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HIGH QUALITY SEED IS YOUR LOWEST INPUT:

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF IT

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A uniform, vigorous stand of cotton is the first major milestone on the road to economically successful cotton production. Getting such a stand is also the first of a host of problems that beset the cotton planter. Although accurate statistics are not available, we estimate that on the average about 20–25 percent of the cotton acreage in the Mississippi Delta areas has to be replanted each year. Periodically, when especially adverse climatic conditions prevail at planting time—as they did in spring, 1971—the replanting percentage rises to above 50 percent, and some planters have to plant even a third time! The same can be true in any area.

The cotton planter already has a sizeable investment in his crop by planting time. When he fails to obtain a stand from the first planting a portion of his investment is lost, and additional expenses are incurred in replanting.

These direct losses and added costs are only part of the total loss attributable to stand failures or poor stands. A delay in getting the crop off to a good start or poor skippy stands often mean lowered yields and increased costs for weed control. Furthermore, the timely scheduling of cultural and control operations so important to successful cotton production is upset.

Stand failures or poor stands can result from any one or a combination of factors: poor seed bed preparation, low soil temperature, excessive or deficient soil moisture, soil microorganisms and other pests, chemical injury, and poor quality seed. Although, poor quality seed appears last in the listing above it is certainly not the least important.

Actually, poor quality seed are probably the most important factor contributing to stand failures for they are much more susceptible to

adverse conditions and stresses in the environment of the seed bed than are seed of good quality.

I have referred to “poor quality seed” and “good quality seed” several times. What do these terms mean? Well, they do not refer just to one attribute or characteristic of seed, but rather to a combination of attributes all of which are essential for good seed performance. First, the seed should be of an adapted, performance-proven variety and they should be pure for that variety.

The cotton breeders—such as Stoneville Pedigreed Seed Company—have developed outstanding varieties adapted to various environments and the current high level of mechanization of cotton production. The genetic potential of these varieties, however, is fully realized only when the varietal purity of the seed is maintained.

Professional cotton seed producers maintain varietal purity through rigorous quality control programs which most often involves seed certification. Documented pedigree of planting stocks, one variety farms and gins, field and processing plant inspections are some of the means used to maintain varietal purity.

Varietal purity is the basic attribute of seed quality but the seed quality story does not end there. The seed producer must also harvest, gin, aerate, store, delint, clean, treat and package the seed in such a manner that the germination and vigor of the seed are preserved at as high a level as possible. Seed must not only be varietally pure—they must also be capable of producing a good stand under a variety of planting conditions!

Production of good quality cottonseed is not an easy task. Besides a formidable investment in processing equipment and facilities, the cotton seed producer is confronted with many more hazards and difficulties than the producers of seed of other major crops. He must contend with the indeterminate fruiting habit of the cotton plant, the unpredictability of climatic conditions during harvest, seed damage arising from mechanical harvest and high speed ginning, and many other factors acting to the detriment of viability and vigor of the seed.

Yet, in spite of these difficulties, the professional cotton seed producer does a remarkably efficient and effective job of producing and supplying delinted, plantable, varietally pure, weed seed-free, good germinating, well treated seed to cotton growers.

The cotton breeders who develop the outstanding varieties currently planted, and the seed producers who multiply and produce the seed in the quantities needed are among the unsung heroes of the Cotton Story.

Unfortunately, the benefits of varietally pure, good quality, professionally produced and processed cottonseed have not been taken advantage of by all cotton planters. Some still save and plant untested seed from their own production, while others purchase seed of unknown origin and uncertain quality from dubious sources on basis of price alone. Such farmers are certainly “pennywise and pound foolish,” for the cost of cotton planting seed is at most a minor part of the total cost of producing cotton. The dollar or so extra per acre that professionally produced seed costs is one of the soundest investments in cotton production.

It has been amply demonstrated that Good Seed Does Not Cost—It Pays.