible for the farmer-owned grain reserve program. However, new rotation provisions will be effective with grain reserve agreements on the 1983 crop.

The rotation provisions will only be available to replace, within 15 days, reserve grain that is going out of condition.

The replacement grain may be: (1) grain the producer has on hand, (2) grain which is purchased by the producer, or (3) grain which is from the producer's new crop.

Deficiency payments or 1982-crop wheat will be made to eligible producers as soon as practical after Oct. 1.

Farm Focus

by Richard Melton
Extension Livestock Agent
Banks Wannamaker
Extension Field Crops Agent

Cotton growers in Hoke County ponder each year over two decisions they must make. One is deciding whether to plant over if they don't get an adequate stand. But the one most are concerned with now is when to defoliate.

That is when to chemically make the plant shed its leaves so the bolls will open up for picking.

All cotton farmers will tell you that it just takes experience and judgment, but there are some pointers that will help.

For example, the timing of the defoliant application is extremely important. This depends upon the weather, the condition of the crop, and your objective for defoliating.

As a general rule-of-thumb, all bolls that you expect to pick should be fairly mature -- about 35 days old.

They should not dent when squeezed between the thumb and forefinger. When the bolls are cut with a knife the fiber should string out. The seed should have a buff or brownish color and the seed cavity completely filled.

These conditions do not occur until 50 or 60 percent of the bolls are open.

Weather has a big influence on how your defoliant works. Ideal conditions would be warm sunny days with nighttime temperatures above 65°F. and a relative

humidity below 65%. Plants under drought stress do not defoliate well. Defoliation can also be complicated by excessive nitrogen or too much rainfall or irrigation.

There are some mistaken ideas about what defoliation will do. Defoliation will not enhance or speed up maturity. Why not? The materials necessary for the formation and development of the seed and fiber are produced in the leaves. So when you strip the leaves, this process stops.

If the leaves are removed too early, the result is immature fiber (low mike), immature seed (low oil, protein content, and poor germination), and less total yield.

Defoliation, however, can result in better grades in a number of ways. It can reduce damage from boll rot by exposing more area of the plant to sunlight and air. And this may speed up the boll opening process. Defoliation can also hasten the start of the picking season.

Defoliants do not translocate throughout the plant, so every leaf must get a dose of chemical if it is to drop. This means you've got to get good penetration and coverage. One final suggestion to reduce the problems of regrowth, defoliate only enough acreage at one time to stay a few days ahead of harvesting operations.

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