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AgriLife Extension to host peanut workshop March 29

South Plains peanut producers have had two difficult growing seasons with little rainfall and high input costs.

This season, peanut prices are down significantly and growers need to focus on the basics of production to minimize input expenses and maximize potential profitability.

Producers and peanut industry personnel will be able to review and learn peanut production practices March 29 at a workshop conducted by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, Terry County.

The workshop will be held at the Party House in Coleman Park at Brownfield. Registration will begin at 8:30 AM. The Clint Williams Peanut Company, Western Division, will sponsor the meeting.

Dr. Jason Woodward, Extension Plant Pathologist and Texas State Peanut Specialist, will review the results of Virginia and Runner peanut trials conduct across the region in 2012.

Dr. Woodward will also discuss irrigation demand and timing in peanut production. Dr. Peter Dotray, Extension Weed and Herbicide Specialist, will discuss the importance of timing herbicide applications in peanut production systems.

Dr. Calvin Trostle, Extension Agronomist, will discuss Valencia Peanut production and variety trial results. Scott A. Russell, Extension Agent- IPM, will discuss the importance of scouting peanut throughout the growing season.

Texas Peanut Producers Board Executive Director, Shelly Nutt, will provide an industry update for attendees.

Attendees will earn three Texas Department of Agriculture continuing education units during the meeting.

The workshop is free of charge.

Coleman Park is located in southeast Brownfield, to the east of highway 385/62. For more information please contact the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, Terry County at 806-637-4060.

Individuals with disabilities who require an auxiliary aid, service or accommodations in order to participate in an Extension sponsored activity are encouraged to contact the number above in advance to make arrangements.

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Blizzard Dampens Drought

A historic blizzard that dumped 19 inches of snow on parts of the Texas Panhandle has helped relieve drought conditions that have persisted for two years, but the improvements will only be short term unless the region gets a wet spring, meteorologists and climate experts said.

The U.S. Drought Monitor released Thursday shows the entire Panhandle remains dry, with some areas still in extreme or exceptional drought.

The map, released weekly by the National Drought Mitigation Center, shows that except for a small part of West Texas and an area of East Texas, the state remains either abnormally dry or in drought.

Locally in Terry County, southern portions of the county are designated as being in "D2" or "Severe" drought conditions, according to the latest drought monitor report.

The northeast corner of the county remains in the grips of a "D3" or "Extreme' drought, according to the new designation.

Thursday's U.S. Drought Monitor listed just under 50-percent of the state as suffering "Severe" drought conditions.

According to the Texas AgriLife Extension Service's Keetch-Byram Drought Index, Terry County had an average score around 500 as of Tuesday's reading.

The Keetch-Byram Drought Index (KBDI), created by John Keetch and George Byram in 1968 for the United States Department of Agriculture's Forest Service, was devised based on mathematical models for predicting the likelihood of wildfire based on soil moisture and other conditions related to drought.

KBDI is a soil/duff drought index that ranges from 0 (no drought) to 800 (extreme drought) and is based on the soil capacity in 8 inches (200 mm) of water. The depth of soil required to hold 8 inches of moisture varies. A prolonged drought (high KBDI) influences fire intensity largely because fuels have a lower moisture content.

The KBDI is a measure of meteorological drought; it reflects water gain or loss within the soil. It does not measure fuel moisture levels in the 1 to 10 hour fuel classes, which must be measured by other means for an accurate assessment of fuel moisture, regardless of the drought index readings.

The dry conditions peaked in 2011 when rain nearly disappeared and temperatures hovered above 100 degrees for months on end. These conditions dried out pastures, depleted reservoirs, forced ranchers to sell their herds, sent hay prices soaring and caused a Texas water agency to cut off water to rice farmers for a second consecutive year.

The blizzard that hit Amarillo and other parts of the Panhandle last Monday helped bring the city's snowfall levels to an above average 29.6 inches. Last year it received 9.2 inches of snow, below the 11.2 inch average.

One- to two-inch amounts of snowfall were reported in Brownfield, with some slightly higher totals in the northern reaches of Terry County from last week's weather event, according to weather tabulations provided by the Texas Tech Mesonet weather monitoring system.

"The snow will help the drought some, but it's been ongoing for a whole, so it's going to take a lot of liquid to alleviate the drought, but we did see improvement in our drought status," weather service meteorologist Christine Krause told the *Amarillo Globe News*.

"We had good moisture, so it's certainly going to help. But we've had two hot, dry years, so it takes quite a lot of moisture to alleviate that," she added.

Brandon Boughen, a Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service agent for Potter County, called the snow "a nice reprieve."

"Most of the time, if you talk to farmers, they say the best thing to happen would be a little bit of moisture at the right time, and I think it might be the right time for people," Boughen said.

State Climatologist John Nielsen-Gammon said the snow will help with spring and summer forage, but the improvements will only be short-term unless there is a wet spring.

"Hopefully, we'll get enough moisture in the ground to get rivers active again. We have a long way to go with reservoir levels," he said.

Locally, Brownfield has received 1.59 inches of precipitation thus far in the 2013 calender year, nearly one-fifth of the 10.49 inches seen in the 2012 calender year.

Brownfield, in the 2011 drought year, saw only 4.15 inches of precipitation, according to Texas Tech Mesonet figures.

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