



COMMENTATOR

PLAINS COTTON COOPERATIVE ASSOCIATION | SUMMER 2015

MEET PCCA'S NEW PRESIDENT AND CEO
RAIN, RAIN, COME AND STAY?
ADAPT, OVERCOME, IMPROVE
THE FUTURE OF COTTON PRODUCTION IN KANSAS

COMMENTATOR

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On the cover...

Abundant rainfall this spring has had a significant impact on the 2015 cotton crop. See related story on page 6.

Photo by Jayci Cave.

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meet KEVIN BRINKLEY

PCCA's New President
and Chief Executive Officer

By John Johnson



PCCA entered a new era on July 1 when Kevin Brinkley officially became president and chief executive officer of the cooperative. Brinkley's hiring was announced on April 24 by PCCA Chairman Eddie Smith following a nationwide search.

"We are very pleased to announce the selection of Kevin to lead PCCA's cotton marketing, warehousing and software services for our members and customers," Smith said in a news release, "and we are excited by the level of experience he brings to the job. He is well known and respected in the cotton industry and will complement PCCA's management team."

Originally from Burnet, Texas, Brinkley attended Texas Tech University where he graduated with bachelor's and master's degrees in agricultural economics. Upon graduation, he joined the staff of the National Cotton Council (NCC) in 1989 as field representative for the Texas High and Rolling Plains. He was promoted to an economist position in NCC's Memphis, Tenn., headquarters in 1990 where he conducted farm policy analysis and provided marketing support for Cotton Council International's efforts to promote U.S. cotton.

Brinkley joined the staff of The Seam as marketing manager when the company was created in 2000 to offer the world's first completely online, neutral exchanges for cotton trading. In 2003, he was promoted to vice president of marketing and business development, and The Seam added other commodities such as grain, peanuts and dairy to its trading platform. The company also began offering food trading platforms for major manufacturers and reverse auction procurement systems for USDA. He was promoted to senior vice president in 2011 to oversee all daily operations of the company and was named its chairman and chief executive officer in January 2015.

"PCCA is a stalwart of the U.S. cotton industry," Brinkley said in April. "My vision is to serve our members by continuing to provide the quality of service and value that have made the cooperative the supplier of choice for customers around the world," he added, "and we will continue to look for new innovations that increase the value of our members' cotton."

The following is a series of questions and answers from Brinkley to help PCCA members and our readers get to know him better.

You are originally from Burnet, Texas. Was your family involved in agriculture in the Burnet area?

My mom's dad was a farmer-rancher his whole life. He was primarily a cow-calf operator but was widely known as the king of watermelons and cantaloupes in our county. Burnet is on the northern end of the Texas Hill Country, and believe it or not, he farmed cotton there for several years. The cotton was hand-harvested

by my mom and her eight siblings, and it was ginned in Burnet County. Eventually, economic realities of dryland cotton on rocky soil caused my granddad to give up fiber production, but I have always enjoyed knowing that cotton was part of my mom's heritage. Most of my time growing up in Burnet was focused on cattle, but I wish I had learned the trick of raising good watermelons, though!

Why did you choose to attend Texas Tech, and why did you major in agricultural economics?

While growing up, I was extremely involved in 4H and FFA. Through those organizations, I was exposed to several students from Tech including E.L. Caraway, the most impressive and influential student leader I had ever encountered. I liked their attitude and work ethic. I scheduled a visit to Lubbock in the middle of winter during my senior year at Burnet High School. I was instantly hooked by the stark landscape and wide-open spaces. I loved the campus and the people. It's been said that when it comes to selecting a college, "you know it when you see it." That was definitely true for me. Since my dream was to be a ranch manager, I intended to major in Range & Wildlife Management at Tech. But, I soon felt myself being drawn to the business side of ag production and switched majors to Agricultural Economics which really fit my interest.

Looking back over your career to-date, what do you consider to be some of the highlights?

Growing up in a small, rural community, I have been able to accomplish more than I ever dreamed. I've worked on policy

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Kevin Brinkley's grandfather, M.L. Hoover, on the town square in Burnet, Texas. Photo Courtesy of Kevin Brinkley.



Kevin Brinkley addressed PCCA's Delegate Body for the first time on May 20, 2015.

“PCCA is a stalwart of the U.S. cotton industry,” Brinkley said in April. **“My vision is to serve our members** by continuing to provide the **quality of service and value** that have made the cooperative the **supplier of choice** for customers around the world.”

...continued from page 1

development and government relations, traveled to some unusual places, and met a lot of influential people. I genuinely believe that getting to start in the field for the National Cotton Council is still one of the highlights for me. There is something about starting your career on the ground floor that provides real confidence. Being able to help growers and ginners work together and solve problems brings a tremendous sense of accomplishment.

What do you think are the greatest challenges facing U.S. agriculture?

To me, the greatest challenge is the approaching structural change as farmers retire and pass their operations along to the next generation. It's on the minds of most growers that are thinking about the future of their farm assets. Recruiting younger family members to stay engaged seems to be more difficult with the amount of risk and financing required. As an industry, we really need to come alongside the next generation and help provide them with solutions that keep them farming.

Why do you want to be President and CEO of PCCA?

Many individuals and organizations have made significant investments in my leadership skills over the years. Much of that development has been from folks at PCCA. With the role PCCA has played in my family's life, I truly cannot imagine a greater opportunity to give back to the organization that has been so important for so many people.

How have your experiences at NCC and The Seam prepared you for this position at PCCA?

Both organizations were great preparation for PCCA. At each organization, you get to work with a lot of individuals and companies to accomplish goals. That requires a lot of listening and subsequent thinking to create solutions that benefit as many people as possible. That skill is vital in agriculture. The only way that growers and small businesses like gins can truly prosper is to all pull in the same direction to increase their influence and marketing power. I have had front-row seats to see a lot of group solutions developed at NCC and The Seam.

What are the greatest challenges facing PCCA today?

PCCA is the largest originator of Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, and New Mexico cotton. That brings tremendous opportunities in terms of scale. We can supply large volumes of value-added cotton around the world. However, the popularity of our cotton combined with declining cotton acres in other areas of the United States means more attention from competitors in the origination market. We need to stay focused on adding value to our members' cotton by enhancing supply chain performance every day.

What do you envision for the future of PCCA?

PCCA's mission is to add significant value to the cotton marketed for our members by being the supplier of choice to our business partners in terms of quality, service and value. That means more than just selling fiber at a competitive price. It means delivering a superior product and supporting supply chain services that make PCCA the best cotton originator in the world. PCCA is made up of thousands of growers operating as individual businesses, and we sell to customers around the world. We will continue to do more of what makes our company special—innovation. It adds value to our members' cotton and makes us the preferred supplier for our customers.

What are your short term and long term goals at PCCA?

My priorities for the near term fall into three categories: listening, learning and leading. Listening to our members, customers and employees talk about their ideas and the challenges they face will give me valuable perspective on where we need to go as a company. PCCA is what it is because of the ideas and efforts of a lot of people over the years. It's important to continue that process beginning in the field and following through to our customers.

As close as I have been to PCCA for nearly 25 years, I still have a lot of learning to do. When you consider the size of PCCA, the organization has done a great job of staying disciplined and protecting its marketing practices and trade secrets. Much of my time over the next few months will be spent learning as much about the operations of the company as I can.

Leading is a topic that is very important to me and every other member of the PCCA team. In order to fulfill our mission, we have to practice “love your neighbor-type” respect for every member, customer and teammate. Our employees are very supportive of this approach because they are personally invested in that philosophy.

In the long run, our goals will be to look for ways that we can innovate to the benefit of our members and customers. This company has created industry-changing technologies and business practices. We're going to keep doing that. It's a major part of our brand.

What are PCCA's strengths and weaknesses?

PCCA is a strong company because since 1953, we deliver very unique value-added services on a large scale. We combine world-class marketing with integrated warehousing, technology and logistics. We are a complete solution, and we're going to get even better at those things.

When it comes to weaknesses, we compete for market share every day. We have had our ups and downs. With the divestment of our textile business behind us, we now can focus all of our efforts on the core of our business—marketing cotton. And that will help our members, our communities, and our industry.

We have a slogan “Grounded in Tradition, Invested in Your Future.” What better position could we ask for? To me, it says we're strong, we're determined and we're ready to embrace the future!

What is your perception of PCCA's relationships with other regional cooperatives?

We have the strongest regional cooperative partners you could wish for. Farmers Coop Compress, Taylor Compress and Gulf Compress receive, store and deliver a significant portion of the cotton we market. Ron Harkey and his staff at FCC and David Fields and his team at Gulf are dedicated to great service and great returns for our members.

Then there is PYCO that adds incredible value to a grower's total production and returns through their oil mills. Gail Kring has a special place in my life because he got me in the door at NCC. He and the rest of the PYCO staff play a critical role in the total returns received by our members.

We wouldn't be able to provide the type of value we do without the services of these companies. All of us are vital to the cooperative system, and we're proud to be associated with them.

Tell us about your wife and children.

My wife, Mary, and I just celebrated our 29th anniversary. Mary is a proud Texas Tech Red Raider who has taught elementary school and is currently an affiliate real estate broker. We have three children. Our oldest daughter, Kate, is a graduate of Auburn University, and lives and works as a technical writer for VMWare in Atlanta, GA. Our son, Carter, is a graduate of Mississippi State University and lives in Hernando, MS, where he serves as Student Minister at Hernando Baptist Church. Our youngest daughter, Molly, is a sophomore at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville majoring in public relations.

How did you meet Mary?

When I was new to Tech, a buddy convinced me to go to the freshmen lock-in at the Baptist Student Union. I met Mary during some silly games there and honestly didn't do much but look at her the rest of the night. I asked her out the next week and we have been the best of friends ever since.

Do you have any hobbies or other outside interests?

Not enough. But I do like getting outdoors. I'm a big fan of bird hunting and go whenever I get the chance. I'm also an avid photographer, but since my kids are grown, I don't have anyone to photograph but our dog for now! Maybe one day we'll have some grandkids I can photograph.

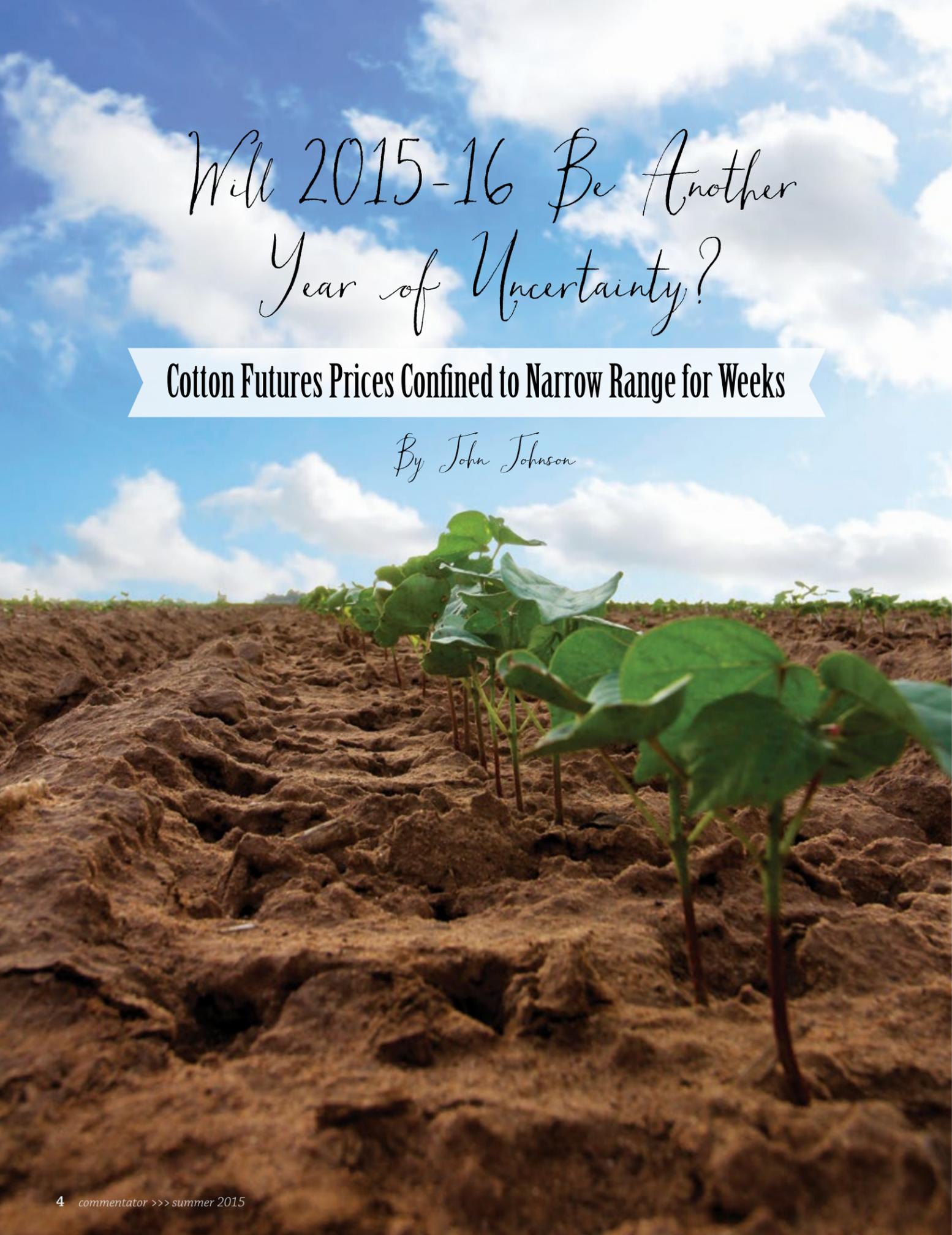
What do you look forward to the most about living in Lubbock again?

In no particular order: food, football and friends. When we moved from Lubbock several years ago, the withdrawals from real barbeque and real “TexMex” were pretty severe. So we will enjoy getting access to authentic southwestern cuisine again. Oh, did I leave out chicken fried steak? We also look forward to Tech football games and making a lot of new friends, too. 🍷

Will 2015-16 Be Another Year of Uncertainty?

Cotton Futures Prices Confined to Narrow Range for Weeks

By John Johnson



Cotton futures prices at the Intercontinental Exchange (ICE) in New York traded in the upper 50-cent range during January as bearish supply and demand figures from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and negative economic news weighed on the market; however, by February, prices began to advance into the mid-60s. Since then, cotton futures have remained in a narrow range, seemingly comfortable with a floor of 65.00 cents per pound.

Uncertainty on a number of fronts has forced many cotton sellers and buyers to remain cautious as they wait for definitive answers. Those fronts in recent months have been the United States, China and India, the world's dominant countries in terms of cotton production, consumption and exports.

U.S. export sales for the 2014-15 marketing year totaled almost 11.7 million statistical bales as of June 25 compared to USDA's most recent estimate of 10.7 million. Furthermore, export shipments stood at almost 10.4 million bales with just over five weeks left in the marketing year. Some traders and analysts must be wondering what the final export figure will be on July 31. Questions about 2015-16 U.S. cotton acreage and production potential also have been topics of conversation among the trade (see related story on page 6).

For months, rumors about China's disposition of the huge stockpile of cotton in its strategic reserve have blown through the market like a dry West Texas wind. The country's stockpile was expected to total 62.58 million bales at the end of the 2015-16 marketing year, according to USDA's June supply and demand estimates.

Finally on June 30, China's National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) reported it will sell up to 1 million tonnes, approximately 4.6 million bales, from its reserve during July and August. The cotton to be sold consists of approximately 1.5 million bales of 2011 domestic crop with a base price of 13,200 yuan per ton. The sale volume also will include almost 2.16 million bales of 2012 crop domestic cotton with a base price of 14,200 yuan per ton and approximately 918,000 bales of 2012 crop import cotton with a base price of 15,500 yuan per ton, according to the reports. The U.S. dollar equivalence price landed China before paying 1 percent tariff and value added tax would be 84.50 to 99.40 cents per pound.

NDRC also said following the July-August selling period, it will begin buying cotton for its reserve in September which will be capped at 40 percent of what is sold the previous two months to help maintain a floor under new-crop domestic cotton prices. The intention is to sell cotton from the reserve but buy in less in order to dispose of the reserve which

is expected to take several years. Meanwhile, NDRC gave no indication of what it will do with the 2014-15 unsold stock. The commission repeatedly has said it will manage sales from its reserve in an effort to avoid pressuring the market, although some analysts find that difficult to believe.

"It stretches the imagination that such selling could be placed into the market without disturbing its equilibrium," one cotton market analyst commented ahead of NDRC's announcement. Other doubters question the fiber quality of the cotton to be sold and mills' willingness to purchase it. Some say quality discounts will be necessary to attract buyers for the older cotton to be sold.

In a news release dated July 1, the International Cotton Advisory Committee seemed to underscore the uncertainty of China's ability to successfully sell off its excess stocks without destabilizing the market.

Some reports indicated many speculators were stunned by NDRC's announcement but the trade seemed to have already factored it into the market. Following the announcement on June 30, cotton futures at ICE apparently shrugged off the news and settled with moderate gains. July cotton settled 71 points higher at 67.51 cents per pound, and December settled at 67.91 cents, up 68 points. China, however, is not the only country to start selling cotton from its reserves.

The sharp decline in prices during 2014 forced India's government to intervene and begin buying a record volume of cotton from its farmers, but the Cotton Corporation of India may have learned a lesson from China's mistake and started selling cotton in January in an effort to dispose of the reserve before Sept. 30.

Meanwhile there have been conflicting reports from India regarding 2015-16 cotton production. Some reports suggest India's cotton acreage will decline 7 percent this year due to continuing low prices and concerns about the monsoon. India is the world's second largest cotton exporter behind the United States.

Higher prices for alternative crops were expected to encourage Indian farmers to reduce their cotton output; however, more recent reports indicate prices for the competing crops also may have declined. Also, reports about the start of India's monsoon season, along with its coverage and effectiveness, often were contradictory throughout the month of June.

Obviously, the uncertainties in the cotton market will remain for a while. The U.S. cotton harvest is still months away, and the potential size of the crop will be closely scrutinized. Likewise, the size of India's cotton crop has the potential to be a market factor. And finally, no one appears to be confident at this time in predicting the success or failure of China's attempt to dispose of its massive cotton stockpile. ☺



Rain, Rain, Come and Stay?

STORY AND PHOTO BY JAYCI CAVE

How much will it rain this year? This question is always on a farmer's mind when spring time rolls around. Dozens of decisions must be made that revolve around this one simple question and each farmer will hope and pray they will have favorable weather to produce their crop for the year. In recent years, widespread drought has caused farmers to deal with the challenge of producing a crop with limited water. This year, however, producers are facing a much different situation.

May 2015 was one for the record books as both Texas and Oklahoma set records for the all-time wettest month, according to the Office of the State Climatologist at Texas A&M University. On average, Texas received 8.81 inches of rainfall in May, breaking the previous record of 6.66 inches in June 2004. Oklahoma also broke its record of 10.75 inches of rain in a single month by receiving, on an average of 14.40 inches in May. Lubbock, Texas, received 12.12 inches of rainfall in May, just shy of the record of 12.69 inches in May 1941. In Corpus Christi, Texas, 14.32 inches of rain was reported in the month of May, which greatly surpassed the previous record of 10.44 inches in 1941.

This substantial rainfall in May made it difficult for producers to get into the wet fields to plant their crops, and this forced them to work against the clock to get the cotton in the ground before the crop insurance planting deadlines. According to USDA, only 46 percent of the intended cotton acreage had been planted as of May 31, 2015, compared to the five-year average of 70 percent.

USDA released its 2015 planted acreage report on June 30, 2015. According to the report, planted acreage for the United States cotton crop was estimated at 9 million acres, down 18 percent from 2014 and the lowest since 1983. The Texas crop was estimated at 5.2 million acres, down significantly from 6.2 million acres last year. Oklahoma saw a slight increase from last year with an estimated 250,000 acres. Kansas acreage was estimated at 29,000, a slight decrease from 31,000 in 2014.

The Texas crop accounts for a large portion of the U.S. crop and similarly, a large portion of the decrease. Cris Gwinn, PCCA South Texas Division Manager, said South Texas acreage was originally projected down because of price. However, all of the rain caused late planting and a significant decrease in cotton acreage.

"Late planting will cause a later than average harvest," Gwinn said. "Usually, South Texas cotton is the first in the U.S. and world to come off resulting in more of a premium price, but the late harvest will cut into that opportunity. Yields will be lower as cotton plants in some cases have been stunted with the lack of sunshine. The producers are doing what they do best, adapting and dealing the best they can," Gwinn added.

Tanner Streety, PCCA Marketing Communications Area Manager, said he has seen a variety of weather conditions in West Texas this year that have affected the crop.

"We have had flooding, wind and hail, but the most important thing is that we have sub-soil moisture," Streety said. "Farmers are known for making something great out of nothing. We have been blessed with some good rains, and the acres that have survived the weather look extremely promising."

PCCA Marketing Communications Oklahoma Area Manager, Matt Monroe, agreed



and said this year has potential to be one of the better ones if farmers can get a few timely rains and the necessary heat units in July and August.

"I feel like the rains in Oklahoma have made this crop a little late," Monroe said, "but they have also provided the best moisture for a crop since 2010. Because of this great start, producers are excited and feel like they have a crop they can invest in. Hopefully this drought is a thing of the past."

This time last year, only 10.45 percent of the state of Texas was drought free with 70.95 percent of the state in moderate to exceptional drought conditions, according to the National Drought Mitigation Center. Texas was 93.20 percent drought free with only .29 percent in moderate drought as of June 18, 2015. Oklahoma also has seen significant drought improvement this spring. Last year 79.34 percent of the state was experiencing moderate to exceptional drought conditions. During March of this year, 70.50 percent of Oklahoma was still

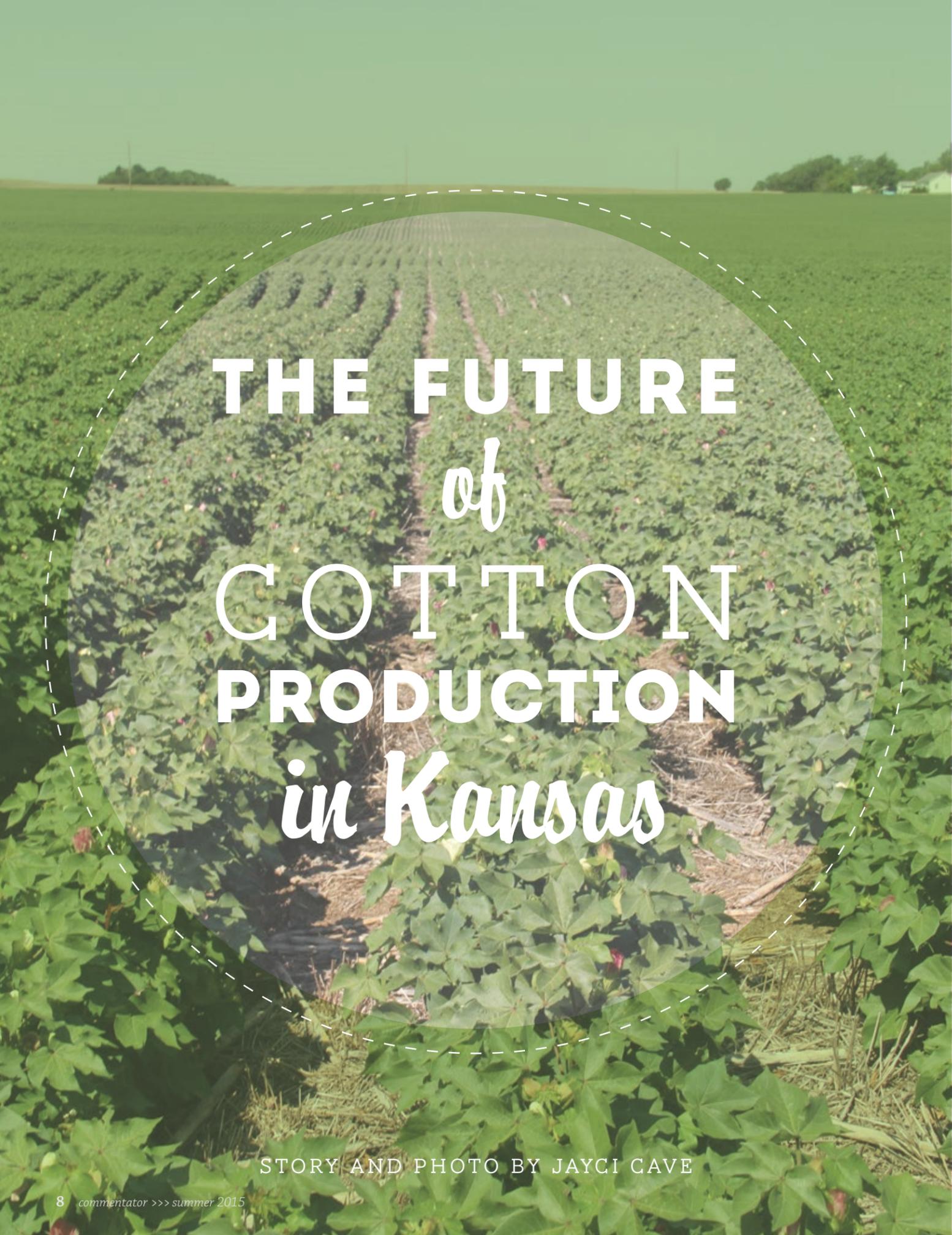
in the moderate to exceptional drought range. However, with the recent rainfall 98.28 percent of Oklahoma is drought free. Kansas followed the same pattern this year as 86.45 percent of the state is drought free. Only 3.81 percent of the state is in moderate drought conditions compared to 87.09 percent in moderate to exceptional drought in June 2014. On the other hand, New Mexico still has 50.79 percent of the state experiencing some drought conditions.

With this much rain, Streety said there was a possibility that controlling weeds could continue to be an issue for farmers.

"I was concerned that with all of the moisture we received we would have another year of weed problems," Streety said, "but from what I have seen, farmers have done a great job controlling them. However, with the recent heat the weeds have become more of an issue. Even though the cotton acreage is down, I have no doubt that we can get great yields with the help of a few timely rains."

Taylor Hurst, PCCA Marketing Communications Area Manager, said West Texas producers and gin managers agree this is the best start they have had in awhile. Even with the recent rain and flooding in areas, the mood is still very positive.

"Everyone agrees that it is much better to be too wet than dry," Hurst said. "I have even had one gin manager mention this is the first year in a long while he will actually have dryland cotton to gin. As long as the rest of the summer and fall will deal us some favorable weather, I believe this will be a really good year for PCCA and our members." ☺



THE FUTURE of COTTON PRODUCTION in Kansas

STORY AND PHOTO BY JAYCI CAVE

FOR THE PAST 20 YEARS, COTTON HAS BEEN CONSISTENTLY GROWN IN SOUTHERN KANSAS. COTTON PRODUCTION AND GINNINGS HAVE EXCEEDED 1.1 MILLION BALES SINCE 1996 IN 26 SOUTHERN KANSAS COUNTIES. HOWEVER, COTTON FARMERS IN KANSAS HAVE FACED A FEW CHALLENGES THAT HAVE HINDERED THE EXPANSION OF COTTON PRODUCTION IN THEIR STATE.

Harvesting equipment requires a significant investment, and many farmers must hire custom harvesters which can delay harvest due to time constraints. Rex Friesen, Ph.D., and crop consultant at Southern Kansas Cotton Growers Cooperative, said John Deere's recent technological advances will help overcome the equipment barrier.

"One is new technology in the form of John Deere's CS690 stripper-baler that harvests and 'packages' the cotton in one process on the fly," said Friesen. "This increases the speed of harvest and enables custom harvesters to arrive at individual farmers' fields on a more timely basis." Three of the CS690s are scheduled for delivery in Southern Kansas/Northern Oklahoma this year, according to Friesen.

Another serious challenge has been significant yield and quality losses due to herbicide damage from 2,4-D sprayed on other crops upwind from cotton fields; however, new developments are poised to help overcome these challenges. Friesen said advancements in cotton genetics will help decrease the likelihood of cotton quality and yield loss in the coming years.

"Dow AgroSciences has been developing cotton varieties that tolerate 2,4-D as well as a 'lower-drift' formulation of the herbicide," Friesen said. "This is significant because cotton farmers will no longer suffer yield and quality losses, and their neighbors who grow other crops can go about their normal weed control programs without fear of harming nearby cotton fields." The new cotton varieties are targeted for release in 2016.

With these advancements paving the way for cotton in Kansas, Dick Cooper, PCCA's Marketing Communications Area Manager, said it is important to promote cotton to Kansas producers because they will be hesitant to take the steps to grow cotton when they are not knowledgeable about the process of ginning, marketing and warehousing the cotton. He said cotton could be an economical and water-friendly option for producers in Kansas.

"A farmer would like to grow a crop where he has a chance to make a living," Cooper said, "especially if he can do it economically and get a higher return than any of his other crops. Cotton will be that if we can get rid of 2,4-D damage, and it uses half the water to produce four times the economic impact of corn."

Zach Hrencher, Marketing Communications Area Manager, said there are two main reasons it is important to promote cotton in Kansas.

"The first being that it is not a traditional crop that some producers are used to growing," Hrencher said. "The other reason promotion is important is it reminds non-cotton producers to be mindful of what they spray in their neighboring fields."

Following the extensive drought in 2011, the Kansas governor set out to develop a 50-year water vision for the state. Cooper, the Kansas Cotton Association and other PCCA employees had the opportunity to meet with the governor and his officials on this project and were able to get cotton included as an integral part of the plan because it uses 50 percent less water than corn, and its value per inch of water is four times greater than corn. Consequently, Hrencher said cotton should be considered in Kansas crop rotations.

"Producers should consider growing cotton because it is a deep root crop that would work well with their rotations," Hrencher said, "and since it is a water conservative crop, it can help slow the depletion of the Ogallala Aquifer." Cooper also said PCCA has been crucial to the growth of cotton production in Kansas.

"We have a 1.1-million-bale history, and I will tell you when we started this nobody believed we could do that," Cooper said. "We have marketed and warehoused every single bale of that through the PCCA system, and the gins use all of our services including the accounting system and scale tickets. Kansas is represented on PCCA's pool committee and the warehouse committee and they are well connected to this cooperative. Even though it is a long trip to Lubbock, they attend every meeting without fail."

Hrencher said the recent rainfall could lead to a decrease in cotton acreage for the 2015 crop, but he is hopeful that the yields will be comparable to last years.

"Fortunately, Kansas has received its fair share of rains this spring; however, it has delayed planting," Hrencher said, "and we could see a decline in acres. Of course, last year we did see yields that were unheard of for dry land, and we hope to see the same this year." ☺

Respect and Hard Work

Pay Off for Stamford Gin Manager

REX FORD RECEIVES THE 2014 TCGA GINNER OF THE YEAR AWARD



Story & Photo by
Sinclair Dobelbower

Many people live their lives based on a personal philosophy that helps guide them. For Rex Ford, Farmers Co-Op Stamford gin manager, the saying “treat people the way you would want to be treated” has been a phrase that he has lived by since he was a boy, and it is evident that it has played a huge role in how he has reached his success.

“If you treat people with kindness and respect,” Ford said, “most of the time they will give you 150 percent in return.” Ford’s attitude and respect has not gone unnoticed. In April 2015, he received the Cotton Ginner of the Year Award at the Texas Cotton Ginner’s Association (TCGA) annual awards banquet.

Ford grew up 15 miles southeast of Stamford in the small town of Lueders. After graduation, he went on to study agricultural economics at Tarleton State University in Stephenville, Texas. After college, he began working at Farmers State Bank as a cashier and eventually worked his way up to president of the bank until he left in 1985. He then farmed for many years and worked for a John Deere dealership until 1990. After another go at farming, Ford started to realize that he missed being around people and co-workers. As a result, in 1992 he accepted the position as gin manager at Farmers Co-op.

Family is a huge factor in Ford’s life. In 1980, he married his wife, Cindy, who works as a registered nurse at the local school district. Rex and Cindy have three daughters, Tiffany Ford, Tara Ford and Tristan Lawson. Tiffany is a school principal in Lubbock and has a daughter named Shelby who is a freshman at Frenship High School. Tara is a dental assistant in Abilene, and their youngest, Tristan, and her husband Cody, have three children, Breck, who is eight, Charli Kate, six, and a six-week-old baby girl named Dalli Paige.

Rex’s parents and family made a living farming and ranching. Since being raised in production agriculture, Ford knew he wanted to work in the industry someday. He grew up around cotton gins, and he knew as a gin manager he could combine his passions for agriculture and working with people.

“I have been around agriculture my whole life,” Ford said. “I just enjoy being around farmers and people, and I knew that someday that’s what I wanted to do.”

As gin manager, Ford wears many hats. His roles include overseeing the operations of the gin as well as maintaining good public relations. However, Ford said he relies on his employees in order to run a successful business. He has a gin superintendent, an office manager, interns, and several other employees who play a vital role in running the business effectively.

“I’m only as good as my employees so I try to surround myself with good people,” said Ford, “and I have been very fortunate to be able to do that here.”

Ford loves every part of his job, but he says his favorite part is the public relations side of it. He enjoys visiting with customers and learning more about what is going on at their farms.

“I try to do more listening than I do talking so I know what their needs are and what I need to make happen to help them,” said Ford.

He says the most challenging part of the job is during the ginning season when he oversees the gin while it runs for many months.

Ford also makes it a priority to stay involved with organizations such as Plains Cotton Cooperative Association (PCCA) and Texas Agricultural Cooperative Council. Ford says that PCCA has played a huge role in the success of his gin and his office.

“I would hate to run a coop gin without PCCA,” said Ford. “They do great things for us beginning in the office and all the way through the marketing of the cotton.”

He says the biggest benefit with working with PCCA is the ease in marketing, and that it makes their jobs much more enjoyable and

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“I would hate to run a coop gin without PCCA,” said Ford. “They do great things for us beginning in the office and all the way through the marketing of the cotton.”

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easier when it comes time to market cotton. He likes the fact PCCA ensures that his customers will always get the best possible return on their cotton.

He also strives to keep good relationships with other gin managers across the state of Texas. He said he enjoys the friendships he has made and values their ability to work together.

“I have learned more from visiting with other gin managers than I ever did in school,” Ford said. “I like being able to learn from each other and compare how they do things to how I do it.”

Ford’s relationship with the gin managers in the state has proven to be a worthy one as he was awarded the prestigious ginner of the year award. Ford was selected for the award due to his accomplishments and the success he has helped to bring to his gin.

“Receiving the award blindsided me like I’ve never been blindsided before,” said Ford. “I never thought about getting it, so it was very humbling that the gidders in the state of Texas would do that for me.”

Ford credits his background in agriculture and growing up in this atmosphere to getting him to where he is today. He also said that his past work experiences have taught him lessons and given him skills that have helped him. He said the most influential person in his life has been his dad. His father was a farmer as well, and Ford described him as a quiet, understanding man who was instrumental in helping steer his path in life and develop who he is today.

Although he is very proud of this award, Ford said his proudest moments in life are when he married his wife, had children, and when he was blessed with grandchildren.

When he isn’t working, Ford can be found spending time with his family, working with his horses or cattle, spending the day on the water boating or waterskiing, roping, and raising border collies.

“I tell everyone my hobby is my farm. I enjoy being around my cows,” he said. “I also love to spend time with my grandkids.”

Good things are still to come for Ford as he looks forward to the future. He wants to continue improving the Stamford gin while keeping up with innovations and technology in agriculture, and then after another seven to eight years, he plans to go into a much-deserved retirement.

“I love what I do, but I don’t want to stay longer than I need to,” said Ford. “I am in no hurry to retire, but I am looking forward to spending time with my family and being on the farm.”

There is no doubt that Rex Ford will continue to be an influence on the Texas cotton industry even after his retirement. His kindness, respect and loyalty have distinguished him as a man who genuinely embodies what it means to be an agriculturalist. He has played a huge part in bringing Farmers Co-op Stamford to the degree of success that it is at today. Ford thanks his family, board of directors, employees, and cotton gidders across the state for providing him this very humbling experience. ☺

Adapt, Overcome, Improve



Innovation. Adaptation. Ingenuity. These are all words that describe the cotton industry in the High Plains. One of the main reasons the industry has been so successful is due to the increasing number of cotton varieties available today.

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Story and Photos By Sinclair Dobelbower

Hunter Parrott, Joel Arce and David Brockman
work hard to get the 2015 test plots planted.

“There aren’t necessarily wrong varieties or right varieties, but there are appropriate ones for your situation, and if you plant a variety that is not appropriate, it is a decision you have to live with all year long.” - Dr. Jane Dever



Flags separate the different test plots at Texas A&M AgriLife Research in Lubbock, Texas.



Jane Dever, Associate Professor
Soil and Crop Sciences

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Dr. Jane Dever, Associate Professor of Soil and Crop Sciences and Cotton Breeder at Texas A&M AgriLife Research in Lubbock, Texas, works to improve cotton varieties for the area through specifically funded research projects and training graduate students. Dever believes we have seen changes to the varieties grown in the area in response to identified needs or changes to production systems.

“One of my first memories in plant breeding is when I started at AgriLife as a student worker in 1983 and PCCA responded to a need for better fiber strength,” said Dever. “They did an analysis, indeed found that we were getting paid less for our cotton, and helped to start the Plains Cotton Improvement Program that helps fund our breeding program. It was in direct response to a need that came from the market side to improve quality and yield,” said Dever.

Similar needs and situations also have been determining factors in the development of cotton varieties. Dr. Dever has worked first-hand on several projects to improve the Texas High Plains cotton crop and has seen multiple innovations to the plant’s potential.

“We’ve seen an incredible improvement in fiber quality, along with varieties that have longer maturity cycles, made possible by boll weevil eradication and Bt cotton, plus changes in irrigation and management practices that allow us to introduce varieties that have better yield potential,” said Dever.

An important question for producers to consider when selecting a cotton variety to plant is what kind of situation and production system they have. Dr. Dever said when selecting a variety to plant, “There

aren’t necessarily wrong varieties or right varieties, but there are appropriate ones for your situation, and if you plant a variety that is not appropriate, it is a decision you have to live with all year long.” To ensure that a variety will be appropriate, Dr. Dever suggests trying a new variety on a small scale of acreage that stays inside the realm of a grower’s production system. Another factor behind selecting varieties is protecting the producers while pleasing the mills.

“There’s not always a huge financial incentive to grow high fiber quality cotton, but there is a huge incentive to grow cotton that fits in your production system that yields consistently,” said Dever. “The value of fiber quality depends on supply and demand of that market, so it tends to be a more market driven objective, where as gearing varieties to produce higher quality yield is more production driven.”

David Canale with TELMARK, a subsidiary of PCCA that was founded to provide electronic cotton marketing services to independent gins and their customers, said the price and demand for cotton is driven by the world economy and that is key to what producers decide to produce.

“Fifteen to twenty years ago we were growing one-inch style cotton, but there is no market for it anymore,” said Canale. “Thanks to the development of new varieties, we now can produce more longer, stronger cotton on less acreage to meet new demands.”

Dr. Dever’s favorite word to describe the nature of plant breeding is resilience, and that word definitely describes the nature of the industry right now. New demands are certainly on the horizon, and PCCA members and producers can look forward to a continuation of new seed varieties to rise up and meet these demands. Expected developments include improved varieties of nematode resistance, drought and stress tolerance, new options in biotechnology traits and technology for herbicide modes of action.

“Cottonseed companies in partnership with public breeding programs are going to be looking at native traits that are quantitative for drought tolerance and stress resistance for more resilience,” said Dever. “Resilience can’t be defined by a molecular marker, but by more genetic variation to identify what is important to our environment and to develop a better variety package with which to deliver valuable traits important to our growers.”

The only thing that is constant in life is change, and the same can be said for the cotton industry. With change comes new and improved methods of production, increases in quality and yield, and reassurance of selling the best cotton possible for the ideal price. The future of the industry will do what it has always done, which is adapt, overcome and improve. 🌱

The Plains Cotton Improvement Program (PCIP) was created in 1982 by Texas High Plains cotton producers and leaders of the region’s warehouse industry.

“The goal of the PCIP is to actively work to improve the fiber and yield characteristics of the High Plains crop and to change the textile industry’s view of High Plains cotton,” said Mary Jane Buerkle, Director of Communications and Public Affairs for Plains Cotton Growers, Inc., in Lubbock.

The program was kick-started through the efforts of the late Joel Hembree, former fiber technologist and statistician at Plains Cotton Cooperative Association, and Rex McKinney, former manager of Lubbock-based Farmers Co-op Compress. They strived to meet a need to improve the quality of the cotton crops in the High Plains, and they found their answer through the establishment of the Plains Cotton Improvement Program that involves cotton geneticists, industry advising committees, and producers.

Plains Cotton Growers states that thanks to their investment in the PCIP, High Plains cotton growers are working together to create benefits many may not even realize they are receiving and to dispel any lingering myths that exist about the value and quality of the cotton produced in the High Plains of Texas.

“Growers fund the PCIP through a voluntary 10-cent per bale assessment collected by High Plains cotton warehouses. Growers also serve on the Plains Cotton Improvement Committee where they review research projects and help determine where funds are allocated relative to current industry needs,” said Buerkle.

By investing in the development of better cotton varieties for the future, the PCIP has raised producer awareness of the importance of the overall quality of the cotton they produce. Buerkle said that the future offers several promising benefits for producers.

“The PCIP has evolved greatly over the past three decades, and producers can look forward to continued innovation in cotton research, from seed breeding all the way through to the fabric and finished product,” said Buerkle.

Producers also are able to see the potential that the PCIP has to offer through providing enhanced research technology in order to improve fiber and yield quality.

Buerkle said that “Through the PCIP, producers will continue to realize significant benefits through partnerships with outstanding and highly respected cotton research scientists to make High Plains cotton even better and more marketable.”

TACC

Each year, the Texas Agricultural Cooperative Council (TACC) selects individuals to receive awards for their service and dedication to the industry. This year was no exception as Bob Ballard, Tommy Engelke and Lonnie Winters were honored at TACC's Joint Cooperative Meeting held in Galveston, Texas, this past March.

HONORS *outstanding* INDIVIDUALS

STORY BY JAYCI CAVE



TACC recognized Bob Ballard as Cooperative Ginner of the Year.

GINNER OF THE YEAR AWARD

Bob Ballard, recently retired general manager of Farmers Cooperative Association in Tahoka, Texas, received the TACC Cooperative Ginner of the Year award. While presenting the award, Gail Kring, CEO of PYCO Industries in Lubbock, Texas, said Ballard had a significant impact on the cooperative movement throughout his career.

"It's in his DNA to help others, and he has proudly been doing so for many, many years," said Kring. "He has been quite a fixture in the existence of the cooperative movement and cotton ginning on the High Plains all these years."

Born in 1943 in Lubbock, Texas, Ballard grew up on his family's farm in Rochester, Texas. He was very active in FFA in his youth, showing steers and sheep. Ballard graduated from Texas Tech in 1966 with a degree in agriculture, and his first job was at New Home ISD teaching vocational agriculture. He spent the next 12 years teaching at New Home ISD. During that time, he met his wife, Linda, who was an English teacher. They were married in 1968 and have three sons, Shawn, Todd and Cory, as well as three grandchildren, Chase, Jet and Ashlyn.

In 1977, Ballard began his 31-year career in the cotton industry as general manager of New Home Coop Gin where he stayed for the next 18 years. In 1996 he switched gears and began working for South Plains Industrial Supply in Lubbock selling gin parts and supplies. He decided to return to gin management in 2002 taking a position at Farmers Coop Gin in Tahoka. He retired earlier this year after managing the gin for 13 seasons. During his career, he ginned 870,639 bales of cotton, and his largest crop was in 2007 when he ginned 73,455 bales.

Ballard has also had a significant impact on the coop movement. He served as the last president of the Texas Cooperative Ginners Association which merged with another statewide coop to form TACC in 1984. Over the years, he has continued to support Lynn County youth by helping them raise their sheep. One year, the county dedicated the Lynn County Stock show to Ballard for his support and mentorship over the years.

"Lonnie Winters has developed a reputation far and wide as a tremendous resource, a trusted advisor, a good listener, and a smart champion for America's cotton farmers." - Buzz Cooper



Lonnie Winters was joined by family as he was honored with the Cooperator of the Year Award.

TACC COOPERATOR OF THE YEAR

Lonnie Winters, PCCA Vice President of Marketing, had the honor of being named TACC Cooperator of the Year. Buzz Cooper, general manager of Texas Star Cooperative Gin, presented the award in Galveston.

"Lonnie Winters has developed a reputation far and wide as a tremendous resource, a trusted advisor, a good listener, and a smart champion for America's cotton farmers," Cooper said. "His intent is to deliver the best return to those who make this country the bedrock of our society."

Winters was raised on his family's farm near Lone Wolf, Oklahoma. In 1971, he went to work in the office at Granite Farmers Coop Gin and was named manager in 1972. He later worked as a cotton buyer for W.R. Moore Cotton Company, buying cotton in Oklahoma and Texas. Shortly thereafter, he moved to Lubbock to work for Hohenberg Cotton.

Winters joined the PCCA marketing staff in 1993, and he was promoted to vice president of marketing in 2004. In 2015 he was named interim president and CEO of PCCA.

Winters is past president of the Lubbock Cotton Exchange and currently serves on the board of directors of The Seam. He also has served on the board of directors of National Cotton Council and Cotton Council International and attended the classing school in Memphis, Tenn.

Winters and his wife, Donna, have two daughters and two sons: Brandie, Meagan, Justin and Eric. They have seven grandchildren: Sydney, Allie, Dane, Taylor, Todd, London, and Brynley.

DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD

After 38 years of serving coops, Tommy Engelke received the 2015 TACC Distinguished Service Award for his dedication to cooperatives across the state.

"Our Texas Agricultural Cooperative Council is highly regarded as one of the best state councils in the nation," said James Deatherage, General Manager of Producers Coop, "and this is directly attributable to Tommy and his relentless, determined attitude."

Engelke was born and raised on a farm near Kingsbury, Texas. Growing up, he worked with his parents and three brothers on the farm and attended Luling High School where he was very active in FFA, serving as president and vice president. He earned his Lone Star and American FFA degrees and had the opportunity to travel abroad with the organization. During his time abroad he worked on a farm in Hassel, Germany.

Engelke attended Texas A&M University where he earned a bachelor's degree in agronomy and a master's degree in agricultural journalism. He began his career in 1974 as a trainee for the Soil Conservation Service. His next stop was the Rice Council for Market Development in Houston. He then spent 12 years with Texas Farm Credit Services/CoBank in Austin before he settled with TACC in 1989. Since 1996, Engelke has been Executive Vice President of TACC.

Engelke has two children, Shirley and Clayton. Throughout his career he has traveled to 13 foreign countries and 44 states in the United States. He logs about 25,000 miles each year visiting other people in the industry. ☺



Tommy Engelke and family after receiving the Distinguished Service Award.



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Save the Date

Plains Cotton Cooperative Association will hold its
62nd Annual Meeting of Members on **Wednesday, September 16th**
at 2:00 p.m. at 3301 E. 50th Street in Lubbock, Texas.

PCCA will present its membership with a report on the financial operations of the association and reports from management. Such other business as may come before the meeting also will be considered.

PCCA'S AUGUST DELEGATE BODY MEETING

Lunch will be served at noon with meeting to follow.

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