

**August 28, 2008**

## **SECC Agricultural Outlook**

*Tropical storm Fay brings much needed moisture*

*Growers assess storm damage, expect crop diseases to rise*

### **Row Crops**

Heavy rains from tropical storm Fay brought much needed moisture to the Southeast. Crop diseases are expected to flourish after the region received significant amounts of rain from the storm. In Georgia, there are concerns about diseases in cotton, peanut, corn, soybean, and forages after the storm. In particular, we might see an increase in incidence of leaf spot, white mold and rhizoctonia limb rot in peanut, soybean rust, southern corn rust, and *Stemphylium* leaf spot in cotton. In Alabama, we also anticipate an increase in the number of reports on leaf spot, white mold and rhizoctonia limb rot in peanut because of wet conditions.

### **Forages**

The moisture will help improve forage conditions. While it is too late to provide extra forage production, the rain will allow for a good late cutting of forage bermudagrass and extensive late season grazing. It will help tall fescue pastures to rebound as well. In addition, it will allow all of the warm season perennials to approach the dormancy season with some significant growth which will enable them to better survive the winter. We anticipate good planting conditions for winter annuals because of good moisture condition. Lack of moisture was one of the biggest problems last fall. It was too dry to even plant at this time last year.

Disease could be an issue, particularly if we get cool night temperatures. *Helminthosporium* leaf spot on bermudagrass and (later on) cool season annual plantings will be problematic with more moist conditions.

### **Peach**

Rain and strong winds from tropical storm Fay damaged some peach trees in South Georgia. Growers anticipate that there will be some tree losses next season due to lodging. The losses will be due to wounding that creates an opportunity for boring insects to move into wounds and fungal problems that are associated with tree stress and wet conditions. Growers will need to take steps to reduce further tree damage, ensure that soil is replaced and adequately tamped down around all trees, even those that are not lodged over and maintain good tree health during the next growing season.

### **Apples and Wine Grapes**

Apples will likely not be impacted, assuming that a good spray program has been implemented. However, it is possible that growers might observe an increase in late-season rots such as bitter rot. There is concern about the effect of wet conditions on wine grapes that are in the middle of harvest or just prior to harvest. If splits occur due to excess rainfall, then it is possible that

various rots will come through on wine grapes. Rain from tropical storm Fay comes at a bad time and it does not benefit wine grapes, since excess moisture is not good during the ripening process.

### ***Pecans***

The pecan trees in SW Georgia counties along the Florida border from Lanier to Lowndes west to the corner with Alabama had significant rain and wind damage. Damage includes broken limbs, downed trees, and nuts blown off. Some growers estimate around 10-50% crop loss. In some orchards, standing water up to two feet might pose a problem if it does not drain within a week. While certainly a severe problem for those growers affected, the state crop overall from southern Mitchell County northward had minimal to no damage. Despite the wet conditions, we do not anticipate diseases in pecans to be an issue this late in the season. Most pecan orchards were clean prior to the storm and are expected to remain disease-free.

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