The giant mechanical pickers roiling through fields of cotton are a common sight wherever the crop is grown across Louisiana. Such machines, capable of picking acres upon acres each day, have almost completely replaced the old-time hand picking method.

Louisiana Harvest in Full Swing

Ag Specialists Say '66 Crop 5% Over '65

By CARLOS HARKNESS
Associate Editor

With the 1966 Louisiana harvest in full swing, agricultural specialists estimate that this year's crop will exceed last year's by some five percent. The 1965 crop brought the state's farmers a near record $506.9 million. This year's crop should bring even more.

Sharp percentage increases in production are indicated for soybeans, oats, peaches and pecans. Smaller increases are indicated for wheat, rice, sugarcane and Irish potatoes.

Based on generally favorable weather conditions and crop progress reports, agricultural economists forecast the following results for this year:

COTTON
Production is estimated at 435,000 bales, some 23 percent below both last year and average. Yield per acre is about 539 pounds last year and the record high of 618 pounds in 1962. Some 555,000 acres were planted to cotton this year.

RICE
The crop is forecast at a new record high of 3.4 million hundredweight (1.2 million barrels), 13 percent above last year's production and 41 percent above average. Yield per acre is estimated at 3,600 pounds (23.5 barrels) dry weight, 150 pounds above last year's record high and 716 pounds above average. Planted for harvest were 2,113,000 acres.

SUGARCANE
Production for sugar and seed is forecast at 8.2 million tons, 16 percent more than 1965 and 11 percent above average. Yield per acre is estimated at 3,000 pounds (22.1 tons) last year and the average of 24.6 tons. Some 313,000 acres were planted to sugarcane.

SOYBEANS
The 1966 crop will approach 20.5 million bushels, 53 percent more than the record production of last year and 330 percent more than the 1960-64 average. A record 577,000 acres were planted for harvest.

WINTER WHEAT
Production is estimated at 3.5 million hundredweight, 25 percent less than last year, but one percent above average. Yield per acre is estimated at 79 hundredweight (127 bushels), compared with the record high of 18 last year and the 1959-64 average of 45. Some 30,000 acres were planted for harvest.

CORN
The 1965 crop to be used for grain is forecast at 5.3 million bushels, 21 percent less than last year and the smallest crop since 1867. Yield per acre is indicated at 33 bushels, 2.2 bushels below last year, but 1 percent above average. A record low 180,000 acres were devoted to corn this year.

HAY
Production is estimated at 63,000 tons, only one percent less than 1965, but 10 percent above average. Acreage devoted to hay hit 385,000 acres this year.

PECANS
The 1966 crop is estimated at 33 million pounds, triple the small crop of last year and 20 percent above average.

PEACHES
This year's crop reached 175,000 bushels, almost three times the 1965 low of 55,000 bushels and higher than the 1960-64 average of 154,000 bushels.

IRISH POTATOES
This year's crop hit 228,000 hundredweight, compared with the 1965 production of 160,000 hundredweight and the 1950-64 average of 194,000 hundredweight. Some 4,200 acres were planted for harvest.

TOBACCO
This year's crop is indicated at 187,000 pounds, a sharp dip from 239,000 pounds last year and the average of 267,000 pounds. Some 220 acres were planted for harvest this year.

With the beginning of fall cane harvest, sugar mills (like the one above) go into operation in the flat country of South Louisiana. In the seemingly-endless prairies of Louisiana's Southwest, late summer and early fall means the big rice crop is ready for the harvest combines (below).