Rice, cotton may set records

With harvest well under way in Louisiana, two of the state's most important crops — cotton and rice — will have record or near-record production years, according to figures from the Louisiana Agricultural Statistics Service.

And total acreage figures are also challenging historic records. Sugar cane farmers are expected to harvest the largest number of acres ever. Cotton farmers, with 885,000 acres, are on pace to harvest the largest acreage since 1953. Rice farmers will harvest about 635,000 acres, making it the fifth-largest acreage on record.

"It has been one of those years when most of the factors needed to make an excellent crop fell into place," according to Louisiana Agriculture Commissioner Bob Odom.

"The weather during the spring turned warm at the right time. The rains held off while the farmers got in the fields to plant. Then the rains came when needed during the growing season to permit optimum growing conditions," Odom said.

"And so far we are enjoying excellent harvest weather. Generally, we have had dry and cool conditions. Farmers have been able to stay in the fields which allow them to harvest their crops as fast as possible," he said.

Figures compiled by the Agricultural Statistic Service gathered from Louisiana cotton growers indicate they will produce 1.4 million bales in 1994, up 255,000 bales over last year and the second highest production on record, bettered only by the 1991 production of 1.41 million bales. The per acre production figure is 759 pounds of cotton lint, 153 pounds above last year.

In the rice area, production is forecast at 30.1 million hundredweight, a 25 percent jump from last year. Yield per acre at 4,750 pounds is 200 pounds above last year. If the preliminary estimate holds, it will be the most rice ever produced in Louisiana.

Louisiana sugar cane acreage for harvest is expected to set a new record at 385,000 acres, up 20,000 acres from last year's all-time acreage record of 365,000. However, production for sugar and seed is forecast at 8.8 million tons, down about one percent from last year's crop.

Sugar yield is projected to hit 23.2 net tons per acre, up only slightly over the 23-ton figure for 1993. Soybean production is also strong, with 1.15 million acres for harvest, a yield of 27 bushels per acre is expected for a total of 31 million bushels, up eight percent from a year ago.

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