

I would like to thank our friends from around the world that sent messages of concern and prayer after Hurricane Katrina passed over the eastern coast of Louisiana and the northern coast of the Gulf of Mexico. Some of us were very fortunate in that the eye of the storm traveled east of us, and we did not sustain massive destruction or flooding. Some in my city (Baton Rouge) and the majority in the Greater New Orleans area were not so lucky. Images and stories can be found on the internet. The storm surge that hit the northern shores of the Gulf of Mexico was very destructive. The flooding of New Orleans resulted from the failure of the levee system. Hundreds of thousands have been displaced. Baton Rouge is now the most populated city in Louisiana. Because most of New Orleans is now virtually uninhabitable, life in all of south Louisiana will be disrupted until our displaced neighbors can return to their homes. Some will be able to return and begin cleanup and repair in the next couple of weeks. It will be several months before those in the most severely flooded area will be able to return. Some will choose to relocate rather than return. Our federal government will pour in resources to rebuild New Orleans and other communities that were affected. The direct consequences of the disaster are being felt all through Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama. The indirect consequences will eventually be felt throughout the USA and I believe in other parts of the world. Life will slowly return to normal - or we will come to consider the new situation normal. That will happen in months for some. For most it will take years. The government can only do so much. There is a lot of work that is being done by relief organizations like the Red Cross <http://www.redcross.org>, the Salvation Army <http://www.salvationarmyusa.org>, and Catholic Charities <http://www.catholiccharitiesusa.org>. The LSU AgCenter, the campus of the university for which I work, through the 4-H Foundation <http://www.la4hfoundation.org> is accepting contributions to help employees who were severely affected (some homes were destroyed) by the storm. For those who have the financial means and wish to contribute, we suggest giving to one of the organizations listed above.

For those who are interested in the damage to the sugarcane crop, Dr. Ben Legendre, past member of the ISSCT Executive and sugarcane specialist for the Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service, has made the following assessment.

Eighty percent of the cane in the most easterly parishes was flattened by the storm and the other 20% had moderate to severe damage (approximately 15% broken tops, 50% shredded leaves, 12-15% of the stools uprooted.) Although the cane is lodged badly it is basically down in one direction which should make it easier to harvest albeit with loss of scrap. Further, the cane is beginning to erect itself which should help when it comes to harvest. This should also allow producers to apply ripeners. However, the down cane and shredded leaves will also mean delayed maturity and lower sucrose content. Further, at harvest the trash content of the cane will be increased because of not being able to top lodged cane and the inefficiency of the extractor fans on the harvester to remove leafy trash. There are approximately 65,000 acres of sugarcane in the most damaged area with another 100,000 acres affected with lodging in the moderate to severe category. There are another 165,000 acres of cane that were moderately affected by Hurricane Katrina. These would include cane in Ascension, Iberville, West Baton Rouge and portions of Pointe Coupee, Iberia, St. Martin and Vermilion Parishes. In these areas, cane was lodged but not as badly as in the aforementioned areas. Further, there was little or no shredding of leaves and little or no broken tops. Within days after the storm cane in these areas had erected itself albeit with a severe crook in the stalks. The economic impact will be significantly greater than the crop loss, for farmers and millers will encounter additional fuel and repair cost to get the crop harvested.

There is a saying that whatever doesn't break you makes you stronger. The people of Louisiana have endured the wrath of other tragic hurricanes. I am certain that we will recover from this one and will become stronger as a result. We do believe in the power of prayer and ask our friends to pray for the victims of this catastrophic event.

Freddie Martin