



COMMENTATOR

PLAINS COTTON COOPERATIVE ASSOCIATION | WINTER 2015-16

COTTON MARKET FLATLINED BY SLOW DEMAND

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT – THINKING ABOUT THE FUTURE

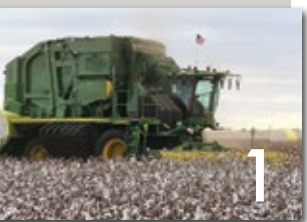
A FAMILY TRADITION – PCCA FAMILY FARM PHOTO CONTEST WINNERS

A CAREER OF COOPERATIVES – GAIL KRING RETIRES FROM PYCO



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VOLUME 46, NO 1 | WINTER 2015-16



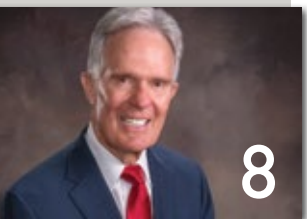
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On the cover...

PCCA Members were working long hours in November to harvest this year's crop.

Photo by Jayci Cave.

COMMENTATOR is published three times per year as information for its farmer-members by Plains Cotton Cooperative Association (PCCA), a cotton marketing cooperative with headquarters at 3301 East 50th Street, Lubbock, Texas. Eligibility to participate in programs administered by PCCA is established by law without regard to race, color, creed, sex, religion, age, national origin or handicap.

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COTTON MARKET

Flatlined by SLOW DEMAND

By John Johnson
Photo by Jayci Cave



The cotton market so far this season has been a virtual mirror image of a year ago with futures prices locked in a narrow 60- to 68-cent range. Slow demand resulting from a number of factors has thwarted any opportunities for the market to gain some momentum as the world's textile mills have been buying cotton in a "hand-to-mouth" fashion since the 2015-16 marketing year began.

The most notable lack of demand is found in China where imports have plunged this year after the government announced it would limit quotas to about 4.1 million bales in order to encourage consumption of domestically-grown cotton. It is estimated that almost 50 million bales currently are held in government-owned reserves. In December, USDA estimated China's cotton consumption would total 32.5 million bales this marketing year, down 500,000 from the previous month's projection.

Imports for the first nine months of 2015 were down 42 percent, according to the China Cotton Association. In September alone, China imported 58.6 percent less cotton than it did in the same month a year ago. Meanwhile, in early November, the government announced it would maintain the same import quota of 4.1 million bales for 2016.

USDA and the International Cotton Advisory Committee (ICAC) have lowered their estimates of China's cotton imports in 2015-16 to 5.75 million bales and 5.50

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million bales, respectively. Imports in excess of China's 4.1 million bale quota will be subject to higher tariffs as mills there are expected to seek better quality cotton than is available domestically. The reduced estimates for China's imports are based on expectations for mill use to decline this season due to high production costs that have forced textile mills to reduce operations or completely shut down.

In early July, China's National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) announced it would begin auctioning cotton from the reserves later that month and in August. The commission stated the cotton to be sold would consist of approximately 1.5 million bales of 2011 domestic crop at a floor bidding price of 84.50 cents per pound, 2.16 million bales of 2012 domestic crop with a floor bidding price of 91.00 cents per pound, and approximately 918,000 bales of 2012 crop imported cotton with a floor bidding price of 99.40 cents per pound, according to reports.

The volume of cotton purchased via the auctions fell far short of NDRC's goals due to concerns about the quality of the fiber and the high floor prices relative to prevailing world prices. Another factor was low prices for man-made fiber which has continued to take market share from cotton. Evidence of this can be found in the decreased import levels of cotton yarn which are not as restricted by quotas in China.

Compounding the world cotton market situation is China's overall economy which has rattled economies elsewhere in the world. China's stock market fell more than 40 percent between mid-June and August, forcing the government to take unprecedented action. One of those actions was a surprise devaluation of China's currency, the yuan, in mid-August after a survey revealed the factory sector declined at its fastest rate in more than six years. By early November, Beijing also had cut interest rates for the sixth time in a year after the country's economic growth dipped to 6.9 percent in the third quarter, the worst performance since the 2008-09 financial crisis.

Reports at that time also indicated Chinese leaders expected the economy to shift to a slower rate of growth, perhaps as low as 6.5 percent, as the government began crafting its next five-year plan. Details of the plan, which some say will call for increased consumer spending, are scheduled to be announced in March.

Since China is the world's second largest economy, its economic woes have had a domino effect

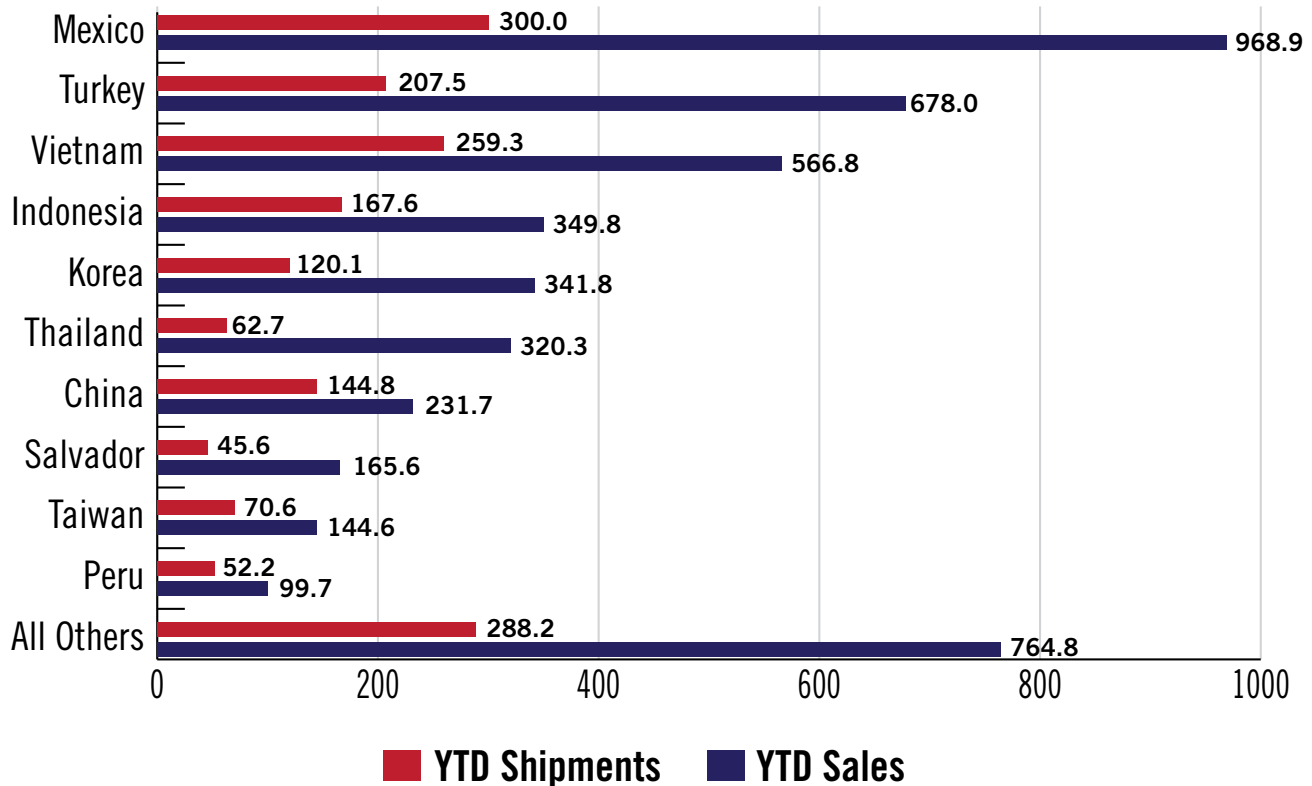
on other countries. Consequently, currencies primarily in emerging markets also have been devalued, making U.S. products, including raw cotton, more expensive.

The United States is not the only country that exports cotton to China. India, the world's largest cotton producer and second largest exporter, and Australia also are affected by China's cotton import quotas. India may be able to sell more cotton to Bangladesh this season, but Australia stands to feel the most impact because almost two-thirds of its exports went to China during the past four seasons.

Meanwhile, the United States has managed to offset the lower exports to China by increasing sales to other markets. By late November, sales of U.S. cotton to Mexico for delivery in the 2015-16 marketing year stood at almost 970,000 bales. Turkey had purchased 678,000 bales, Vietnam had purchased almost 566,000 bales, and sales to Indonesia stood at almost 350,000 bales. Two possible reasons for Mexico's strong volume are a shortfall in domestic cotton production and the attractiveness of U.S. cotton at current price levels.

Overall, cotton imports by Asian countries other than China are expected to increase this season to 20.7 million bales, according to

USDA Cotton Export Summary Thousand Bales



another report from ICAC, representing 60 percent of projected world cotton trade. Bangladesh may import more than 4.5 million bales this marketing year, up 4 percent from last year, and imports by Vietnam may exceed 4.5 million bales. Indonesia's imports may increase to 3.6 million bales, ICAC said.

Despite the brighter outlook for improved sales to other Asian countries, some traders and analysts have been concerned about the United States achieving USDA's current export sales estimate of 10.0 million bales. Since the beginning of the current marketing year on Aug. 1, weekly export sales of U.S. cotton have been limping along. Some of the more pessimistic observers were talking about exports as low as 7.5 million to 8.0 million bales, but at least one analyst sees opportunity.

Based on the November supply and demand estimates from USDA, the analyst separated the data into three parts: the United States; China; and the rest of the world (ROW). The analyst combined the ROW production shortfall with China's cotton imports, and the result was a seasonal deficit of 13.3 million bales. If the United States exports the 10.0 million bales currently estimated by USDA, it still leaves a deficit of 3.3 million bales. Consequently, the analyst concluded U.S. exports are needed to fill the deficit in the ROW.

By late November, weekly U.S. export sales were showing improvement. Year-to-date sales now total 5,021,563 bales, according to USDA's Export Summary report released on Dec. 10. Thus, weekly sales need to average 152,307 bales for the remaining 34 weeks of the marketing year, and weekly shipments need to average 243,137 bales.

The 2015-16 season is far from over, and a number of factors will be closely monitored by traders and analysts. First, the U.S. cotton harvest was only 80 percent complete as of Nov. 29 compared to the five-year average of 88 percent. Second, it appears there will be a shortage of high-grade, machine-picked cotton this season. Third, lingering doubts about China's economy and its impact on other countries continue to be mentioned on a weekly, if not daily, basis in market newsletters and commentary.

ICAC's latest forecast for world cotton consumption this season was reduced by 3.0 million bales to 112.0 million. Despite the reduction, the consumption level will be 918,600 bales more than in 2014-15. 🌱

Meanwhile, the United States has managed to offset the lower exports to China by increasing sales to other markets.

Letter *from the* President

THINKING ABOUT THE FUTURE

Lately, I have been taking stock of our assumptions about how we view markets for cotton. Much of what we believe is shaped by the momentum of news and analysis we read. I think we sometimes tend to put all our eggs in one basket. Maybe it's time we applied a little common sense to our expectations about reliable buyers for our fiber.

Who can and will buy cotton in the future?

Because cotton is primarily an exported product in the U.S., we have to look for the customer base of the future. Therefore, someone around the globe must have the means to manufacture and purchase cotton-based products.

Although not perfect, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is probably the best measure of a country's economic ability to consume apparel and textiles. It's the combined value of goods and services generated by an economy. The GDP rate is usually the result of an economy's population and productivity rate. So, who is at the top of the list when it comes to GDP firepower?

We've generally assumed that the most crowded place on the planet is China, and we've thought they are among the most productive. Both are currently true, but what about a few years from now? The facts point to changes in the future.

A World Dominated by Cities

In 2025, 37 cities in the world are projected to have a population of more than 10 million people. Seven of those are in China. There are several more in China that are just below 10 million. I suspect that China has known this is coming for years. The country has enforced a one-child per family policy since 1978. The math of this situation will play out over the next 30 years to a point where China's population is projected to begin declining in 2050. And like most other developing economies, the population will be older on average than it is currently.

If you want to keep your economy growing, you must have producers. Perhaps this explains why China is the world's largest investor in robotics technology.

Demographic shifts around the world will require a rethink about future markets. These changes have and will continue to cause governments to implement policies that affect the normal operations of markets. An example of this is the subsidy program China operates for its cotton growers.

Rather than move to one of the large cities in China, farmers there can be enticed to remain in a rural area in the western part of the country and produce cotton for the equivalent of about \$1.45 per pound for the government. Putting it mildly, that's quite a bit higher than the prevailing price for cotton in the world.



Between cotton purchased from exporters and cotton grown internally, China has amassed 65.5 million bales of stocks (equal to nearly two years of mill use). The impact of that policy is hitting you in the wallet. At the urging of the U.S. cotton industry, our government has questioned the transparency and equity of the Chinese policy at the World Trade Organization (WTO) level. The Chinese government's response? Basically that they will do whatever it takes to keep farmers in rural areas.

Is China Still Relevant?

Absolutely.

However, their cotton policies and a slowing economy have limited trade and affected the structure of our export business. Until they use up a significant portion of their reserve cotton, China has restricted imports to WTO minimums (which are a fraction of historical levels).

I hope they can figure a way out of the mess created by their decisions. In the meantime, we're busy searching the world for the best markets for our members' cotton. Countries with open trade structures and aggressive entrepreneurs will probably have a competitive advantage in sourcing our members' cotton.

Sincerely yours,

C. Kevin Brinkley
Kevin Brinkley

Sources: A.T. Kearney, American Enterprise Institute, Pew Research Associates, WTO, USDA-ERS

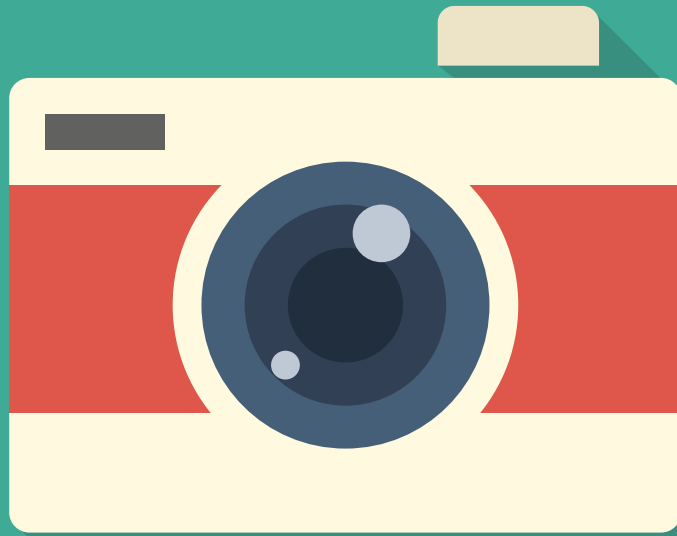
A World Dominated by Cities

By 2025, 37 will have a population of over 10 million



Rank	City	Country	Population	Rank	City	Country	Population
1	Tokyo	Japan	38.7	20	Kinshasa	Congo	14.5
2	Delhi	India	32.9	21	Chongqing	China	13.6
3	Shanghai	China	28.4	22	Rio de Janeiro	Brazil	13.6
4	Mumbai	India	26.6	23	Bangalore	India	13.2
5	Mexico City	Mexico	24.6	24	Jakarta	Indonesia	12.8
6	New York	USA	23.6	25	Chennai	India	12.8
7	Sao Paulo	Brazil	23.2	26	Wuhan	China	12.7
8	Dhaka	Bangladesh	22.9	27	Moscow	Russia	12.6
9	Beijing	China	22.6	28	Paris	France	12.2
10	Karachi	Pakistan	20.2	29	Osaka-Kobe	Japan	12.0
11	Lagos	Nigeria	18.9	30	Tianjin	China	11.9
12	Kolkata	India	18.7	31	Hyderabad	India	11.6
13	Manila	Philippines	16.3	32	Lima	Peru	11.5
14	Los Angeles	USA	15.7	33	Chicago	USA	11.4
15	Shenzhen	China	15.5	34	Bogota	Colombia	11.4
16	Buenos Aires	Argentina	15.5	35	Bangkok	Thailand	11.2
17	Guangzhou	China	15.5	36	Lahore	Pakistan	11.2
18	Istanbul	Turkey	14.9	37	London	UK	10.3
19	Cairo	Egypt	14.7				

A Family Tradition



PCCA Family Farm Photo Contest Winners

By Jayci Cave

The members are the heart of any cooperative, and this is no different for Plains Cotton Cooperative Association. PCCA hosted a Family Farm Photo Contest on Facebook in September 2015 to highlight some of the great families of this cooperative. The Abernathy family received the most votes and won the contest, and the three families with the most votes won the opportunity to be featured in this edition of *Commentator*. Meet the Abernathy family, the Mason family and the Howze family.



The Abernathy Family Cotton Growers Gin Altus, Oklahoma

From left to right: Jarod Abernathy and Cade and Drake; Clint Abernathy; Justin Abernathy and Kenzie, Kreed, Kason.

Five generations of the Abernathy family have farmed in the Altus, Oklahoma, area. Clint Abernathy is the fourth generation to farm since his great-grandfather settled the place. Clint and his wife, Kim, have two sons who farm alongside them. Their son, Justin, is married to Amy, and they have three children; Kason, Kenzie and Kreed. Their other son, Jarod, is married to Jill, and they have two sons; Cade and Drake. The Abernathy family focuses their practices on tradition and family values.

Why did you participate in the photo contest?

Jill: We participated in the contest because farming goes deep into our roots, and we thought it was important to showcase our hard-working family and emphasize the importance of farming as a family.

What do you enjoy about having your family on a farm?

Amy: Having the family on the farm is something unique and very special to our large family! But some of our most prized reasons that we love raising the family on the farm is that you have the opportunity to see more sunrises and more sunsets than most do and that early on you have manners and learn to respect your elders. You learn the importance of listening and following instructions. You quickly learn the value of a dollar.

What makes your family special?

Kim: My family is special because we are close-knit and farm together. We respect each other and listen to each other when it comes to making decisions.

What is the best part of being a farm family?

Jill: A day in the life of a farm family is never the same. Some days are rewarding while others are discouraging, some days are warm and others are freezing, some days run smooth, other days are a disaster, but no matter what each day brings, they are all worth it. We wouldn't trade our farm life for anything.

Why do you farm?

Justin: I love farming because it has always been in the family. It is what I grew up around, and it's pretty much all I know. It is rewarding to start a crop and see it all the way to the end and finishing it. I really enjoy it.

Why is it important to be a good steward of the land?

Clint: It's important because the land was passed down to us from our parents and grandparents, and we intend on it to continue to my children and grandchildren. We are constantly looking for ways to conserve the soil because when that soil is gone, we do not get it back.

What would you say to someone who accused farmers of abusing the land?

Clint: This land means so much to us, there is no way we would abuse it. I also think in agriculture we need to be better at communicating. We have a generation of consumers coming online that we are going to have to communicate with on social media. We need that sort of communication so we don't get criticized in the first place. The facts need to be put out there in a way that this younger generation will read and understand what we are doing.

How can we be better stewards of the land?

Clint: As a whole, I think farmers continue to implement the practices that we have already started, and I think technology is going to be a big part of that. We have come so far already with the methods we use, but we need to continue that and to adopt the new technologies that come our way.

Why are you proud to be a farmer?

Clint: I am proud to be a farmer because it is a tradition in my family, and it is one that we are really proud to carry on. We feel like we do a good job with the land, and we enjoy it. We would not want to do anything else.

Why did you want to raise your children on the farm?

Justin: It is what my family has always done, and hopefully that is what we will always do. My kids are coming up, and I want them to experience the same things I did growing up. Coming out to a good, honest day's work to get where you need to be.

What are you doing to ensure future generations will be able to farm?

Clint: We are adopting conservation practices such as no-till and drip irrigation. We try to do precision farming by applying fertilizers accurately and just where they need to be. We don't apply any more pesticides than

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A Career of Cooperatives

Gail Kring Retires from PYCO



BY JAYCI CAVE

Looking back on his nearly 50-year career, Gail Kring said his favorite thing was learning and realizing the true value of the cooperative system.

"When you first start working here, you do not realize what the cooperative system is," Kring said. "You are just young, and you are doing a job working for a coop. Everybody says, well what is a coop? It is a business owned and operated by another business, but then you begin to realize that the coop is an extension of the individual producer to move his business further up the marketing chain and into the marketplace. With the coop gin, the coop compress, PCCA and then the oil mill, in no particular order, it allows the farmer to extend his operation and take profits from those areas. It took a while, but the fun part was realizing how the system works and really understanding it."

Kring retired from his position as President and CEO of PYCO Industries, Inc., this past September. He began his career in the cooperative system while attending Texas Tech University when he got a job working part-time at the oil mill running the scales.

"This was in 1961, and the beautiful part about the job was they would allow me to study if things got slow," Kring said. "During the fall, I would work seven days a week going to school during the day and then working at night, but I could also study at night which was really beneficial to me."

When Kring graduated from Texas Tech with his degree in business and a minor in industrial engineering, he was offered a full-time accounting position at the mill. Later, he became the personnel manager where he ran the safety programs. At one point, he even earned his insurance license and handled the mill's cooperative insurance program. Following that, he was put on the road traveling where he mapped out the mill's territory throughout Nebraska, Colorado, New Mexico, Texas, and Oklahoma. After three or four years on the road, he was given the opportunity to be the gin manager at Lockney Coop. He was there for five years managing the cotton gin, grain elevator and feed yard. When Wayne Martin became the manager in 1984, Kring was asked to come back to PYCO as the assistant vice president. When Martin retired in 2002, Kring became president and held the position until his retirement.

In his retirement, Kring plans to spend time with his four children, Karen, Scott, Tommy and Amy along with his seven grandchildren. He and his wife, Mary Ann, are planning to do some traveling and remodel their home. They also will continue to stay active in their church.

Over the course of his career at PYCO, Kring encountered his fair share of challenges. However, the one that stood out from the rest was when the dairy industry began moving into the High Plains of Texas in 2002. The dairies use whole cottonseed in their operations. Kring said back then, the oil mill could not compete with the dairies because they were paying more for the whole cottonseed than the mill could. At that particular time, in order to remain a member of the oil mill, a cooperative gin was required to deliver 75 percent of its cottonseed to the mill. Kring said this was not working

Each division cycles and there are years the oil mill does well, there are years the compress does better and there are years PCCA does better. So, between the three, we are still pulling together for the farmers.

because the independent gins could go out there and get the high dairy prices which would put cooperative members at a disadvantage.

"As a result, in 2004 we introduced the 50-50 program," Kring said. "All the cooperative gin had to do was bring 50 percent of their cottonseed to the mill, and they could sell the other 50 percent. We felt like that put our cooperative gins on an equal basis with the independent gins. There is only so much market out there with dairies, and if our gins were able to get 50 percent of it, and they were the same size as independent gins, then the independent gins could not get the top dollar and put the cooperative gins at a disadvantage. I think that is one of the biggest challenges we have faced but one of the best solutions we ever did."

Kring said he has enjoyed watching the cooperative grow and seeing how the forward thinking board has benefited the cooperative over the years.

"The board made the decision to put in the refinery to make refined oil so we could get into those markets and extend our arm out there," Kring said. "When we put that refinery in, all the other mills used to make fun of us, and we struggled at first. Now, everyone wishes they had a refinery, but it is too expensive to put one in now. But our board was forward thinking and put us into the refined oil business, and it has made the producers on the High Plains an awful lot of money."

Throughout his career, Kring said a lot of things have changed within agriculture and the cotton industry. One major change he witnessed has been the improvement in cotton varieties.

"The yields from cotton varieties are so much better than they were when I first started," Kring said. "We have varieties now, under proper growing conditions, that can just produce a lot of cotton which wasn't possible, but through breeding and genetics, everything has just come so far. This in turn has helped us with increased volume of cottonseed. It is a win-win for the producer, the compress, bales for PCCA to sell and for cottonseed."

Another shocking change he has seen in recent years is the decline of the cottonseed crushing industry. He said with the low price of cotton, many areas in the United States where there were previously oil mills, no longer have mills.

Kring said any business is based on relationships, and it is the relationships with the gin managers and the employees at the mill that he will miss the most.

"I was in charge of actually running the mill operations, and it is the camaraderie you develop with the young men and women that work here that makes it such a joy," Kring said. "If you really take an interest in them, you find out about their lives, their children and families. You see their children and families grow and mature. So the thing I am going to miss most is those relationships. The gin managers are good guys and even though they fuss at you sometimes, they are friends. The worries, the battles, I will not miss that, but I will miss the people."

As he leaves the cooperative system, Kring said in his opinion the greatest challenge cooperatives will face in the future is convincing the younger generation of farmers of the true value of the cooperative system.

"As you know, here on the High Plains of Texas is one of the greatest cooperative areas in the United States. You have the farmer, the coop cotton gins, then it goes on through the three regionals. I think the difficulty today is the new farmers coming along, a new generation of

farmers, do not realize and appreciate the value of the cooperative system and how hard their grandfathers and fathers fought to get it going." Looking back at the history of the oil mill, the mill began in 1936 despite opposition from others in the cotton industry.

"The independents fought it very hard," Kring said. "The other independent oil mills fought it. The banks fought it. They even tried to go through the federal government to fight it. They just did not want the cooperative to gain a foothold, but it finally did, and it has been a great system." Kring said, historically, the oil mill came first, and it helped organize the compress and PCCA.

"I wouldn't say the oil mill was the catalyst," Kring said, "but they were kind of the base to where these others came and they were interested in moving those things forward and they helped when they could. So, we have been cooperating for years, and that needs to continue."

In the past, the three regional cooperatives have put money back into the farmers' pockets. Kring said it has been dependable, steady money throughout the years, and it is important that the three work together for the good of the farmers.

"I think because we all work for the same people, there cannot be a division among the three regionals," Kring said. "We have the same customers, the farmers. Each division cycles and there are years the oil mill does well, there are years the compress does better and there are years PCCA does better. So, between the three, we are still pulling together for the farmers. We have got to have that unity among the three and work together as much as we can to be compatible and to fight for each other." 🍌



MARK PRYOR

Growing up surrounded by agriculture and developing a passion for technology at a young age prepared Mark Pryor for the role of CEO of The Seam. Pryor was named CEO in August 2015 after working several years with the company in multiple positions. The Seam was founded in December 2000 by PCCA and other leading global agribusiness companies to become the world's first completely online, neutral exchange for cotton trading. PCCA's TELCOT system served as the foundation upon which The Seam was built.

Pryor grew up three miles south of Memphis in Southaven, Miss. Growing up, Pryor said his family always appreciated and respected the agriculture industries with some of their close family-friends in the business and being surrounded by agriculture.

"My two brothers and I attended elementary school in Walls, Miss., which was surrounded by cotton fields as far as you could see," Pryor said. "I can remember sitting in class and hearing the crop dusters buzz the top of the school for the nearby fields."

Pryor now lives in Somerville, Tenn., a small farming community about 45 miles east of Memphis. He said his home borders a cattle farm, a cotton farm and horse pastures. Pryor said he comes from a long line of carpenters and craftsman and enjoyed watching his father and grandfather design and build objects out of wood.

"While I had an immense desire to create things," Pryor said, "my hammer never quite hit the nail when building items out of wood." When the Apple II computer made its appearance in the marketplace and in schools, Pryor said he quickly became immersed in technology and software development.

"I could finally build something and not worry about hitting my thumb!" Pryor said. "They say 'the rest is history', but in many ways I think we were just getting started."

Pryor went on to study computer science at Northwest College in Mississippi and also at State Technical Institute in Memphis.

Before joining The Seam, Pryor's career was in the banking industry; specifically, financial technology and software. He held several hands-on and management roles including software development, technical support, quality assurance, sales and marketing. He said this phase of his career provided important building blocks with first-hand experience in the primary areas of a financial technology company.



NAMED CEO OF THE SEAM

By Sinclair Dobelbower

While in this position, Pryor said he and his team were able to develop some of the first Internet home banking products as well as a touch-screen product in bank lobbies, at UCLA, and Johns Hopkins in Maryland.

"At that time, the Internet was in its infancy and Google did not exist yet," Pryor said. "Over 500,000 households were using the product a year later. Mainstream touch-screen devices did not really exist until the iPhone was released in 2007, so looking back, it was really extraordinary."

Pryor first joined The Seam in 2000 which he said was also his first professional exposure to the agriculture industry. His initial role was in directing software development and later advanced into the Vice President of Information Technology role which he held through 2011.

Pryor said there are numerous highlights from working at The Seam in his previous roles, particularly involving directing the design, architecture and implementation for the core, underlying technology that drives the business today.

"This technology has allowed The Seam to successfully clear billions in commodity transactions for hundreds of companies around the globe," Pryor said. "The same underlying technology has allowed The Seam to service multiple agricultural commodity products and entirely new industries altogether."

The Seam has changed and adapted over the years to meet the needs of the market, but as Pryor said, the only thing constant in life is change, and sometimes change can be a challenge. Some challenges include keeping up with the supply and demand of cotton as a whole, keeping current with new technological advances, and extending The Seam's reach globally and into additional commodity markets and technologies.

"When The Seam opened its doors, the biggest challenge was convincing businesses to steer away from their old way of trading cotton toward a more efficient, real-time marketplace," Pryor said. "With the razor-thin margins, the ever-increasing need for efficiency, coupled with 'soon-to-be-released' trading innovations, we have an opportunity to face the challenge head on."

Pryor said he has great visions for the future of the company, including extending their reach further into the supply chain, into other commodities, beyond U.S. boundaries, into agribusiness IT departments, and delving into more devices and platforms.

"The Seam has a rock-solid reputation in providing business-driven technology and trading solutions," Pryor said. "While our trusted brand and reputation is well earned and respected, it is also critical to our next move in the marketplace."

Outside of work, Pryor said he enjoys being outdoors hunting or fishing, especially when accompanied by family and friends. He said he is married to his best friend, Brenda, who is a schoolteacher and also a data conversion programmer in the banking industry. They have three adult children who continue to make them proud every day. Their daughter Rebecca, 25, is a schoolteacher, married and lives near Seattle with her husband, JP, who is active duty U.S. military. Their son Scott, 23, is in the Mississippi Army National Guard and lives in Memphis, Tenn., and works in the banking industry. Their youngest, Lauren, 21, is a junior and full-time student at Harding University in Searcy, Arkansas. Pryor said she occasionally runs into the Duck Dynasty family there but has yet to bring him an autographed duck call.

Another hobby of Pryor's is running marathons. He has run in about 15 marathons including The Boston Marathon in 2009 and 2010. He said his youngest daughter is following in his footsteps of being a runner as well.

"My daughter, Lauren, has taken up the sport and is challenging me for a comeback," Pryor said. "I guess I'll be dusting off my sneakers." 🏃

TAWC Improves Water Management *Through Education*

BY SINCLAIRE DOBELBOWER

From the Dust Bowl in the 1920s to the fluctuation of rains in the last few years, there is no doubt water has become a precious resource to farmers in West Texas. Thankfully, an organization based in Lubbock, Texas, is revolutionizing the way water is used in the region's farmlands.



Photos courtesy of TAWC

Established in 2005 and funded by the Texas Water Development Board, the Texas Alliance for Water Conservation (TAWC) is a project involving Texas Tech University, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, the High Plains Underground Water District, and producers in West Texas. The project uses demonstrations of irrigation technologies on land volunteered by farmers for economists and scientists to conduct research on the effectiveness of water conservation practices.

With more than 20 producers involved, the project spans more than 6,000 acres in Floyd, Hale, Lamb, Lubbock, Crosby, Parmer, Swisher, and Deaf Smith counties. These sites include a range of agricultural practices from monoculture cropping systems, crop rotations, tillage practices, land application of manure, and fully integrated crop and livestock systems. The project sites are monitored for water use, soil moisture depletion, crop productivity, and economic return.

Rudy Ritz, Ed.D., has served as the coordinator for outreach and education for the TAWC since December 2013. He said the data they have acquired over the last few years provides a strong foundation toward water conservation efforts.

“One of the main objectives is to help producers manage their water like a checkbook,” Ritz said, “but the general public also wants to know what producers are doing to improve irrigation methods.”

Rick Kellison, project director for the TAWC, has been with the program since its start in 2005. Kellison coordinates efforts between producers, industry, and political entities in order to get new technology to farmers.

“When we started, there was not a lot of irrigation management technology available to growers,” Kellison said. “Today, we have become a nonbiased source for new technology as it comes to this region, and we try to get that technology in the growers’ hands, not to endorse one over the other, but to help them make decisions and to share what they have learned as producers.”

The TAWC is moving toward more research on a series of new technologies such as dragline, which is an above ground drip-tape, and variable rate technology with irrigation systems that change the amount of water applied based on soil texture and other characteristics. Ritz said that the success of their research can be measured by the impact their education and outreach efforts have had on producers.

Another technology is the usage of capacitance probes in the soil that calculate for evapotranspiration, which is the movement of water into the air from the soil, and weather conditions. This provides useful information for farmers to know when to turn on and off their irrigation systems.

“It has made people aware of the impact of water conservation and that you can reduce the amount of water with the help of technology without having to sacrifice yield,” Ritz said. “Economists put up numbers on the board, and producers start to see dollar signs.”

Demonstration results and technologies are showcased every year in several different events. The TAWC hosts its annual field day in late August in Floyd County along with two or three smaller field walks during the growing season in May through July. The TAWC also is hosting the 2nd annual water college in January 2016 at the Bayer Museum of Agriculture. The college is open to anyone who wants to learn more about the TAWC and water conservation tools. There will be cotton, corn, and sorghum experts giving information along with a large number of vendors from the agribusiness sector. The college will feature Sid Miller, Texas Commissioner of Agriculture, as the keynote speaker.

“It has made people aware of the impact of water conservation and that you can reduce the amount of water with the help of technology without having to sacrifice yield.”

These are just a few of the many education, outreach, and public relations initiatives taken by the TAWC, and their efforts have not gone unnoticed. In May 2015, The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality recognized the TAWC as one of the winners of the 23rd annual Texas Environmental Excellence Awards. These awards are presented to the most innovative and effective projects that strive to protect the state’s natural resources. Governor of Texas, Greg Abbott, provided a statement in recognition of this award.

In the cotton industry specifically, Rick Kellison said that the water conservation efforts have been made in order for producers to use their given resources as effectively as possible. Another goal is to improve results through knowing what their maximum daily water use is and how they can irrigate and expect good yields.

“In this region, water is the most limiting factor as far as production agriculture is concerned,” Kellison said. “We are dealing with a finite resource, and we have to learn how to do a better job of using irrigation as a supplement and to utilize it as judiciously as possible.” ☺

PCCA

Joins Industry in Communicating Sustainability Message

By Sinclair Dobelbower

Market trends and research are showing consumers around the world are increasingly concerned that the food and fiber products they consume are responsibly produced by farmers that care about people and the environment.

In August 2015, PCCA officially became a partner with Cotton LEADS™, a program committed to promoting responsible cotton production centered on core principles that are consistent with sustainability and traceability in the supply chain.

Cotton Australia and The Cotton Foundation created the Cotton LEADS™ program in 2013 which is supported by Australia Cotton Shippers Association, National Cotton Council of America, Cotton USA, and Cotton Incorporated.

The program offers the global cotton industry a solution to increase the global supply of responsibly produced cotton. Cotton produced in Australia and the United States is automatically recognized as having achieved the core principles of the Cotton LEADS™ commitment. This cotton includes varieties of upland and pima cotton which can be conventionally or organically grown.

"Farmers are the original conservationists. Most raise their families on their farm so they take extra measures to care for the land and keep it safe," said Kevin Brinkley, President and CEO of PCCA. "It's no surprise to us that consumers are expressing a desire for cotton produced by growers that farm in the most responsible way possible. The Cotton LEADS™ program helps ensure that manufacturers know the story of efforts our farmers go to protect their families and their land."

The cotton produced in the program is grown based on a set of five core principles that encompass the practices involved with sustainable production.



COTTON LEADS™

The logo graphic for Cotton LEADS features a stylized, abstract representation of a cotton plant or flower. It consists of several curved, overlapping lines in shades of green and blue, creating a sense of movement and growth.

Principle 1 – Commitment

To the social, environmental, economic and regulatory factors required to produce world-class cotton.

Principle 2 – Recognition

That sustainable and responsible cotton production requires continual improvement, investment, research and sharing of the best practices information among growers and industry.

Principle 3 – Understanding

That leading change in responsible and sustainable cotton practices will have the most positive impact when implemented in collaboration among farm, regional, national and international programs.

Principle 4 – Belief

In the benefit of working cooperatively with similar programs that seek to advance responsible and sustainable cotton production in an effort to keep global cotton competitive in world fiber programs.

Principle 5 – Confidence

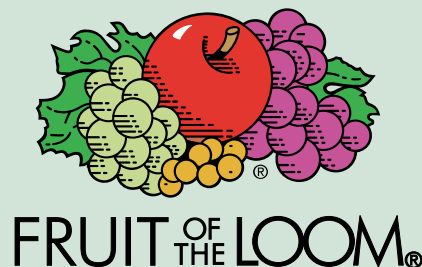
In cotton identification systems that ensure traceability from farm to manufacturer.

Currently, there are more than 350 retailers, brands, and manufacturers partnered with the Cotton LEADS™ program. They include Target, Kohls, Hanes, Fruit of the Loom, and Brooks Brothers. These partners have the benefit of knowing the cotton they are sourcing is responsibly produced, and they have confidence there is transparency and traceability in the supply chain.

This program offers a solution to increasing global supply of cottons from countries that demonstrate responsible production practices.

“Chemical fibers like polyester and rayon have no credibility on these issues. We’re optimistic that conscientious consumers will recognize that responsibly produced cotton is consistent with their values. Ultimately, that should help us win back market share,” Brinkley said.

Just as the mission statement describes, PCCA is committed to adding significant value to the cotton marketed for its members by being the supplier of choice to business partners in terms of quality, service and value. By being a partner of the Cotton LEADS™ program, PCCA is strengthening this commitment. 🌱



we absolutely have to. It is expensive for one thing, and we do not want to be exposed to it anymore than anyone else. It is just important that we take care of that.

Is there anything that was passed down to you that has influenced your farming practices?

Justin: I have been fortunate enough to be able to work around my dad and my granddad. Things are a lot different now than when my granddad was farming, but with the new technology and everything else it still gets down to the nitty gritty. You still get in there and do what needs to be done. I wouldn't know that if I hadn't watched them over the years and picked up on that.

The Mason Family Lubbock Cotton Growers Lubbock, Texas



From left to right: Ray, Celia, Desta, Wes, Ben, and Charles Mason.

The Mason family has been farming since 1918 when the first generation bought land in Lynn and Garza counties. Since then, each generation has carried on the family tradition. Charles Mason is the living patriarch of the family at 79 years old. He is still an active part of the day-to-day operations on the farm. His son Ray and his wife, Celia, followed in his footsteps. They also raised their family on the farm. Their oldest son, Wes, and his wife, Desta, both attended agricultural based universities. They both use their degrees in agriculture to add input to the farming operations. Ray and Celia's second son, Ben, attended trade school in diesel technology. His knowledge is a great asset in maintaining the equipment that the family uses every day. The main things the Mason family believe in are faith, family and farming.

Why did you participate in the photo contest?

Desta: Our family has an interesting story since we have been farming for 97 years. It is fun to share this story with others! We had friends and family share our posts that are located all over Texas and the United States. A simple post can advocate for farming and grow support for our industry.

What do you enjoy about having your family on a farm?

Charles: I feel like they are an asset to the operation since they grew up here. I am glad to pass the heritage on to them.

What is your favorite part of farming?

Clint: It is hard for me to pick a favorite part of farming. I love just about every part of it. Being with my family is really important. It is very rewarding, but it can be very challenging at times, and sometimes it gets downright discouraging. No two years are ever the same. We can set up a plan every year but are ready when those plans change. It is just the challenge of it that I really enjoy.

Why do you choose to be part of Plains Cotton Cooperative Association?

Kim: We choose to be part of PCCA because we trust them to warehouse and market our cotton in a professional manner. Since it is a coop, we have some ownership in the company and can have a voice in how it is run.

What makes your family special?

Desta: While each family member has their own farming operation, the family as a whole works as a team to accomplish the work that needs to be done.

What is the best part of being a farm family?

Charles: Associating and working together would be the best part.

Why do you farm?

Charles: I have been here 60 years, and that's the only thing I know. Also, the independence of the operation.

Why is it important to be a good steward of the land?

Ray: It is important because you have one shot at the land. It is your livelihood. If you don't take care of it, it won't take care of you.

What would you say to someone who accused farmers of abusing the land?

Ray: I would ask them to come with me and show them what practices we have used down through the generations and prove to them that we are good stewards.

How can we be better stewards of the land?

Ray: Be cognizant of the situations that weather and other environmental factors bring and be proactive to maintain conservation practices.

Why are you proud to be a farmer?

Charles: It's always been my desire to do this and take the heritage that was passed to me and carry it on.

Ray: I like the freedom to make my own decisions and the fact that I am only responsible to myself.

Wes and Ben: We like applying our college educations to advance our farming practices.

Why did you want to raise your children on the farm?

Celia: Living on the farm is one of the world's best classrooms. Children learn responsibility, stewardship, respect, and work ethics. Things in life are not just given to you; you have to work for them. Kids raised on the farm have a whole different mentality than those raised in town.



James Howze

Sam and Lora Howze have been married for five years, and they have two children, James who is three years old and a seven week old named Wesley. They also have two black labs, Bell and Rio, who are like children to them. Sam is the third generation of his family to farm near Petronila, Texas.

Why did you participate in the photo contest?

Lora: I really wanted to win the camera and thought that it would be really cool to have James' picture in a magazine that so many of our friends get.

What do you enjoy about having your family on the farm?

Lora: Our favorite part about living on the farm is how peaceful and relaxing it is. You don't have the noise of traffic or any nosey neighbors. It is nice to be able to watch the sunset and be able to see the stars

What are you doing to ensure future generations will be able to farm?

Ray and Charles: We are maintaining the land that we farm and trying to improve usable practices to make the land productive for the future generations.

Is there anything that was passed down to you that has influenced your farming practices?

Ray and Charles: Our family has always had a love of soil stewardship and conservation. It has been passed down from generation to generation and will continue to be.

What is your favorite part of farming?

Ray: Planting a crop gives you hope, but harvesting has to be my favorite because it's the final accomplishment of your year's work.

Why do you choose to be part of Plains Cotton Cooperative Association?

Ray: We have always been part of the cooperative system. PCCA helps us carry our marketing ability one step further and relieves us from the burden of having to market our crop ourselves.

Wes: I like the technological side of PCCA and being able to access information easily anywhere, anytime.

The Howze Family Coastal Bend Gin Petronila, Texas

without a bunch of streetlights. James can run and play or ride his gator and not have to worry about getting in the street. He also has plenty of dirt to play with his trucks and tractors in. When Sam puts in long hours, it is nice that he does not have a long drive home.

What makes your family special?

Lora: It is mine, and there is no other family like us because we are unique in our own way. I married a hardworking, loving, caring man, and together we made two handsome boys. Together, we will teach them the value of hard work and respect.

What is the best part of being a farm family?

Lora: Knowing that we are helping feed and clothe America and that we are a part of a hard working industry that is well respected. 🌱



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Photo by Jayci Cave

