More than 1 million acres of Louisiana farm and pasture land in prime agricultural regions were flooded by some four weeks of torrential rains, according to a preliminary estimate. An early estimate of damages for some of the worst hit parishes showed $128.5 million in crop losses have occurred in major state crops.

The estimates are as of May 15. They were made by the Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service.

Ronnie Anderson, president of the Louisiana Farm Bureau Federation, said the bureau is getting reports of land still under water and in some places where water has receded the ground is not drying out yet.

Anderson said the Farm Bureau is trying to push federal disaster assistance efforts in Washington. He said Louisiana farmers may get some support from Arkansas and Mississippi farmers similarly hit by excessive rains in the middle of a major planting season.

"The main thing right now is that there is not a lot of funds available to directly aid agriculture because of the budget situation in Congress," Anderson said.

Some farmers may qualify for low-interest

A bell pepper plant shows effect of too much rain.
Rain hurrying all of Pointe Coupee agriculture

By DICK WRIGHT
Advisory Staff writer

Right now Pointe Coupee Parish wheat farmers, like others in south Louisiana, ought to be cutting the fields they planted last fall. But weeks and weeks of heavy rain have made fields soggy so the soil can’t dry out. Some of the wheat has lodged and some of the ripe grains have started to sprout on the stalk.

"We anticipate major losses as far as yield potential," said Miles Brashier, the county agent in Pointe Coupee Parish.

Farmers are talking about abandoning wheat fields, he said. "If the rain continues, I think I’ll set 40 percent of the wheat crop might be lost," he said.

Brashier is the agent in one of the most diverse farming parishes in the state. Wheat is just one of its major crops.

While most parishes have one or two dominant crops, Pointe Coupee harbors farmers who raise sweet potatoes, cotton, sugarcane, corn, soybeans, rice and pecans. The parish has one sugar factory and Pointe Coupee Parish.

Pointe Coupee is situated between the Atchafalaya and the Mississippi, just below the point where the Red River enters the Atchafalaya.

"It’s not growing thick and the root system didn’t establish out as it should have," Brashier said.

"It isn’t growing thick and the root system didn’t establish. I think up, but now that rain has blocked planting at the out, we could probably turn this thing around and salvage some of our crops," he said. But he added the outlook is not too good.

The result is extreme rainfall figures. In 61 stations, Shreveport had received 46 inches of rainfall when the normal by this time of year is 18.20 inches. Prude had received more than twice the normal for this time of year — a total of 49.64 inches.

"It’s too wet for some of our crops." Brashier said. But he added the outlook is not too good.

Rain has turned completely around on us," he said. "The hardest hit crops are cotton and wheat," Odom said. And rice will see some major damage, he said.

Odom said two paper machines at International Paper Co.’s mill at Bastrop, where the stalks were not cut, were shut down.

The parish is rich in river bottomland soils.

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the most notable thing about the drought is that it has a small stem, he said.

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