



Contact:
Shelly Nutt
Executive Director
Texas Peanut Producers Board
(800) 734-0086

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Texas farmers will plant fewer peanut acres in '09

LUBBOCK, Texas – Texas' 2009 peanut acreage will be down nearly 38 percent from last year's plantings, according to the National Agricultural Statistics Service.

Last year, Texas farmers planted 257,000 acres of peanuts before harvesting 253,000 of those acres last fall. Last year's surplus, drought and decreased demand have taken their toll on this year's peanut prices, resulting in only 160,000 acres being planted.

Brownfield farmer Delwin Marrow was planting 300 acres of peanuts on May 12. He said while 2008 was challenging due to weather and high input prices, he expects this year's crop to come with its own new set of hurdles.

"If it rains we could see a bumper crop, but if it doesn't rain we could see a really difficult and challenging year," Marrow said.

Despite last year's obstacles, American peanut farmers planted the largest crop in history, providing more than enough peanuts in the market and lowering prices. When consumers reduced peanut butter and peanut product purchases earlier this year, prices took an even harder hit. As a result, Marrow said many producers in Texas decided to not grow peanuts this year.

As consumer confidence is restored at the grocery store, farmers who decided to plant peanuts this year are hoping for better prices when they harvest their crops.

Shelly Nutt, executive director of the Texas Peanut Producers Board, is optimistic peanut butter will remain a mainstay in Texas pantries.

"You will not find an industry more dedicated to safety and quality than agriculture," Nutt said. "Peanut farmers go to every extreme possible to make sure they are producing a peanut that is not only safe to eat, but is healthy and great tasting. These guys get paid for the quality of their crop, so they have every incentive to work very hard to make sure it's the best it can be."

Marrow said despite the ups and downs that accompany peanut farming, it's worth every hardship.

"It's a tough business, but it's what I love doing."

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The Texas Peanut Producers Board is a state-wide board funded by a \$2 per ton voluntary check-off program. For more information, contact Lindsay West, TPPB communications director, at lindsay@texaspeanutboard.com or call 1-800-734-0086.