Louisiana farmers are jumping on historically high cotton prices, telling the Louisiana Agricultural Statistics Service they intend to plant 1,010,000 acres of cotton this year, the largest acreage since 1953.

While cotton acreage is moving up, everything else in Louisiana is moving down. Farmers report they will plant 300,000 fewer acres of rice, corn, grain sorghum and soybeans in 1995.

"We were expecting the big jump in cotton. It's the 'hot' commodity right now. Given a fairly decent growing season, our farmers should do well in cotton this year," Louisiana Agriculture Commissioner Bob Odom said.

"And the experts, while they don't expect the price to stay as high as it is now, they do expect it to remain strong throughout the 1995 marketing year," he said. Cotton brought in a record $529 million to Louisiana in 1994.

Cotton futures have been selling above $1 per pound. Normally cotton sells between 60 cents and 70 cents per pound.

In the statistics service's first "planting intentions" forecast for 1995, farmers say they will plant 110,000 more acres of cotton, but will cut acreage in soybeans by 150,000, cut corn acreage by 60,000, cut rice acreage by 35,000, and cut grain sorghum acreage by 55,000.

State statistics

Farmers say they will plant 110,000 more acres of cotton, but will cut acreage in soybeans by 150,000, cut corn acreage by 60,000, cut rice acreage by 35,000, and cut grain sorghum acreage by 55,000.

"Some of this reduction in acreage, particularly in rice in north Louisiana, and sorghum and soybeans, is moving into cotton. And overseas harvest predictions and other competitive factors on the world market have led to relatively weak prices in the four crops losing acreage.

"But 110,000 up in cotton and 300,000 down in the other four still leaves us with 190,000 idle acres," he said. "We don't have a good, solid explanation for the larger across-the-board drop in all the other row crop commodities that compete for acreage with cotton in Louisiana."

Growers say they will plant one million acres of soybeans in 1995, down 150,000 acres, the lowest soybean acreage in Louisiana since 1966. Rice is expected to total 590,000. Corn will be 260,000 acres and grain sorghum acreage is expected to total 75,000.

In percentages, cotton is up 12 percent, corn is down 19 percent, rice is down six percent, sorghum is down 42 percent, and soybeans are down 13 percent.