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**CEA Newsletter Items for February, 2015**

**Alternative Crop Options/Timing of Topdress N on Wheat/Updated Crop Budgets**

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**2015 Cropping Option Alternatives to Cotton**

With low prices on cotton for 2015 numerous producers are evaluating shifting some acres out of cotton to grain or specialty crops for 2015. This is not an easy decision, especially if you have been almost exclusively cotton, don’t have harvest equipment for grain, you factor in your historical base acres, and also try meet landowner expectations if you are renting.

If you are considering some other crop options, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension agronomist Dr. Calvin Trostle has published annually in June “Alternative Crop Options after Failed Cotton/Late-Season Crop Planting for the Texas South Plains,” <http://lubbock.tamu.edu/files/2014/06/Hailout-Replant-LatePlant-Guide-TX-S-Plains-Trostle-Kelley-AgriLife-2014.pdf> Although this document is oriented toward replanting (and last recommended planting dates, for example), there is a large amount of “First Things” information for about a dozen grain and specialty crops that are produced in the region. If you are needing additional information possible alternative cropping decisions, especially in a primary crop situation, contact us in the county Extension office or Dr. Trostle.

**2015 Extension Budgets for Cotton and Alternative Crops**

Hand-in-hand with the above agronomic information is the all-important budget information for South Plains crops. Texas A&M AgriLife Extension ag. economics colleagues based at Lubbock have for several years compiled a series of budgets for irrigated and dryland crops.  Their host website for this information is <http://agrilife.org/southplainsprofit> I recommend you download the file to your computer (right click on the link then choose ‘Save Link As…’). When you open the file it you will find a row of “Tabs” across the bottom of the screen, and starting on the left will be

* Instructions, Menu, Universal Input Prices, Irr Alfalfa, Irr Blackeyes, …

Scroll to the right across these tabs on the bottom you will go through the irrigated crops then the dryland. Be sure to read the instructions, and among other things you can change A) the universal input prices (which will take effect across all budgets, e.g. tractor use, irrigation cost per inch, N fertilizer cost for liquid or dry, and the commodity price per market unit, etc.), or B) the individual budget input prices you want like yield goal, actual units of N, seed, hours of equipment use, etc.

**Spring Top-Dressing of N for Wheat for Grain**

Wheat across the region is in good shape. Some irrigated wheat has received little actual irrigation. It has been five years since I could have written that! Texas A&M AgriLife Extension has guidelines for decision making and the timing of topdress N on wheat that is going to grain. In general, producers in the Texas High Plains should think ‘late winter’ top-dressing rather than spring top-dressing. There is a specific growth stage in wheat—growing point differentiation—that guides the timing of not only the timing of topdress N but also ensuring that the N is in the root zone to optimize yield potential. A significant number of South Plains farmers with wheat for grain tend to be 1-2 weeks late with timing of topdress N, though this seems to be less an issue in the Texas Panhandle. For further information on this topic consult the two N topdress documents near the top of the page at <http://lubbock.tamu.edu/programs/crops/wheat/>

For further information on crops in the Texas South Plains your area, or for specific questions you have, contact your local county agricultural Extension agent, an Extension crop specialist, or Dr. Calvin Trostle, extension agronomist, at (806) 746-6101, [ctrostle@ag.tamu.edu](https://owa.agnet.tamu.edu/owa/redir.aspx?C=0d7d4d045ca74dc09fd8b19aef5ff733&URL=mailto%3actrostle%40ag.tamu.edu)  Your question will be relayed to the appropriate Texas A&M AgriLife staff as needed.