Continuing high prices make cotton Louisiana’s hottest crop

By The Associated Press

Farmers across the state are planning to plant more than a million acres in cotton this year to take advantage of high prices, the state agriculture department says.

That’s 110,000 acres more than last year and the most acreage covered in cotton since 1953, said a news release from Bob Odom, secretary of the department.

While cotton acreage is increasing, other crops in Louisiana are moving down, according to Odom’s report.

This week cotton futures — normally in the 60 to 70 cents a pound range — are selling for $1.08 a pound.

“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,” 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.

Also with higher cotton prices, lending institutions are more likely to lend to cotton producers, said St. Landry Parish County Agent Keith Normand, explaining why cotton acreage in that parish continues to increase.

The need for farmers to diversify can also explain why cotton acreage is increasing. For example, six years ago, St. Landry Parish had less than 100 acres of cotton. In 1994, it had about 7,400, according to a parish agricultural report. “This year it looks like we will probably have 10,000 acres or more of cotton,” Normand said.

Louisiana farmers will plant 300,000 fewer acres of rice, corn, grain sorghum and soybeans in 1995, according to Odom. Rice acreage hasn’t necessarily been replaced by cotton, but soybeans, corn and grain sorghum have, Normand said.

Cotton brought in a record $529 million into Louisiana last year, Odom said.