

# Agriculture News

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## Meat processing plant closes

PLAINVIEW, Texas (AP) — Cargill has announced it will idle a West Texas plant and lay off all 2,000 workers because of a tight cattle supply stemming from years of drought.

A news release from the Wichita, Kan.,-based company Thursday says the Plainview workers will be laid off Feb. 1.

Other Cargill plants in the region and in other parts of the country will not be affected.

The release said the company will work to relocate Plainview employees to its other plants.

The Plainview plant, according to a Cargill website was established in 1971 and processes 4,650 head of cattle per day.

The site reports that the Plainview facility employs 2,050 people and operates three shifts, 24 hours a day.

Plainview city and Hale County officials were notified of the closure Thursday, at the same time the plant's employees were told, according to the *Plainview Daily Herald*.

The closure will be a blow to the community's economy. The nation's cattle herd is at its lowest level since 1952.

Higher feed costs from drought in Texas and elsewhere and ranchers' selling off their cattle have reduced the number of animals headed to meatpacking plants.

Cargill said it could reopen the plant if cattle numbers increase in coming years.

## Cotton News

### Texas Appellate Court: ACSA Arbitration Rules Found to be "Substantively Unconscionable"

By Mary Jane Buerkle

Advocates for a more fair cotton contract dispute arbitration process scored a win Friday as the state's Eleventh District Court of Appeals agreed with a Gaines County judge in the 121st Judicial District who deemed the arbitration rules of the American Cotton Shippers Association, as applied to disputes between merchants and producers, as "substantively unconscionable."

Venture Cotton Cooperative and Noble Americas Corporation appealed the original decision, which occurred after cotton contract disputes between them and certain High Plains cotton producers were being forced into ACSA arbitration. The growers involved in the contractual disputes contested the terms of the arbitration.

Although Plains Cotton Growers never took any position on the merits of the lawsuit in Gaines County nor any other cotton contract dispute, staff began meeting with growers about a year ago to discuss issues related to the ACSA arbitration process. As a result, PCG filed an amicus, or "friend of the court", letter brief with the Eleventh District Court of Appeals, supporting the Gaines County judge's decision and stated that the ACSA arbitration rules, as applied to merchant-to-producer contracts, placed producers at a serious disadvantage.

"Above all, PCG supports sanctity of contract between all parties involved," PCG Executive

Vice President Steve Verett said. "Going forward, it's our goal to make sure that if arbitration is going to be included in cotton contracts, it's going to have to be an arbitration process that provides equal representation for both sides. The process for settling any cotton contract dispute has to be fair."

PCG will continue to work through the National Cotton Council to effect change in the ACSA arbitration process so that producers and merchants have equal opportunity for success without causing undue economic hardship.

### January Crop Report Lowers High Plains Production Estimate

By Mary Jane Buerkle

The January crop report from the National Agricultural Statistics Service revealed yet another drop in upland cotton production figures for the Texas High Plains.

NASS estimates that Districts 1-N and 1-S will produce 2.92 million bales, down from 3.4 million in their December report. Expected statewide production dropped from 5.5 million bales to 5 million bales. Nationwide upland production estimates were down from the December report to 16.25 million bales.

However, worldwide production for the month was estimated to be higher and consumption slightly lower, resulting in ending stocks of 81.7 million bales, according to the World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates report.

Yield per acre estimates increased for both the northern and southern portions of the Plains Cotton Growers service area. The northern half esti-

mates increased slightly, from 726 pounds/acre to 745, but estimates for the southern half jumped 89 pounds from 458 pounds/acre to 547.

The report also decreased harvested acreage by 790,000 acres, from 3.11 million acres in December to 2.32 million acres of the 4.22 million planted in the area in 2012. As a result of that adjustment, acreage abandonment on the High Plains now is estimated at about 45 percent for 2012.

Cotton acreage nationwide for 2013 is predicted to decrease, with some projecting planted acreage to be as low as 10 million. However, much of that shift is expected to occur in areas other than the High Plains, where only a slight adjustment is expected.

"We've still got a lot of time before any seed goes into the ground on the High Plains and those decisions are made," PCG Executive Vice President Steve Verett said.

Much of the High Plains

received welcome rainfall this past week, and almost all of the West Texas Mesonet sites have recorded at least a half-inch for the month.

### Area Ag Conferences Scheduled for January

January 21 - Cotton Production Profit Workshop, Morton - Contact Jeff Molloy, County Extension Agent-AG, for more information at 806-266-5215.

January 22 - South Plains Ag Conference, Brownfield - Contact Chris Bishop, County Extension Agent-AG, for more information at 806-637-4060.

January 22 - Grain Sorghum Symposium, Ollie Linder Center, Plainview - Contact Gary Cross, County Extension Agent-AG, for more information at 806-291-5267.

January 23 - Northwest Texas AG Conference, Wellington - Contact Dale Dunlap, County Extension Agent-AG, for more information at 806-447-2313.

## South Plains Agriculture conference to address drought-management

The South Plains Ag Conference is set for Tuesday, Jan. 22, and this year has something for everyone.

The annual agricultural-education program will be held in the Activity Center of First Baptist Church, 219 W. Main St. Registration is \$15 and includes lunch and six Texas Department of Agriculture continuing education units.

Registration will be held from 7:45-8:15 a.m., followed by a welcome and introductions. The list of speakers and the topics they will cover includes:

- **Dr. Jason Woodward**, Assistant Professor and Extension Plant Pathologist, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension and State Peanut Specialist, "Disease Issues in Cotton and Peanut;

Peanut Production in Drought Condition (irrigation timing, variety selection, etc.)

- **Dr. Mark Kelley**, Extension Cotton Agronomist, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, "Cotton Variety Selection in Drought Conditions and Irrigation Timing"

- **Debbie Slocum**, Inspector, Texas Department of Agriculture, "Texas Department of Agriculture Laws and Regulations Update"

- **Jason Coleman**, Manager, South Plains Underground Water Conservation District "South Plains Underground Water Conservation District Update"

- **Mary Collier**, County Extension Agent- Family and Consumer Sciences, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, Terry

## AgriLife to hold smartphone training

CONTRIBUTED

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service will conduct an iPhone and iPad workshop for agricultural producers from 1:30-4:30 p.m. Monday, Jan. 28 in the board room of the Brownfield ISD administration building, 601 Tahoka Rd.

"Our goal is to train farmers and ranchers to use their iPhones and iPads to make decisions to increase their bottom lines whether they are in the field, on

the tractor or in the pickup," said Chris Bishop, AgriLife Extension agent in Terry County.

Bishop said instructors will train producers to utilize specific "apps" to more effectively manage risks in their business and improve the profitability of their operations.

He said they will learn to access market data to help them evaluate relevant pricing strategies and learn to use the training team's Cost of Production App to improve their knowledge of costs and break-evens of various commodities produced on the South Plains.

"They'll also be introduced to a wide array of other apps related to marketing, budgeting, irrigation decisions, various time-saving calculators and other tools," he said.

Bishop said iPads with the apps already installed will be available for participants to use during the workshop.

"We want producers leaving this workshop to have a good working knowledge of how to enter data and use the various apps to improve their price and production risk management skills," Bishop said.

Setting is limited; preregistration is required by Thursday, Jan. 24. Individual registration is \$12; credit cards accepted.

For more information and to preregister, call the AgriLife Extension office in Terry County at 637-4060.

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Each workshop participant will have access to iPads with apps already installed!

Monday, January 28, 1:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.  
Brownfield ISD Administration Building, 601 Tahoka Rd  
Registration Fee: \$12.00 / person, credit cards accepted  
Seating is limited; RSVP required, call 637-4060 by Thurs., Jan. 24.

Individuals with disabilities who require an auxiliary aid, service, or accommodation in order to participate in any Extension event are encouraged to call 637-4060 at least one week in advance of the program in order for proper arrangements to be made.

Educational programs of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service are open to all people without regard to race, color, sex, disability, religion, age, or national origin. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating

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