

Texas Cotton Yield and Quality Challenges

- The mid-1990s marked the beginning of an era with the development of the first genetically modified cotton variety. As seed companies made biological advancements in cottonseed at a rapid pace, variety selection became more difficult.
- The first important decision a grower makes is the selection of a cotton variety, with particular transgenic traits.

AgriLife Extension's Response

- This new era of rapidly changing seed technology called for an expanded and more intensive cotton variety testing effort. With funding support from Plains Cotton Growers and the Texas State Support Committee of Cotton Inc., the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and Texas A&M AgriLife Research began conducting intensive replicated cotton variety trials in producer-cooperator fields in 2000.
- Since 2012, AgriLife Extension has conducted 345 cotton variety trials, providing an unbiased evaluation of varieties for growers to use in making their selections.
- The partnership with industry—including funding, local producer-cooperators, and seed and technology companies—provides credibility to the large-plot trials. The testing results allow producers to compare production, quality, and economic characteristics of selected varieties.
- Given the increasing number of varieties that are available, these results are invaluable to growers in selecting varieties. In 2015, 84 seed varieties were available, including 26 new varieties.

- Since 2015, more than 7,900 educational contacts have participated in 146 cotton variety educational meetings conducted by AgriLife Extension.
- Approximately 8,000 test-plot trial reports have been distributed to producers, cotton gins, and consultants via educational meetings since 2015. In addition, the cotton variety testing website (varietytesting.tamu.edu/cotton) received more than 19,000 page views in 2015.

Economic Impacts

- Improved seed technology and variety testing efforts have led to significant improvements in both cotton lint quality and yield potential. However, droughts since 2006 have affected yields, obscuring the full value of the improved seed technology.
- From 2000 to 2015, the value of improved technology and increased adoption by growers is estimated at \$413 million.
- The yield potential associated with varietal improvements, testing, and education would support approximately 3,200 jobs annually at cotton gins in the region and 230 jobs in ginning support industries.