Parish farmers harvest $66,051,205

By J. AUBREY MIRE

Gross receipts for all Evangeline Parish agricultural commodities registered a year-end aggregate of $66,051,205, and increase of $11,321,321 over 1986. Since 1980 agricultural income has registered losses every single year.

Does this mean the days of “gloom and doom” are behind us? Unfortunately it does not, however it does appear to indicate a very faint light at the end of the tunnel. But we still have some rough days ahead of us.

Rice recorded the greatest income, and led other agricultural commodities with an estimated crop value of $24,822,942, an increase of $11,345,024 over last year. The gross value also includes, for the first time in crop reporting, government payment. Income per hundred weight (cwt) includes $7.00 for loan value and $7.00 for target price. For some farmers the value per hundred weight will exceed $14.00 and could go as high as $17.00 or better depending on quality of the rice being marketed. To determine the price per barrel simply multiply by 162 which is the weight of a barrel of rice.

Growers planted 33,509.9 acres of rice this year, a decrease of 1,378 acres from the previous year.

Farmers had generally good yields with a number of farmers recording yields in the upper 30 and lower 40 barrels per acre average. In a few cases two cuttings resulted in over 50 barrels.

Income from sweet potatoes spiraled to $17,094,750, an increase of $10,815,750 over 1986. Yields were much improved over last years and prices held steady to higher. For the second year in a row sweet potatoes have displaced soybeans and continue to rank second behind rice as an agricultural income producing commodity in this parish.

For this first time since 1970 Beef Cattle income jumped ahead of soybeans in Evangeline Parish. Income from beef cattle took a moderate increase of $1,818,375. The rebound in beef prices in 1987 seems to be responsible for the favorable outlook and mood in the cattle industry. Estimated total income from beef cattle in 1987 stands at $6,675,850.

Generally speaking, soybeans are better than last year “yield-wise” and “pricewise” as well. It has been very difficult to find anything positive to say about soybeans the past five years. These years have been very unkind years to our soybean grower with weather disasters ranging from late season hurricanes, tropical storms, droughts and other kinds of unusual problems.

Income from soybeans this year showed a slight increase of $464,420 over 1986. The total estimated income from soybeans in 1987 stands at $6,323,960. However, I know that many farmers can remember a few years back (1979) when soybean income in this parish stood in excess of $37 million.

Parish farmers planted 47,727.6 acres of soybeans in 1987, a decrease of 11,785 acres from the previous year. It does appear the romance and passion farmers have had for the soybean has been cooled.

Dramatic decreases in acreage due to cross compliance with the new farm program has lead to the same case scenario with corn, grain sorghum (milo) and wheat.

Corn acreage dropped from 9,217 acres in 1986 to 4,574 acres in 1987. However, the price of corn was stronger and yields much improved over the previous year. Both combined to set our parish estimated corn income at $905,423, a drop of $163,703 from last year.

Income from wheat fell to $541,637 in 1987, a decrease of $185,847 from last season. Acreage planted to wheat this year dropped to 5,938 acres. This is off some 2,367 acres. Yields from wheat were improved from last season but price was much weaker.

Grain sorghum (milo) suffered the greatest acreage decrease of any crop. This plus very poor yield coupled to give our estimated income from the crop a total of $195,847, a devastating decrease of $1,029,678 from 1986. Acreage planted to milo was only 2,914.4 acres as compared to 15,000 acres in 1986.

Income from crawfish remained steady at $1,365,000. Per acre yields were strong but prices received from crawfish were softer. There continues to be approximately 5,000 acres in crawfish production.

Income from other agricultural commodities in...