

# HURRICANE MICHAEL DAMAGE TO GEORGIA AGRICULTURE

**GEORGIA AGRICULTURE COMMISSIONER GARY W. BLACK:** “Unfortunately, our worst thoughts were realized. We saw months and sometimes years of work just laid over on the ground in a matter of seconds. Georgia has long led in the production of several renowned commodities and now we have the dubious distinction of also leading in the devastation and incredible loss of these prominent crops. These are generational losses that are unprecedented and it will take unprecedented ideas and actions to help our farm families and rural communities recover.”



## **COTTON: \$300 MILLION - \$800 MILLION**

Cotton was the second highest contributor to Georgia’s farmgate value last year, contributing just over 7 percent. The final loss estimate will be dependent on farmers’ ability to harvest what remains in the field. Georgia had the potential of record yields for this year, so this loss is even more devastating.

## **VEGETABLES: \$480 MILLION**

Vegetables affected include sweet corn, cucumbers, squash, peppers, peas, and more. Georgia is home to a wide variety of produce, much of which was affected by the high winds and hard rains of Michael. After Hurricane Florence, prices were elevated so this enhanced the loss estimate because Georgia was in a very good position to supply the market prior to Hurricane Michael. This comes as a blow to growers who had a difficult spring harvest and were counting on the fall.



## **PECAN: \$560 MILLION**

Pecan trees that were blown over or broken are a severe, generational loss for farmers. It takes about seven years for a tree to begin producing nuts, and there is 100 percent crop loss in Seminole County, 85 percent in Decatur County, and 30 percent in Grady County. Pecan farmers will take a decade to recover from the loss of a mature tree, and many of these farmers were still recovering from Irma when Michael rolled through.



## **POULTRY: \$25 MILLION**

Poultry is Georgia’s leading agricultural industry, contributing nearly 32 percent of the state’s 2018 farmgate value in broilers and an additional 5.62 percent in eggs. Michael will make a lasting impact on this poultry industry with the loss of 129 houses on 36 farms and well over 2 million chickens.

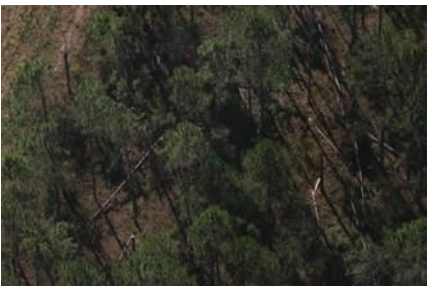


## **PEANUTS: \$10 MILLION - \$20 MILLION**

While peanuts fared better than many other crops, infrastructure loss remains uncertain. The final loss estimate will be impacted by the ability to get the remaining peanuts out of the field and into storage facilities. The grading and sorting of these peanuts will play a large part of determining the final loss. Peanuts contributed nearly 5 percent of Georgia’s 2018 farmgate value.

## **AGRITOURISM**

Fall is typically the most important season for many agritourism sites as it includes activities like corn mazes and pumpkin patches that bring many families and school field trips on the farm. Multiple mazes have been destroyed in addition to other farm damage. The loss estimate will be difficult to determine, even after the season is over.



## **TIMBER: \$763 MILLION**

Approximately 2 million acres were destroyed, most belonging to small or private landowners. For information regarding the extensive timber losses suffered by South Georgians during Hurricane Michael, we would like to direct you to the Georgia Forestry Commission and their public relations representative Wendy Burnett at 478-365-6233 or [wburnett@gfc.state.ga.us](mailto:wburnett@gfc.state.ga.us).

## **MEDIA USE**

The Georgia Department of Agriculture is happy to provide the media both photo and video footage of Michael’s damage. **Please visit <http://agr.georgia.gov/hurricane-michael-gallery.aspx> for continually updated photo and video coverage.**

**SOURCES:** Loss estimates come from the University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Service with the Georgia Forestry Commission providing estimates on timber.