A Siratac User's Way To an Early Cotton Crop.

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Question

What makes an early crop ?

Answer

There are many factors that are conducive to producing an early cotton crop. In order of importance they are:

1. SEED-BED PREPARATION (soil condition).
2. PLANTING DATE.
3. CLIMATE.
4. PEST MANAGEMENT.
5. WATER MANAGEMENT.
6. NUTRITION.
7. VARIETY.

Pest management is only one link in the cotton management chain. To produce an early crop it is essential that all links in that chain be securely "welded" together.

Pest Management and Siratac

I view Siratac not as a crop manager in its own right. I use it as a tool just as I use the neutron probe and computer to aid in water and soil management decisions and the computer to aid with financial decisions.

The key to good pest management is accurate and organized insect

checking. If you don't know exactly what is happening in the crop at all times with respect to insect levels and plant development then pest management becomes a "hit and miss" affair and is usually more expensive than it needs to be.

I use Siratac because it is a discipline. The checking and crop monitoring methods are very thorough and organized. On a large operation such as Telleraga where new insect checkers are being trained each year, the Siratac system provides an excellent means of quickly getting new recruits up to a level of competence equal to the task required of them.

Telleraga is consistently among the first 10% of crops in the Gwydir Valley to commence harvesting cotton. There has never been a problem with maturity of the lint so the crop has been genuinely early.

Telleraga has always been a strict follower of the Siratac system so this should provide sufficient evidence that Siratac as a pest management system does <u>not</u> produce a late crop.

It should be obvious that to be able to control insects in a cotton crop successfully and economically then it is extremely important to know at all times what level and types of pests are in that crop. We find that the methodology and discipline that Siratac imposes achieves this very well.

In sequence, the procedures to follow, as I see it to achieve an early crop you need to :

1. Plant on time and establish a good plant stand. This means that the seed-bed preparation must be timely and done in such a way as to avoid soil compaction and seed-bed conditions that will lead to poor plant establishment.

2. Have a season that provides sufficient heat units to enable a crop to fully mature. An early establishment of a good plant stand will help this, but the rest is beyond the grower's control.

3. Ensure that the young plant does not receive undue set-back from early season insect damage (tipping out etc.) and, of course, once fruiting begins, adequately control square and boll damaging insects. Proper observances of Siratac checking procedures will achieve this very well!

4. Ensure that the crop has adequate water to fulfil all its functions. Timing of the first irrigation is the most critical as time lost due to the late application of this first irrigation cannot be recovered. The use of the Neutron Probe and scheduling software can help here.

5. Provide the crop with adequate nutrition. Excess growth due to excess nitrogen can be controlled with growth regulators but soil and petiole nitrate testing can aid in this side of management.

6. Choose a variety which suits your situation. Whilst all our current varieties are capable of producing an early crop. Some areas are better suited to one variety or another. For example, in an area where bacterial blight is a severe problem, it would be best not to use a susceptible variety.

An early crop is the result of many management practices. Pest management is only one of these. In fact within reason I feel it ranks fairly well down the order in comparison with SEED-BED PREPARATION, PLANTING DATE and IRRIGATION MANAGEMENT. If these factors are not tightly controlled then no amount of insecticide will help.

In conclusion :

Siratac does <u>not</u> make LATE CROPS

You cannot spray SUNSHINE