

Organic News

Organic Cotton and Peanut Tour



Working with organic producers, specialists, and researchers a great organic tour of both peanut and cotton production has been planned for **Thursday, September 1st in the Seminole area**. The tour will start at **8:00 am** with registration at the Gaines Co. Civic Building in Seminole at 402 NW 5th Street (Corner of NW 5th and NW Ave. D). **The tour will leave at 8:45 am from the Civic Building and return at noon for a sponsored lunch**. Two continuing education credits will be offered on the tour.

The first stop on the tour will be on the Neil Froese Peanut Farm just north of Seminole on CR 110 east of Hwy 62. At this organic peanut field tour participants will discuss growing organic peanuts and production in 2022. Dr. John Cason, Texas A&M AgriLife Research Peanut Breeder will talk about a research variety trial in this field for organic peanuts. Issues about weed control, insects or diseases will also be discussed.



The next stop will be at the Rob Warren farm south on FM 1429 across Hwy 180 to CR 421 (Fairview Rd.) where his farm is a few miles down on the left. Tour participants will have a chance to talk about organic cotton on both upland and Pima fields. Dr. Jane Dever, Texas A&M AgriLife Research Cotton Breeder and Dr. Murillo Maeda, Extension Cotton Specialist will be on hand to discuss cotton production and breeding in 2022.

Sponsors for the Organic Cotton and Peanut Tour include **Birdsong Peanut (meal sponsor)**, Back to Nature Compost, Marrone Bio, American Plant Food, Algrano Peanut, Certis Biologicals, Texas Peanut Producers Board, Wilco Peanut, Trico Peanut, Viatrac Fertilizers, Texas Earth, GreenDirt, and New Deal Grain.

To participate in the Tour and to get an accurate head count for the meal **please call** Amanda (Gaines Co. Extension Office) at **(432) 758-4006**.

Agricultural and Food Policy Center

The Agricultural and Food Policy Center (AFPC) (<http://www.afpc.tamu.edu>) conducts analyses of the impacts of government policy proposals and/or implementation procedures on farmers, agribusiness's, taxpayers, and consumers. Its primary constituency is the U.S. Congress,

particularly the Agriculture Committees. The AFPC also conducts research and/or educational programs for government agencies, farm and agribusiness organizations, and agricultural leadership throughout Texas and the nation.

You might be interested in a report they put together on **"Economic Impact of Higher Crop and Input Prices on AFPC's Representative Crop Farms."** To download a copy, you can go here <https://tinyurl.com/yckaz44m>



Rice Field Days and Future Research

June and July were both months to highlight rice research in Texas. On June 28 a Rice Field Day was held at the Eagle Lake Rice Research Center and on July 14 a Rice Field Day was held at the Beaumont Rice Research Center. Why two? Well, there are two areas of rice production in Texas split by the City of Houston!

The field days provided opportunities to work on two organic rice projects with producers. **First**, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension is part of a **multi-state project to facilitate the growth of organic rice production** and foster the growth of the domestic organic rice market. We are working on the adoption of new and innovative organic production practices, barriers to adoption of those practices by producers, some economic information about organic rice production and overall consumer attitudes toward organic rice in the US. During the field day we were able to meet with organic rice producers and start this rice project.

A second project is just beginning but will have a huge impact on improving organic rice production. **Dr. Tanumoy Bera** along with other researchers and extension specialists are working on a project entitled, **“Development of Sustainable Organic Rice Ratoon Production Systems.”** In the past, research has led to improvements in main crop organic rice production, but data on how to optimize ratoon (second crop) crop organic rice nutrient management and assess sustainability are sorely lacking. Developing economically and

environmentally sustainable practices is critical to further expansion of organic rice production in the US. We propose to conduct comprehensive field experiments to assess the **effects of cultivars, cover crops, and nitrogen rates on ratoon crop rice yields, milling quality, pest pressures, environmental sustainability, and economic viability**. This project will be conducted in organic grower fields and give us great data to improve overall organic rice yields.

Organic Cover Crops

Cover crops are a part of any certified organic plan, and their importance is growing in all agriculture systems for many reasons. Unfortunately, they can also be a source of frustration (for many reasons!) and this year one of the top reasons is the short supply of seed, high prices, and the persistent drought. Still the benefits can certainly outweigh the costs and include:

Cover crops improve soil health. The living soil microbiome must have plant roots to survive, and plants need that soil microbiome to produce.

Growing cover crops provides roots and consequently root exudates.

Microbes feed on the exudates and then the roots feed on what the microbes leave behind, namely plant nutrients. Also, there are lots of fauna (insects and

animals) that live and feed in and on those cover crops. This includes earthworms, potworms, beneficial nematodes, collembola (springtails), etc. These insects and animals play a huge role in breaking down organic matter, removing weed seeds and creating soil aggregates.

Cover crops reduce water use. We commonly talk about **EvapoTranspiration** rates in agriculture.



This summer it is not unusual to see **ET** rates over 0.4 inches per day. **ET** is drastically reduced with soil cover and becomes **T** (plant transpiration) with soil cover. Added to reduced water use is the ability of soils with cover crop residue for taking in and holding or storing more water!

Cover crops lower soil temperature. This is often overlooked but with air temperatures over 100° we can see soil temperatures rise to over 120°. This will affect root development negatively in the top few inches of soil, and this is where we irrigate roots.

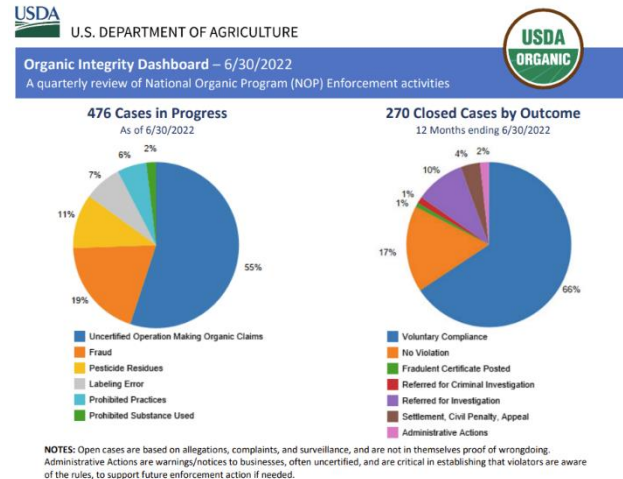
Cover crops are fertilizer. They are a significant source of nutrients with nitrogen being the primary. Everyone knows that legume cover crops are a source of nitrogen, but all cover crops are a source of nitrogen! But they are also a source of most major and minor nutrients too. It is not unusual for a good crop of cowpeas to supply 100 units of N to the following crop plus P and K. Also, the microbiome around cover crop roots is taking in many micronutrients and chelating them for future use by crops.



Cover crops help control pests. There is a lot of research that shows how cover crops “recruit” beneficial insects, fungi and bacteria preventing plant pathogens. They basically start the beneficial cycle so that when you plant your cash crop, they are in the soil or in the above ground cover ready for “prey” (aphides, mites, caterpillars, etc.) to eat. For instance, cowpeas have floral nectaries in the petioles and leaflets that attract beneficial insects to the plant.

Organic Program Regulation

Couple of things I recently received. First, I do like to highlight the quarterly reports from the NOP



on enforcement. As you can see in the picture there are 476 cases in progress and the bulk are uncertified operations saying they are organic. I run into this all the time! Folks think that because they use an organic practice or just believe in organics that they are automatically organic.

Second, there is this story from the US Attorney’s Office for the District of Minnesota. **Cottonwood County Farmer Charged with \$46 Million Organic Grain Fraud Scheme**
MINNEAPOLIS – A Jeffers, Minnesota man has been indicted for defrauding grain purchasers by selling non-GMO grains falsely labeled as organic. According to court documents, between 2014 and 2020, James Clayton Wolf, 64, a certified organic farmer, engaged in a scheme to defraud grain purchasers by selling them non-GMO grains falsely represented as organic. Wolf, who did not hold a legally required grain buyer’s license, repeatedly purchased non-organic corn and soybeans from a grain seller and resold the grain as organic product. As part of his scheme, **Wolf also grew**



conventionally farmed crops using chemical fertilizers and pesticides, in violation of organic farming standards. Wolf provided grain purchasers with copies of his National Organics Program certification but withheld the material fact that the grains were not organically farmed. As a result of his fraud scheme, Wolf received more than **\$46,000,000** in payments from grain buyers.



NOP Ruling on Organic Cottonseed

There has been **some concern** about new varieties of cottonseed that are coming into the US, and if they can be used for organic cotton planting. There was a potential issue that the non-organic cottonseed may have been **treated or delinted with a chemical not allowed** in the **National Organic Program (NOP)** and potentially still be on the seedcoat when planted in an organic field.

NOP 5029-1 Response to Comments for the Seeds, Annual Seedlings, and Planting Stock guidance, Paragraph 5, Definition of "Priming" and Types of Treatments that Need Review, states: *"We have also clarified that substances used during the production of non-organic seed or non-organic planting stock do not require review. This includes substances that may be used in post-harvest handling and cleaning of non-organic seed and planting stock, that do not remain on the seed when it is planted."*

"Therefore, so long as the material does not remain on the non-organic seed when it is planted, the seed would be allowed in organic production,

provided it meets all other NOP requirements for non-organic seed."

A specific example of this scenario includes non-organic cotton seed that has been delinted with sulfuric acid. **Manufacturer affidavits** should attest that the acid has been neutralized, and no longer remains on the seed when planted.

A big thanks to **Brandi Chandler with TDA** for getting this clarification on the rule from the National Organic Program.

"Beginner" Organic Training!



Okay, maybe this picture is not exactly a beginner organic class but by the next newsletter you could be in the picture!

Mark it on your calendar, the first **"Beginner Organic Training"** program will be held on Tuesday, **October 18** starting a 1pm and going through 5 pm, Wednesday, **October 19** in **Georgetown, Texas**. This "beginner" training program is really for **anyone** who has an interest in learning more about organic production, but it is certainly important for those considering "the plunge" into organics.

Topics are being planned but include an overview of the Texas organic program, tour of a local organic nursery, soils and soil microbiome, cover crops for Texas, organic products & pest control, organic fertilizers, biostimulants and a compost tour, what's involved in organic certification, beneficial insects in organic production and panel discussions.

We are working out the details for cost and a final agenda, but plans are to make it affordable, easy to participate, and fun to attend. Put it on your calendar with more to come!