Texas Cotton Yield and Quality Challenges
◆ The mid-1990s marked the beginning of an era when the first genetically modified cotton variety was developed. Since that time, biological advances in cotton seed have occurred at a rapid pace, making variety selection more difficult.
◆ The most important decision a grower makes is the selection of a cotton variety and transgenic traits.

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 – Cotton Inc., the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service began conducting intensive replicated cotton variety trials in producer-cooperator fields in 2000.
◆ The partnership with industry – including funding, local leading producer-cooperators, and seed and technology companies – provides added credibility to the large-plot variety evaluations. The testing results allow producers to compare production, quality and economic characteristics of selected varieties.
◆ Given the increasing number of varieties that are available – more than 110 in 2011 – these results are invaluable to growers in their variety-selection decisions.
◆ Since 2011, more than 9,900 cotton producers across the state have participated in 183 education meetings conducted by AgriLife Extension.

More than 1,500 test plot trial reports have been distributed to producers, cotton gins and consultants via educational meetings, Web site downloads, CDs and DVDs since 2011.

Economic Benefit
◆ Improved seed technology and variety testing efforts have led to significant improvements in both cotton lint quality and yields in the state. Since 2000, average yields per harvested acre have increased from 475 pounds to 669 pounds.
◆ From 2000 to 2011, the cumulative benefit of improved technology and increased adoption by growers is estimated at $544 million, which has helped growers to partially offset the sharp increases in production costs in recent years.
◆ For the ginning sector, the annual gain associated with varietal improvements, testing, and education supports approximately 2,100 jobs annually at cotton gins in the state. The value-added impacts associated with ginning the additional production were estimated at $156 million in 2011, which supports an additional 1,470 jobs in ginning support industries.