

Field Notes  
September 23, 2008  
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I thought I had written the last edition of Field Notes for 2008 until hurricanes Gustav and Ike hit. This has definitely been the longest rice season of my career. We have never harvested first crop rice in the third week of September before this year. The last three fields were harvested on the 12<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>. At least we were able to harvest them while many others lost all or a large portion of their crop. Yields up this point appeared to be on track for another record year, well needed in a year of exorbitant input costs. There will be too many “0” acres for a record.

The table on the next page summarizes the first crop yields of our verification program. Second crop is planned in Calcasieu, Jeff Davis and Vermilion.

We were not able to witness the harvest in Madison parish where the only lodged rice was around the perimeter where it had been double drilled. In Avoyelles we faced major challenges. Of the two the Avoyelles field provided the biggest surprise. All season long it looked ragged. Seedbed preparation was the major contributing factor. Last year in the same field we harvested 92 hundredweights (cwt) per acre setting a verification program record. We expected yield this year to be 68 cwt at best, then it was all flattened by Gustav. This is visible in the photograph below. As we weighed the trucks we had to check everything because the numbers looked impossible. We can only wonder what it would have yielded standing.



Parish	Acres	Variety	cwt/A (green)	bbbl/A (green)	bu/A (green)	cwt/A @ 12%	bbbl/A @12%	bu/A @12%
Avoyelles	40.9	Cheniere	81.97	51	182	76.57	47	170
Calcasieu	55.1	CLXL730 <sup>1</sup>	74.90	46	166	71.24	44	158
Concordia	54.7	CL161	74.66	46	166	71.78	44	160
Evangeline	46.4	Cheniere	72.96	45	162	68.40	42	152
Madison	41.5	Cheniere	88.52	55	197	82.08	51	182
Jeff Davis	37.7	Cheniere	76.01	47	169	71.09	44	158
St. Landry	60.2	Cheniere	82.41	51	183	78.01	48	173
Vermilion	51.1	CLXL745	107.40	66	239	98.00	60	218
Average	NA	NA	82.40	51	183	77.26	48	172





The photographs on the preceding page chronicle some of the problems we met in Concordia parish where the field was the best looking field of CL161 I had ever seen. We were anxious to find out what it would yield. I had anticipated at least 89 cwt per acre. The first photograph was taken on August 29<sup>th</sup> when the field had already been drained for a month and two days. Even though the combine had 36 inch wide high flotation tires it could not go through the mud. Then Gustav hit. By the time we got back to the field on September 17<sup>th</sup> we had other problems.

The upper right photograph shows not only completely flattened rice but the shoots of a well developed ratoon crop on its way. I've never seen a field of ripe rice that looked green, but this one did. In an adjacent field it required the biggest tractor to pull out one of the combines. Next year they intend have some combines equipped with tracks.

We were able to put them in touch with a farmer who had a track machine and was willing to help with the harvest. DOTD routed the truck hauling the combine under the only low bridge in the 150 miles between the two farms. They did about \$10,000 damage to the combine and the farmer lost 5 more days and Ike blew in. At this point we were beginning to wonder if this field was jinxed. (this is the short version)

I personally walked the area harvested prior to the storms (shown in the background of the first photograph) and measured it with a GPS unit. According to the truck tickets and the area measured the yield of that small portion was around 110 cwt per acre. We'll never know what it could have been.







The three preceding photographs were taken in Cameron and Calcasieu parishes a couple of days after Ike. The first one shows what was fairly typical of rice fields in the area we could reach. The next is of water flowing north into a rice field from the marsh. The sheet of metal is on the side of a boat shed in the northeast area of Cameron parish that adjoins Jeff Davis parish. The upper water mark was left by Rita. The water from Ike is about 6 inches below it.

When it is all said and done I expect the loss to the Louisiana rice crop to be around \$50 million.

