The peanut crop in the Virginia-Carolina region is approximately 80% planted. Emergence of peanuts planted in early May has been good in most fields. Air temperatures during the week of May 10 were unseasonably cool but did not negatively impact stand establishment in most cases. The major challenge for planting peanuts in mid-May and late-May has been soil moisture. This has been the case especially in areas where farmers needed to make multiple passes in conventional tillage systems to prepare seedbeds. In some of these fields a complete stand will not be achieved until adequate rainfall occurs. Options for irrigating fields to establish a stand of peanuts are limited in the Virginia-Carolina region with irrigation constituting no more than 20% of land area devoted to peanuts. Some farmers have stopped planting peanuts and will complete their plantings if rainfall occurs within the next two weeks. The planting window for peanuts in the region can go into early June. After the first week of June peanut yields often drop off precipitously compared with May plantings.

Herbicides applied immediately after planting are likely to have limited effectiveness because of limited rainfall for activation. Farmers will need to apply herbicides with contact and residual activity within the first three weeks after planting to improve weed control and possibly receive activating rainfall for the residual herbicide component. Thrips control with systemic insecticides applied in the seed furrow at planting has been marginal due to limited absorption by roots of seedlings. Foliar sprays will be needed to make sure thrips injury is not yield limiting. Growers can co-apply herbicides and insecticides to control both groups of pests. Spider mite populations have been building in some areas of the region and may present a major issue for growers to address unless the hot and dry cycle we are currently experiencing changes relatively soon. This will be exacerbated in areas where foliar-applied insecticides are needed to control thrips. Growers are encouraged to leave vegetation on turn rows and ditch banks in place to minimize spider mite movement into fields during the coming weeks.

Even though May has been a challenging month for peanut stand establishment and control of thrips and weeds, the peanut crop in the Virginia-Carolina region continues to have good potential and could yield well if conditions improve. Although planting is not complete, growers have two more weeks to plant and expect reasonable yields.

Estimated yield potential for the region is 4,480 kg/ha (4,000 lbs/acre.) In North Carolina and Virginia, the predominant market type will be Virginia market types (90%) with the balance in runner market types. In South Carolina, 65% of plantings will be runner market types with 35% being Virginia market types. Estimated land area planted to peanuts in North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia is 42,500 ha (105,000 acres), 34,400 ha (85,000 acres), and 8,000 ha (20,000 acres), respectively.

Peanut stand in a field near Lewiston-Woodville on May 25 when planted May 6.

Peanut plants near Lewiston-Woodville, NC showing minor injury from thrips feeding on May 25 following planting on May 6. Imidacloprid was applied in the seed furrow at planting in this field.

Peanut field near Rocky Mount, NC on May 25. Peanut seed was planted in this field in early May with limited soil moisture. The stand will not be complete until rainfall occurs to germinate seed resting in dry soil.

Field under preparation for peanut planting near Lewiston-Woodville, NC. This field will require rain in order for peanuts to germinate.