The peanut crop in the Virginia-Carolina region is 98% harvested. Harvest is complete in South Carolina and Virginia but not in North Carolina. Final yield is estimated to be 3,650 pounds/acre of farmer stock peanuts (4,090 kg/ha). Market grade characteristics (total sound mature kernels, extra large kernels, etc.) have been relatively good considering growing conditions across the region and challenges with harvest in 2020. A major target for peanuts produced in the region is the in-shell trade, and while quality of in-shells was relatively good early in the harvest cycle, desirable characteristics for this market have been poor, especially for peanut harvested after mid-October. A brief summary of the growing season is provided below:

Early May was relatively cool compared with previous years and peanuts were slow to emerge if planted prior to May 15, especially in the northern portion of the region. In many cases close to three weeks was needed for early planted peanuts to emerge. Ultimately, most fields had adequate peanut stands to optimize yield. Wet fields in May resulted in approximately 20% of fields planted in June. Some of these fields were planted in mid- to late-June.

Weed control across the region was generally good, and although thrips damage was observed as predicted, systemic insecticides performed well enough to protect yield.

June and portions of July were characterized by drought in some production areas, especially in portions of North Carolina. Rainfall became abundant during the latter part of the season across most of the Virginia-Carolina region. This was especially the case in Virginia but also in some areas of North Carolina and South Carolina. In some instances, the amount of rain was detrimental.

Most pathogens that cause disease were controlled adequately to protect peanut yield. Tomato spotted wilt was observed throughout the region but generally, at levels that were not yield limiting when adequate stands in fields where adequate stands were achieved. Sclerotinia blight was not a major issue in North Carolina and Virginia. Leaf spot and stem rot control was adequate with no widespread failures. Insect and spider mite damages was localized and not widespread across the region.

Yield potential was lower going into harvest than in previous years, and harvest proved difficult and required patience. Cool temperatures in mid- to late-September prevented peanuts from maturing at the pace observed during the previous years and this delayed the maturation process significantly. In many cases, farmers delayed digging well into October to allow the greatest possible level of pod and kernel maturation. Still, many fields never reached optimum maturity and this impacted yield in a negative manner.

Frost occurred in some areas of the region, especially northeastern North Carolina and Virginia while farmers were digging pods and inverting vines. Growers were able to adjust schedule to minimize the potential for freeze damage. However, several key rainfall events delayed field operations until well into November and this resulted in decreased yield and quality. Approximately 3% of the peanut crop remains to be harvested in North Carolina.

Overall, the peanut crop in the Virginia-Carolina region yielded lower than desired, and quality, especially for in-shells, was relatively poor for 2020.

Progression of peanut growth and development in a field near Oak City, North Carolina during 2020.

July 26

August 19

September 9

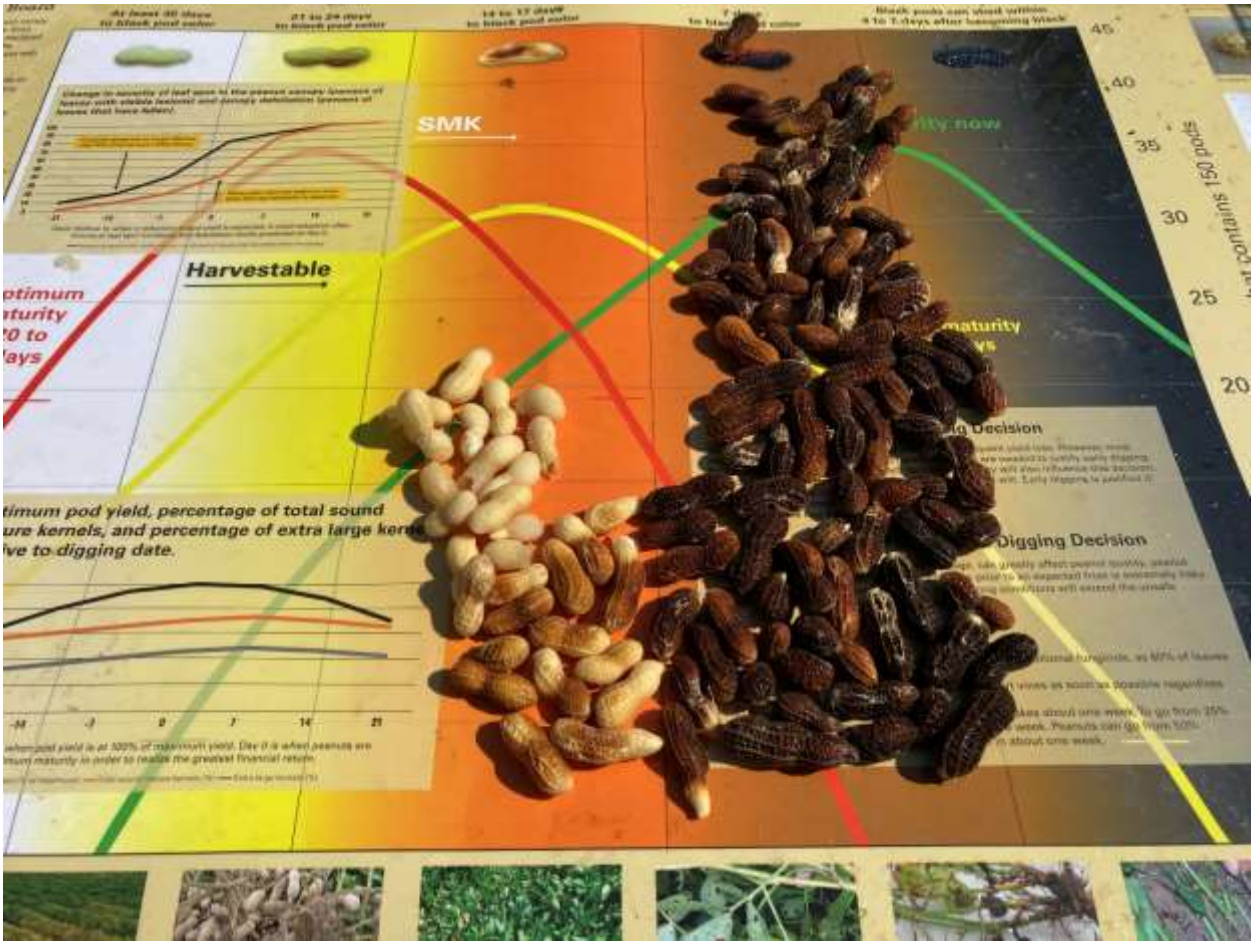
October 14

October 20

Progression of pod maturity for three varieites planted near Lewiston-Woodville on May 14 with images recorded October 13. Pod mesocarp color did not change appreciably in October due to cooler temperatures. Note that few pods are in the black mesocarp color category.

Bailey II

Emery



Sullivan


SMK
Harvestable
Percentage of a sample that contains 150 pods
45
40
35
30
25
20
15
10

Peanut remaining in the field in early November and poor quality due to exposure to delays in digging and threshing and poor weather conditions.