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**Memo To: Texas Organic Cotton and Peanut Producers**

**From: Bob Whitney, Extension Organic Program Specialist**

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I wanted to write this short note to all the certified Texas organic cotton and peanut producers to introduce myself. I am a long-time Texas A&M AgriLife employee and have held several positions in both AgriLife Research and Extension, as well as working on projects for Texas A&M AgriLife internationally. I accepted the offer for this new position because it is something AgriLife has never done, and the challenge will be to make it successful. My job includes the following and a whole lot more:

- Work with certified and transitioning farmers to overcome the challenges they face farming organically.
- Help resolve issues with NOP regulations especially issues related to what is approved and can be used or done within the guidelines.
- Provide training for organic inspectors and certifiers.
- Work with NRCS and County Extension Agents to learn about organic farming practices and where or how they can help organic producers.
- Work with various commodity groups helping them with organic practices and issues related to their commodity. I help with crop seminars, field days, short courses, etc. providing organic production speakers and topics and teaching at those educational events.
- Coordinate and collaborate on research projects that could or do have an impact in organic agriculture. We have a great team of research scientists and extension specialists that work on organic programs, and we all collaborate to ensure we are addressing your organic issues in production agriculture.

I had a chance to meet many of you at the Organic Peanut Seminar held January 2019 at the Reddy Vineyard near Brownfield, and I hope to have opportunity to meet many more of you in the coming months. Please let me know if I can help.

**A Few Notes of Interest to Organic Producers**

**India Organic Certification** – I am sure you heard about this in the news, but just in case, this is directly from the USDA AMS website: *“The USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) National Organic Program (NOP) is changing its approach to organic oversight in India. USDA is ending its recognition agreement that has allowed APEDA-accredited certifiers to provide USDA organic certification in India. This change adapts to the evolution of organic supply chains over time and allows USDA to protect farms and businesses around the world that are following the rules. This decision starts a transition period which will allow Indian organic operations certified by APEDA-accredited certifiers to apply for direct certification by USDA-accredited certifiers to the USDA organic standards. Certification by USDA-accredited certifiers will be required for products exported from India to the United States.”*

Of course, this announcement has impacted the world market for organic cotton and means that buyers are sourcing organic cotton wherever they can. **Looks good for Texas organic cotton!**



Me and my wife  
Laurie of 40 years



**Finger Weeder with Sweeps** - Dr. Pete Dotray is working with Carl Pepper to look at some weed control using finger weeders like you see in the picture with sweeps set shallow between rows. This is work funded by Cotton Incorporated and looks promising!



**Organic Cotton Varieties:** Eight new variety candidates developed by Dr. Jane Dever are planted in her research plots for 2021. These

include two okra-leaf, three high-fiber quality, one very early maturing nematode-tolerant, a productive wilt-tolerant, and a bacterial blight resistant line with similar growth habit, high productivity, and better fiber quality than the popular variety FM 958. These varieties have characteristics important for organic production in Texas such as stormproof bolls, good seedling vigor, and drought resilience. More to come!



**Organic Peanut Varieties** – Both International Peanut Group (IPG) and Texas A&M AgriLife are working hard to develop and release better organic peanut varieties. This picture to the right is from Dr. Dylan Wann, IPG Breeder, showing the slow (cold spring) but good germination of organic varieties. Strong germination and emergence are keys to the success of any organic peanut variety.



**Cotton Harvest Aid** – The good organic cotton prices are encouraging producers to look at some harvest options. Typically, we don't have much help with cotton harvest aids, but Certis Biologicals has a product called Homeplate that is labeled as a crop harvest aid. Hopefully we will be doing some work at harvest to determine how well it works and rates to use.



**Armyworms in Crops** – Dr. Tuggle sent me this armyworm picture and it's a monster! This is one of the many armyworm species invading crops across the state. Scouting is the key to organic control and scout often. Remember regular insect thresholds are too high for organic treatments.

**Peanut Field Day** – Mark your calendar for the Donley County Peanut Field Day to be held on **Friday, September 17** around the Clarendon area. The field day will begin with registration and then start at 10 am. For more information contact Leonard Haynes – Donley County Agent at (806) 874-2141, or email at [leonard.haynes@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:leonard.haynes@ag.tamu.edu).

**New Peanut Seed Sheller “Ribbon Cutting”** – Texas A&M AgriLife Foundation Seed is having a “Ribbon Cutting” celebration on **Monday, September 27** at the facility near Vernon. More details to follow or call TAFS at (940) 552-6226 for more information.

**Organic Cotton and Peanut Production Seminar** – Mark down **Tuesday, January 25, 2022**, for this organic seminar to be held at the Seminole Community Center. Varieties, weed control, disease/insect control, market updates, organic updates, more!