Situation

Over the past few weeks, many fields have dried out enough to allow harvesting. The final numbers are not yet in, but we all know it hasn’t been an easy year. Additional late season rains across much of the state have further complicated the matter. First and foremost, for peanuts that were ready to be dug or combined, these later rains delayed harvest and affected grades for some. On the other hand, for late maturing and previously drought stressed runners, the rains have provided an opportunity to put on a new crop of peanuts while the old and moldy nuts rot off. This has given some fields with a very dim outlook a second chance. Nevertheless, waiting for these later crops can be difficult when the rain increases late leaf spot defoliation.

Don’t Let Your Peanuts Catch a Cold Snap

While it’s not that cold yet, for fields where harvest continues to get pushed back, this is a good time to refresh ourselves of the damage frost can cause on peanuts. As we move further into November, the risk of frost increases every day. Risks for specific counties can be found at http://www.clemson.edu/extension/county/laurens/yard_garden/15_frost_dates.html. Fortunately, early November frosts in SC typically don’t last for more than a couple days. This is important when planning to dig, since peanuts are most easily damaged the day they are dug, due to the high amount of moisture in the kernels. After drying for about 3 days, the peanuts are at a much smaller risk of frost damage. When graded, kernels with freeze-injury get marked as damaged and count towards the Seg. 2 damage cutoff of 2.5%. Peanuts still in the ground during a frost are protected from cold injury.

The next week looks like we should be free of frost. When temperatures become lower, a good rule of thumb is to wait at least a day to dig if low temperatures are predicted to be ≤ 34°F. Lows ≥ 38°F are a green light for digging. Temperatures between the two thresholds become a judgement call for individual fields. Once the risk of frost moves out we can dig as soon as conditions are good. If the leaves get severely frost-damaged they may not look pretty or help peanuts further mature, but they usually last long enough to get the peanuts dug. The take home message here is if at all possible, don’t dig right before a hard frost is forecasted.

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