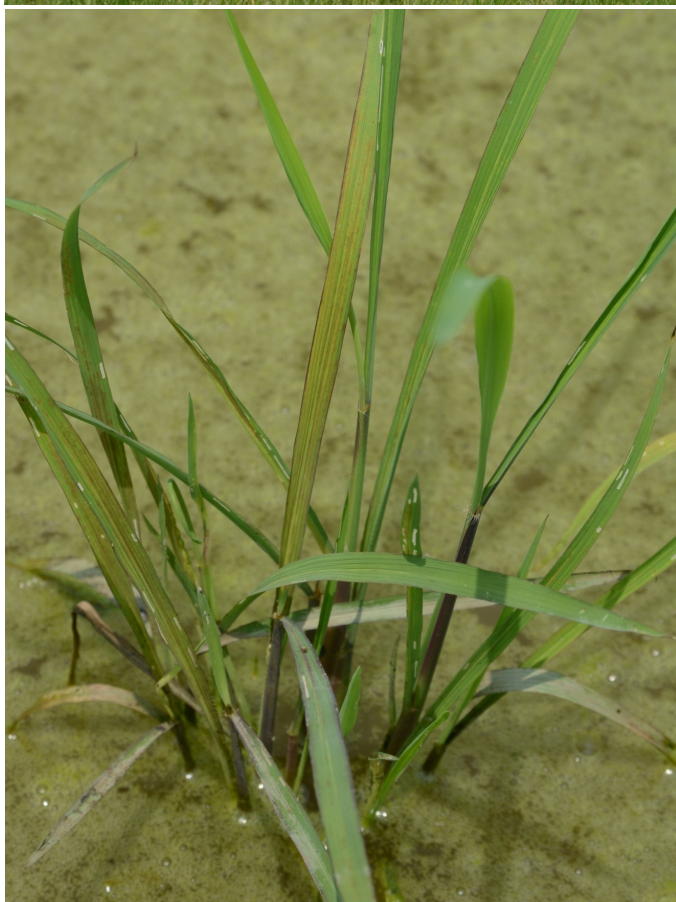




The view above typifies one of the more common aspects of this year's rice crop. It is uneven. Emergence was uneven, stands are uneven, heading is uneven and I suspect grain moisture at harvest will be uneven too. Uneven means lots of management decisions were compromised—too early for some and too late for others and is the basis for my reasoning that this crop will not yield as well as the 2013 crop.



How many stink bugs do you see in this picture? There should be 7. They are congregating on red sprangletop and crabgrass growing on the field borders. Several years ago I saw something similar before rice was headed, but at the time fungicides were to be applied. We added an insecticide to the fungicide mix and killed the stinkbugs in the grass, but we still had to apply an insecticide to control stink bugs as soon as the rice started heading. We should have saved our money and let the stink bugs do a little damage to the weed seeds because it did not help us in the rice crop.



Stuart Gauthier and I were asked to take a look at a rice field showing odd patterns that the farmer was afraid might be herbicide carryover from a previous sugarcane crop. They picked up the land this spring and laser leveled it very hard cutting as much as 12 to 15 inches of soil from the affected area. Symptoms of individual plants ranged from the rust colored (similar to bronzing) shown at left to the bright yellow at right that suggest sulfur deficiency. At first we could not see a pattern then noticed the old sugarcane rows you can see in the top photo. We could not determine if we were looking at the old furrows or the tops of the old beds. Add to this the soil pH in the upper 7's or low 8's and a layer of sand below clay and we have a situation with so many confounding conditions we could only speculate on the cause. We pulled tissue samples from plants representing each of the symptoms and from "normal" plants and hope a tissue analysis may provide more information.

When I first saw the plants with the symptoms shown at right I immediately said, "That is late season potassium deficiency." Then I remembered a presentation by someone from Arkansas at a meeting where photographs of plants with similar symptoms were shown and the problem identified as late season sulfur deficiency. I contacted Dr. Harrell who sent this link to me: <http://arkansasrice.blogspot.com/2010/06/sulfur-and-potassium-deficiency-in-rice.html> . After viewing that information I regained some confidence in my initial conclusion. Then I read information this week where they are reporting late season potassium deficiency in rice in Arkansas. The leaves shown at right are of Jupiter grown near the Arkansas line in northeast Louisiana. I suggested the dealer rep apply some potash, some ammonium sulfate and some urea to three small plots to see if he gets a response. This rice was already in mid to late boot so any response is likely to be cosmetic this year, but knowing of the potential problem could help next year.



The two photographs at left show classic symptoms of bacterial panicle blight. I have not seen much of it this year, thankfully, but any rice flowering in the hot recent conditions might be affected by it. The transition of color from grayish to light brown to dark brown and then green on the individual grains is typical as are the green panicle

branches (rachilla). Blast can cause grain discoloration too, but the branches will be gray or straw colored if it is blast. When sheath blight attacks the panicles the color patterns are irregular and the panicle branches are affected as well as the grains. Remember, fungicides will not control bacterial panicle blight; it is caused by a bacterium not a fungus.



We set a record in the verification program last week. In the 18 years we have been monitoring rice fields we have never had one of our rain gauges over-flow. We don't know how much rain we received because the gauge only holds 11 inches. After we left the field on Tuesday of last week the sky opened up and we figure we got 3 or 4 inches. Then on Friday the farmer said they measured another 9.3 inches in their gauge. He had 4 pumps running full speed pumping water off. Several of his long grain fields had been drained, but we had not yet drained our Jupiter verification field.

While this is certainly excessive we were lucky because the rice was still green. If the crop had been dry and ready to harvest damage would likely have been significant. Once the stalks dry down they begin to lose strength and also the ability to ward off attack by various fungi and bacteria. Decomposition of straw begins as soon as the plants die and dry down. All sorts of microorganisms begin to feed on the straw gradually breaking it down. As long as the straw is dry the amount of injury is minimized—dehydration is one method to preserve things. Wetting the now dead straw sets up ideal conditions for straw breakdown along with the simply physical aspects of getting wet among them is lodging. Secondary to lodging is grain germination prior to harvest.

So, we hope we do not have anymore rain events like we did last week.

I heard some rice might be harvested this week, but noting significant. I think the bulk will begin the first week of August.