Crawfish production down

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CROWLEY — Crawfish won't be in abundance again this year as drought conditions and a rice pesticide are being blamed for the decline, according to state aquaculture experts.

More than 120 farmers gathered at the Acadia Parish Extension office Tuesday to hear a report from Louisiana State University Agriculture Center officials on crawfish production.

"We will not have a real bumper crop of crawfish again this year," said fisheries agent Mark Shirley. "We are not seeing a tremendous number of crawfish."

Crawfish production has been down the last three years, Shirley said, due to lack of rain in the state.

"ICON may have played a part in some ponds not being able to produce crawfish," he said.

ICON, a new pesticide used since 1999 in rice production, has been linked to crawfish mortality in ponds throughout Acadiana.

Shirley said the trend can be reversed.

"With a lot of rain it can get us back into a normal (crawfish production) season," Shirley said.

Dr. Ray McClain, of the LSU AgCenter Rice Research Center in Crowley, said research has been conducted on the effect of ICON on crawfish production.

"Crawfish that come in contact with the treated (rice) seed probably will die," he explained.

But results for crawfish exposed to water containing ICON and the stocking of crawfish into rice crops that have Icon-treated seeds were inconclusive.

"We certainly don’t have all the answers regarding ICON," said McClain. "A lot of this information is just not clear-cut yet."

Farmers had concerns about sterilization of female crawfish as the result of being exposed to ICON and the effect of the pesticide on young crawfish.

Dr. Robert Romaine, a crawfish researcher at the Aquaculture Research Station in Baton Rouge, said ongoing research is being done on hatchling, juvenile and adult crawfish.

"We have had pretty good success in spawning crawfish treated with ICON," Romaine said.

The researcher said his center will get "fairly good numbers on the actual survival of crawfish exposed to ICON" over longer periods of time.

The data should be available in a couple of months and will be posted at the LSU AgCenter Web site, Romaine said.