**Considerations following Hurricane Helene**

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In the days following Hurricane Helene, we have begun assessing damage and determining yield and quality losses associated with the storm. Unfortunately, this will take some time but myself, our county agents, and my team of graduate students and student workers are diligently working to get this data out. While we are waiting on this, I have gotten a few questions about what we do moving forward, expectations from affected areas, and other things. Below are my major thoughts as we move forward on this crop:

1. **Don’t do anything until you talk to your FSA office and Crop Insurance Agent!!!**

* In most cases, I have learned that it is easier to do something than it is to do nothing. However, in some cases we are going to have to have some serious conversations about whether or not it is worth putting a picker in some of the fields in East Georgia. Before I made any moves to defoliate or pick a crop, I would have conversations with crop insurance folks and get them out there to assess the damage. Defoliating and running a picker in a field could run another $150 an acre, and if there isn’t much cotton there you are wearing out your machinery and risking a fire in some cases. Let’s not risk losing more than we already have if we don’t have to.

1. **What do we do defoliation wise??**

* For now, I will continue sending recs out to our county agents on a weekly basis, and I wouldn’t drastically change anything **for now**. However, I have a sneaky suspicion that some of the leaves on severely damaged cotton are declining/dying and there won’t be much of a way to remove them. On some of these fields, we may just be spraying thidiazuron to control and prevent regrowth, and ethephon to open the bolls up. However, we will learn more about what is needed on some of these fields next week. We will also keep a close eye on our later planted cotton, how it progresses following the storm, and defoliation recommendations as it relates to salvaging a late crop.

1. **What do we do with all this stained/dirty cotton???**

* Unfortunately, I’m afraid there isn’t much we can do. We have had good sunshine following the storm, which should have helped bleach some of the cotton back to a more white color. But there is still some that is stained from being in contact with the ground too long or other reasons. So we will have to pick it like normal. To add insult to injury in some cases, this will likely contribute to deductions based on fiber quality.

1. **Expect yields and grades to be off significantly**

* Again, unfortunately, if you are in a situation where you were hit hard by the storm, we need to have realistic expectations. By that, I mean that in the path of the storm we can expect reduced yield and reduced fiber quality as well.

We are doing everything we can to quantify yield and quality losses in response to the storm and provide data to those that will help get growers some form of assistance.