

Crops

After 95 years, it's business as usual for Texas co-op gin

By J.T. SMITH

THROUGH both horrible crop years and fantastic seasons, Rule Co-op Gin has pressed on since its first season in 1913.

Texas' oldest continually operating cooperative gin is humming, heading into Thanksgiving — and perhaps a “white” Christmas — as the Rolling Plains may have one of its best cotton crops in history.

“It’s sure an above-average crop,” says Russell Beakley, veteran Rule cotton grower and vice president of the Rule Co-op Gin & Elevator board.

Jimmy Teichelman, a co-op board member from Sagerton, says with good harvest weather, the crop could be outstanding. Some dryland cotton looks as if it had been irrigated because of frequent rains in one of the wettest springs and summers in Rolling Plains’ history.

Beakley says the 21,000 bales ginned in 1979 still remains the record. Part of the reason that record hasn’t been broken is farmers diversifying opera-

Key Points

- Rule Co-op is in its 95th ginning season heading toward Thanksgiving.
- Although rooted in cotton, the co-op’s grain business is growing.
- Farmers in the area are getting more diverse in their crop mixes.

tions in the area to many crops, often in rotation with cotton.

Grains will have impact

With wheat prices soaring in 2007, Colby Christie, Rule Co-op manager, says he has no doubt a lot of cotton acres will go into wheat next year.

Many farmers rotate cotton and wheat, or other crops, as a way to deal with root rot disease in cotton. Beakley, for example, devotes 50% of his acreage to cotton and 50% to wheat as his regular rotation.

But that’s all right with Rule Co-op because its board members have worked for years to try and beef up the



READY FOR COTTON: Jimmy Teichelman (left), Rule Cooperative Gin & Elevator board member; Russell Beakley, vice president of the co-op board; and Colby Christie, manager, are thankful for a cotton harvest that may be the best ever in the Rule, Texas, area.

grain division.

Christie notes the co-op handled more than 30 million pounds of wheat in 2007. But the grain business is not just a renewed romance with wheat.

Milo’s background strong

By October, Rule Co-op already had taken in more than 8 million pounds of milo — as the region’s farmers commonly call grain sorghum.

“When it’s all done this fall, the milo harvest likely will total 15 [million] to 20 million pounds,” Colby reports. “It depends on how much the wild hogs get.”

Colby assures milo is no longer a stepchild crop.

He says beyond cotton, wheat and sorghum, Rule area growers also produced peanuts, sesame, soybeans, mungbeans and some commercial corn in 2007.

Meanwhile, the Tifton 85 bermudagrass production for the year was successful.

“The crop mix has gotten real diverse here,” Colby notes.

But that doesn’t bother him. He grew up at Hereford in the Texas Panhandle in grain country, and so his background fits long-term goals to improve the grain



BACK TO BUSINESS: Colby Christie, manager of the Rule Cooperative Gin & Elevator in Texas, and Joyce Ramirez, co-op secretary, deal with both the cotton and grain business at the almost century-old continually operating cooperative.

business of Rule Co-op.

Colby credits office secretary Joyce Ramirez for keeping the co-op facility organized each day. He also lauds the other co-op board members for their staunch support, including Kraig Kupatt of Sagerton, co-op president; Robert “Ace” Turner, director and board secretary, of Rule; and Jerry Saffel, director, also of Rule.

In five more seasons, Rule Co-op can celebrate 100 years of operation. More grain is likely, but it won’t forget its cotton roots.

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