

# OKLAHOMA AGRICULTURAL LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

## CLASS XVI

Scribe Notes  
Seminar 2  
October 10-12, 2012

**Theme:** *“Southwestern and West Central Oklahoma Agriculture and Industry”*

**October 10, 2012**

**Scribe: Jamie Cumming**

Plains Cotton Cooperative Association – Jay Cowart VP, PCCA’s Warehouse Division

Jay gave us a tour of one of the storage warehouse and gave some information on the daily operation. We viewed the machines in the building that were used to stack the bales of cotton.

This cooperative was formed in 1953 and facilitates the buying and selling of cotton, and guarantees the payment to seller. In 1963, they purchased the warehouses and in the 1980s expanded into Altus and into Sweetwater, Texas.

Two big impacts to the cotton industry was the eradication of the boll weevil in the early 2000s and improved cotton varieties. Due to these improvements, they have doubled the number of bales produced in the same territory. In an average year about 1,250,000 bales come through the coop.

The majority of cotton is produced on dry land but some fields are irrigated. They are realizing with today’s drought conditions that even the irrigated cotton it is very dependent on rain.

The cooperative is farmer owned by about 20,000 members.

The supply chain is as follows: farm to gin (cut samples from all sides of a bale to grade and a computer system assigns a number to the owner) to warehouse (bale is labeled with owner and class). You can track a bale back to the exact farm and buyers can shop bales with this labeling system. Some retailers are using this as a marketing tool, promoting that you can track a garment of clothing back to the farm from which the cotton originated. Each bale has a unique number in the computer system to access the supply chain and has one tag throughout the whole logistics process.

A truckload can hold up to 88 bales of cotton.

The coop’s income stream comes from two sources: payment to receive a bale averages about \$3.25 per bale and storage fees are \$0.07 per bale per day. A bale will stay about 140 days in the warehouse. A standard bale weighs about 480-490 lbs. The warehouse is equipped with fire sprinklers.

For about half the growers, PCCA does all the marketing and the other half have corporate contracts with other market channels

The loan chart has classes listed by color which indicates the amount of trash, strength of fiber, and micronaire (will take die evenly). Harvest conditions and varieties can affect all of these factors.

Jay touched on the international issues with default buyers, particularly in Peru.

Lunch served at the coop was burgers and chips provided by AgPreference.

The first speaker during lunch was Randy Bowman with OSU's Southwest Research and Extension Center in Altus. They maintain websites ([ntokcotton.org](http://ntokcotton.org)), have experiments at the research stations, and work with National Cotton Council. What is the future of cotton in Oklahoma? With the 1998 boll weevil eradication and continued research, the outlook is very good. They are currently conducting 16 county trials: seven on irrigated land and nine on dry land. They are trying to get additional irrigation but the cost is high. They are also researching weed resistance and drought resistance. Advancements have been made with the round bale picker. He estimates that there will likely be a reduction in acres in Oklahoma due to grain prices and cotton conditions.

Expression of color: 11 is bright white and a 31 is darker. One bale of cotton = 1500 shirts or 350 pairs of 14 oz. denim jeans.

Tom Buchanan, Lugert-Altus Irrigation District Manager, was the next speaker during lunch. In 1946, they started to impound water on 135,000 acres. The last time the lake was full was in 2007. The year 2012 was the first time the irrigation district did not deliver water from Lake Lugert.

A big change occurred with a cement lining on the irrigation distribution channels and the use of tail water. These were the most effective use of water with no waste. Drip irrigation has only been used about 12 years so there still a lot of learning to do. The drip holes spoon feed what the plant needs so it provides an advantage. Irrigation is turned on from about July 1 – September 8.

There are many water issues in Oklahoma to be addressed. Surface water belongs to the property owner and ground water is for public use.

We then went to Martha Valley Farms and were able to watch the cotton harvest with a picker. The bolls were put in a buggy and then dumped into a module maker where it is tramped it to make room for more bolls. On a good day they can produce eight modules per day. It takes about seven days to receive the tests results of the cotton.

The picker itself is very hazardous to work around. It has three tanks: 150 gallons of gas, 150 gallons of grease, and 300 gallons of water. They have to fill it every day.

Tom and Matt Muller discussed the drip irrigation. There is funding available to assist with the installation. In utilizing drip irrigation, there is no insecticide to run off into the water table. It is the most efficient system and green. It uses surface water which has a lot of sediment so it needs filters. This pump provides 400 gallons per minute. Electricity is crucial since diesel has a higher cost. Some solar panels have been experimented with for providing electricity but they will not withstand hail storms.

We then went to the Muller barn and viewed a stripper. This machine is cheaper and easier to maintain but it must have the right conditions to be effectively used during harvest. They usually plant in May. Later in the summer, it starts fruiting and opens to a flower. The flower dies and underneath is the boll with about 32 seeds. Cotton fibers grow until the boll opens.

May – check soil moisture and plant germination (worry about insects and hail storms)

June – some growth; close to blooming time the demand for water increases

July – water the crop; crop develops; cotton can grow too fast

July/Aug – hope the temperature drops some; demand for water drops off

Sept – Do we shut off the water or keep watering? If it gets too wet it can ruin the crop.

GMO seeds are much more expensive than regular seeds but you are paying for much more resistance.

Matt touched on the importance of agricultural advocacy and waging a war with emotions and feelings by telling your story on the farm. We must defend others in agriculture. We are all trying to provide a safe, affordable food supply domestically.

If you don't have "Drill It, Dig It, Grow It," any economy would shut down.

We then traveled to the Cotton Growers Cooperative Gin. It is a privately owned coop and will gin one bale a minute. They have two 12-hour shifts and can gin about 1000-1200 bales per shift. We were able to tour the three-part process:

First stage – shake it to get out debris and dirt

Second stage – bolls fall into a saw-like machine to separate the seeds from the fiber

Third stage – fiber goes up and slides down to the baling area

For each bale, two samples are pulled for testing. About 90% of the cotton goes to exports; cotton seed goes to the cooperative oil mill in Oklahoma City as nothing goes to waste.

Cotton needs the infrastructure support, gin, and irrigation or you are not making any money. This year they only estimate that 7000 bales will be produced.

We then traveled to the Eldorado Farmers Coop to see the grain elevator and shuttle train. A 110-car train can load and unload from this facility. Each storage bin can hold up to 250,000 bushels of grain.

We then traveled to Rio Rojo Outfitters owned by Tanner and Tara Holder. This hunting lodge is on 12,000 acres and they have hunts for deer, quail, dove, turkey, and some hogs and predators. They have bow, muzzle-loader, and rifle seasons. They provide three meals each day. They can sleep 14 individual and have three queen beds. Their business has been on several television shows including Scott Andersons' BackLand Experiences and Roger Raglin Outdoors. It is pretty much the ultimate man cave☺!

We had dinner at the home of Rick Holder. Rick and Mark Holder are the owners of Holder Brothers Beef. They have stores in Altus and more recently Edmond.

The Holder Ranch was started in 1898. They started with wheat but then decided to stick with cattle. In 1998, they started an Angus herd because they wanted to take their meat to retail outlets. Their goal was to remove all inconsistencies out of the process. They studied genetics for better meat quality. They built a 600-700 head feed yard. The cattle were sold out naturally. Two years ago, they took their meat to retail. Good marbling and tenderness were part of their goal. They wanted a good steak every time. They have stores in Altus and Edmond. The processing plant is in Stratford, Texas. They look for tenderness genetics, maturity, and use dry-aging. The trim is used for making sausage. They sell some wholesale but their goal is to sell mostly retail.

Trying to grow and understand the market – you should have a better product to get out there and bid in the retail world. Lawton is a possibility for their next store. Their products have been in the Edmond store for five months. Several whole food type stores have opened recently. They are going toward a market with less competition.

Natural: in a global audit; no hormones, no antibiotics, no feed additives. There is a lot of confusion about what natural means. Consumers think they want grass-fed beef.

Once the cattle are stressed, they may get sick.

**October 11, 2012**

**Scribe: Jamie Doyal**

We started the day by visiting the Phelan Ranch near Mt. Park. We went to the ranch to see how Mr. Phelan manages his native pasture. Due to the drought and recent wildfires, Mr. Phelan has sold all of his cattle. He currently has approximately 250 head of Dorper sheep. Mr. Phelan has 3500 acres, and it is 100% native range. Aside from spraying mesquites, he does not use herbicides.

Next we went to Woods and Waters Winery and Vineyard in Anadarko. Mr. Pound did not have us on his calendar and was not there to give us a tour or provide lunch. Farm Credit of Central Oklahoma had planned to sponsor the lunch. Russell Strecker from Farm Credit met us at KIG Barbecue in Anadarko and sponsored our lunch.

After lunch, we went to Alan Mindemann's farm north of Apache to see his no-till farming operation. Alan is a fourth-generation farmer and the first of his family to go to a no-till operation. He grows various crops including milo, soybeans, canola, and radishes. He also grows certified seed wheat. He said the key to no-till farming is fertilizer and no-till results in better yields.

From Apache, we traveled to the Horn Canna Farm north of Carnegie. The canna farm was started by Mrs. Snow's grandparents in the 1920s with six canna bulbs. The farm has grown to 110 acres of cannas with 129 varieties. The first water well in Caddo County was on the Horn Canna Farm. Last year the farm was sold to Mrs. Snow's son, Dustin. We were able to tour the cellar where the cannas are stored and the farm where the cannas were being harvested.

At the Bethel Mennonite Church in Hydro, we were welcomed by Senator Ron Justice and Representative Harold Wright. They spoke to us briefly and answered questions. From there we went to the school to help with the Hydro Fire Department Fundraiser Auction. At the end of the night, we departed from the auction to stay with our host families in the area.

**October 12, 2012**

**Scribe: Chris Hitch**

As we drove south from Hydro, Dean Smith told us a story about how the California Trail crossed through here and you could cross the entire state of Oklahoma without crossing one river if you took a certain route. Some mounds looked like haystacks on the horizon at night but they were just rocks.

Virgil Slagell spent some time talking about cabbage. They plant in the fall and harvest in March usually, but they also do some planting in August and harvest in November. Stacy Howeth did not manage to obtain a cabbage. She was very disappointed.

At the Sweet Potato Company, candy was for sale for \$1. I bought a Butterfinger, Snickers, and Nestle Crunch and gave the Nestle Crunch to Ginger.

Gary Disse explained how they sort the potatoes, cure them in a big warehouse, and ship them to a plant in Louisiana. It was a pretty neat process and he designed a sorter called the GDS-7 (Gary Disse Sorter number 7 for the number of cocktail napkins that were used in explaining the design requirements to an engineer). Any good redneck welder would have gotten it done after two napkins.

We then went to a sweet potato field and watched a harvester work. It leaves a lot of potatoes in the field. I guess it just shows how much is harvested. Stacy Howeth loaded approximately 300 lbs. of sweet potatoes into a Walmart sack at the field and smuggled them into one of the vans. (Okay, she did ask if it was alright to take some.)

The best thing about our visit to the Gunter Peanut Company was the free spicy peanuts. It was a pretty cool organization. I never knew much about peanuts and just assumed you had to dry them down like corn in a bin. The trailer set up was really great. Mike Kubicek gave us some peanut facts for the state and region. Robbie Gunter toured us around his facility. Stacy Howeth managed to collect yet more “samples” from our visited locations.

Back on the bus, Allen Entz regaled us with stories of auctions and land prices on the trip back to Schantz Farms near Hydro. The values have risen drastically. I think this is probably true everywhere.

We had a lovely meal inside Schantz Farms’ shop. The shop is nicer than my house – and bigger. Our lunch time speakers were good. Rick Wicker explained a great deal about Oklahoma Water from the perspective of a regulator with no appreciation for the difficulties of running a business.

Next, Dr. Lynn Brandenberger spoke to us about the Land Grant Mission and how it affects us. There is a great deal of need for additional help in the Land Grant universities for funding, extension and teaching.

Dr. Jim Motes spoke at length about peppers and how their ingredients do all sorts of things besides burn your mouth. They are used in all sorts of products and the higher the capsaicin content, the more desired the pepper. Unfortunately, the higher the content, the more fragile is the plant. There are some pepper plants that if you touch the fruit, you immediately burst into flames and die a miserable death.

Merlin Schantz talked to us about his harvesting equipment, how he has to modify existing equipment for his specialty crops, and then we went out to look at the fields before heading home.