

Agriculture and Natural Resources

2020 Commodity Marketing, Technology and Industrial Hemp Education

Developed by:

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Relevance

Cotton, grain Sorghum, soybean, corn, and rice production continue to be a major economic force in Wharton County. USDA reports **234,079** total acres planted in 2020 in these five major crops for Wharton County. The 2015 and 2019 Texas Community Futures Forum identified that crop producers will need to keep abreast of marketing opportunities, precision agriculture practices, variety/seed technology developments, and alternative crops (e.g. Industrial Hemp) to remain competitive in the industry.

Wharton County ranks 22nd in the State in total agricultural receipts and 2nd in the State in total value of crops, including nursery and greenhouse production. The 2017 Census of Agriculture for Wharton County reports \$208,540,000 in total agricultural receipts, which is down 44% from the \$373,637,000 reported in the 2012 Census of Agriculture. As costs of production continue to increase and farm income declines, applied research and marketing education is needed to maintain a crop producers' economic sustainability in the years to come.

Response

The Wharton County Row Crops Committee was instrumental in developing, delivering, and evaluating educational programs in 2020 that addressed new crop system technology, commodity marketing, and informed producers of a new and emerging industrial hemp industry. The following educational conferences and seminars were conducted in 2020:

- Upper Gulf Coast Feed Grain and Cotton Conference – January 23, 2020. This event is organized as a multi-county program in Wharton, Texas (Wharton County) – Wharton, Matagorda, and Colorado County cooperating. Selection of grain and cotton production topics and presenters is directed by Row Crops Committee members in each of the three counties.
- Result Demonstrations were implemented and data was collected on the following:
 - Replicated Agronomic Cotton Evaluation (RACE)
 - Uniform Corn Variety Trial
 - Soybean Variety Trial
 - Evaluation of the Effect of Application Rate of Chicken Pit Manure on Corn Grain Yield

Results

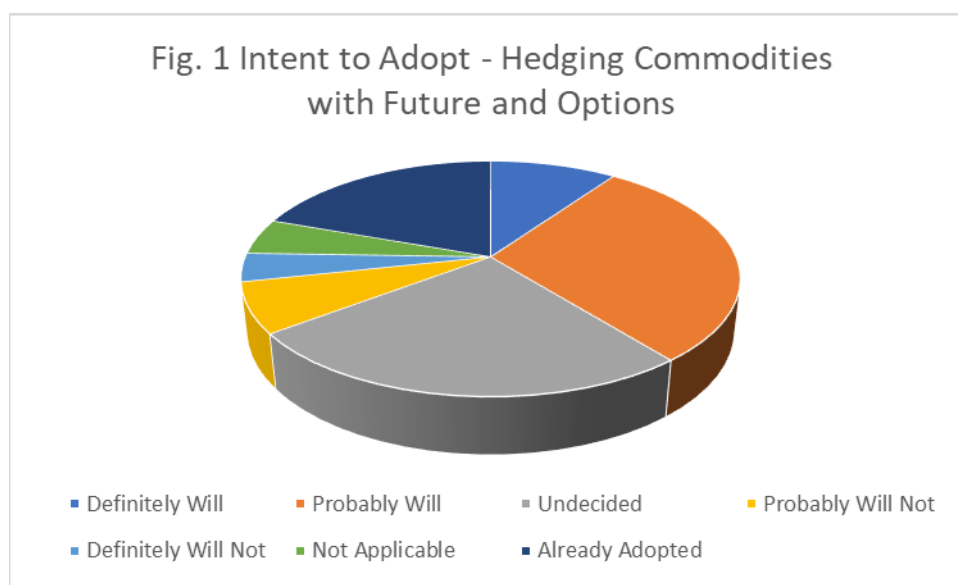
Upper Gulf Coast Feed Grain and Cotton Conference

To determine the programmatic results of the Feed Grain and Cotton Conference a retrospective-post evaluation instrument was administered the day of the conference. 105 of 190 (47.65%) completed evaluations. Fig 1. Respondents report that 51.9% of farmers who attended the conference intend to adopt the practice of hedging commodities with futures and options. 19% of respondents (or 20 people) report

that they already hedge commodities with futures and options. 4% have no intentions of hedging commodities with futures and options. Participants reported 190,288 acres managed, and a total anticipated economic benefit to their operations of \$837,682 or \$4.40 per acre.

Client Change Level of Understanding: Upper Gulf Coast Feed Grain and Cotton Conference

TOPICS	Mean Value BEFORE	Mean Value AFTER	Percent Increase
Knowledge of a new and emerging cotton disease known as 'cotton blue disease'	1.51	2.86	45.0%
Auxin herbicide drift minimization.	2.97	3.64	22.3%
Cotton risk management strategies given the 2020 current cotton market outlook	2.38	3.26	29.3%
Gene Drive Technology	1.33	2.76	47.7%



2020 – First Year of Hemp Production in Texas

Hemp growers must certify their hemp crop to the local USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) county office. Those certified Hemp acres are listed under the USDA’s Crop Acreage Data report. This report dated October 1st indicates that Matagorda County certified 533.28 acres of Hemp; 0.5034 acres of Hemp certified in Fort Bend County; 0 acres of hemp certified in Wharton, Colorado, Jackson Counties. That same Crop Acreage Data report shows that 65,450 acres of Hemp were certified planted in the U.S. in 2020, compared to 146,780 planted acres of Hemp in the U.S. in 2019. 1,978.916 acres were certified planted in Texas in 2020 in a total of 42 counties. Approximately 1,038.38 acres in Texas were planted for the intended use for CBD; 376.24 acres for fiber; 533.28 acres for grain; and 31 acres for seed. Wharton County did not have any producers acquire a license to produce hemp in 2020. Market saturation for hemp, decreased CBD prices, a lack of viable research on agronomic practices, and a lack of reliable hemp varieties for the Upper Gulf Coast environment are a few reasons why Wharton County producers are slow to enter into hemp production.

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