

2007 Peanut Crop Year in Review

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The 2007 peanut crop ended up being much better than anyone could have ever imagined. The final average yield for Georgia was 3,150 pounds per acre on 520,000 harvested acres. According to the USDA – National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), Georgia producers planted 530,000 acres in 2007. The final total production was 819,000 tons. The 3,150 pounds per acre was the 10th highest statewide average yield in Georgia, surpassed only by 2003 (3,450 lbs/A), 1984 (3,375 lbs/A), 2001 (3,330 lbs/A), 1975 (3,295 lbs/A), 1978 (3,280 lbs/A), 1985 (3,240 lbs/A), 1979 (3,235 lbs/A), 1974 (3,220 lbs/A), and 1982 (3,215 lbs/A). The 2007 crop rounds out the only other crop year in Georgia in which the average yield exceeded 3,000 pounds per acre.

The crop year started out as one of the driest on record, especially for the late fall of 2006 and winter and spring months of 2007. The rainfall, or lack thereof, was being compared to the 1954 drought that is so often mentioned. Rainfall data for October 1953 – May 1954 compared to October 2006 – May 2007 at Tifton indicated it was drier in 2006-2007. Planting was delayed as producers waited on moisture of any type to allow placement of seed into moist soil. By the end of the third week of May, only 33% of the Georgia peanut acreage had been planted and by the end of the fourth week of May only 55% of the acreage had been planted.

Very fortunately, at least for the central and eastern portions of the Georgia peanut belt, Tropical Storm Barry moved across south central and eastern Georgia on June 2nd bringing from 2 to 5 inches of rain over a 24-hour period. Unfortunately, as you moved west across south Georgia from Tifton, the rainfall amount quickly diminished to less than ½ inch in the southwestern corner of the state. The remaining 40-50% of the crop was planted in early to mid June, much later than desired.

Numerous fields in the southwest corner of Georgia that were not irrigated were abandoned or suffered severe yield loss due to the very dry beginning of the crop year. Sporadic rainfall events the remainder of the year was just enough to keep the crop from suffering an overall disaster. The rainfall events increased in the late summer and early fall, resulting in the staggering final yield.

As far as pest problems were concerned, tomato spotted wilt virus (TSWV) was a minor problem in most fields. Only those fields planted very early or with very poor stands suffered significant yield reduction from TSWV. The major pest problem during the year was white mold, or southern stem rot, caused by *Sclerotium rolfsii*. The high temperatures in mid August and the moisture that followed were the perfect combination for white mold outbreaks. Most of the state experienced maximum temperatures in the 100 degrees Fahrenheit range for two consecutive weeks in early to mid August.

The major weed problem was Palmer amaranth. It has become especially troublesome as many plants have developed resistance to glyphosate and the ALS family of herbicides. Florida beggarweed was also an issue in fields late in the season. Insect problems were mostly lesser cornstalk borer in the non-irrigated fields during the drought and thrips injury.

Harvest was much later than normal due to the fact there were so many acres planted in June. Fortunately, there was not a cold snap in October cold enough to delay or stop pod maturation.