

Prospective Plantings

On March 31, 2026, USDA released their annual Prospective Plantings report. This is the first farmer-survey based report of the growing season. Surveys were conducted during the first two weeks of March. These numbers are a starting point, but will change as farmers react to planting conditions.

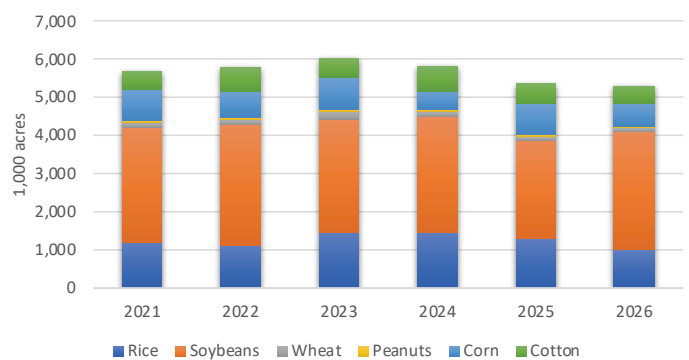
Planted acres in Arkansas have been trending lower since farmers planted more than 6 million acres of primary crops in 2023. High input costs and negative margins have resulted in farmers planting fewer acres in an attempt to maximize yield potential on remaining acres. In 2026, farmers plan to plant 5.3 million acres of primary crops, down from 5.4 million in 2025 — a year that saw significant flooding through several major row crop producing counties.

As expected, Arkansas farmers are projected to cut rice acres significantly. Corn and cotton acres are also projected lower as farmers shift to soybeans looking for the best margins.

Rice

Rice acres will be down significantly across the board. Arkansas farmers are reporting their intentions to plant only 900,000 acres of long grain, down 24% from 2025 and down 32% from 2024. Medium grain acres are pegged at 100,000 in Arkansas, down 3% from 2025 and 17% from 2024. If realized, this would be the smallest Arkansas rice crop since 1983 and, given how early it is in the season, it is possible to see further reductions. Arkansas rice acres have only fallen below one million three times since the Rice Production Act of 1975 ended acreage allotments for the 1976 crop and beyond. Sharp cuts to rice acres, both in Arkansas and across the U.S., were expected, but planting intentions of only 2.319

Arkansas Planted Acres Primary Crops



	2025 (1,000 acres)	2026 (1,000 acres)	% Change
Rice			
United States	2,812	2,319	-18%
Arkansas	1,284	1,001	-22%
Soybeans			
United States	81,215	84,700	4%
Arkansas	2,590	3,100	20%
Wheat			
United States	45,328	43,775	-3%
Arkansas	110	110	0%
Corn			
United States	98,788	95,338	-3%
Arkansas	810	590	-27%
Cotton			
United States	9,283	9,640	5%
Arkansas	520	470	-10%
Peanuts			
United States	1,953	1,674	-14%
Arkansas	48	37	-23%

million acres is well below the average trade estimate of 2.7 million acres. Planting in Arkansas has just begun, and actual seedings will differ from the report. Arkansas farmers currently have inadequate soil moisture for planting, and the war in Iran has caused fertilizer prices to skyrocket amid shortages. We could see even more acres shift to soybeans as the days progress.

Soybeans

Farmers across the U.S. report plans to increase soybean acres by 4%. This was anticipated by the market since the cost of production is lower and the potential to break even with soybeans is more likely than with other crops. Arkansas farmers report intentions to plant 20% more soybeans as they move from rice, cotton and corn. Fertilizer issues have assuredly driven some of the shift, as farmers worry they won't be able to produce high yields without it. March 1 soybean stocks, however, were up 10.2% from a year earlier. With no indications China will reenter the market for U.S. soybeans, this could limit the upside potential for prices.

Wheat

USDA pegged U.S. all-wheat seedings at 43.8 million acres, down 3.4% from last year and more than a million acres below the average trade estimate. That's the lowest acreage since records began in 1919. Arkansas wheat acres are projected to be steady at 110,000 acres. March 1 wheat stocks were reported at 1.3 billion bushels, 10 million bushels below the average trade guess but up 63 million bushels year over year.

Corn

Farmers reported their intentions to plant 95.4 million acres of corn, down 3% from 2025. The average trade estimate was 94.4 million, so the report was seen as slightly bearish for the market. The situation in Arkansas looks a bit different, with farmers planning to cut corn acres by 27%, with total acres pegged at 590,000. March 1 corn stocks were slightly lower than expected at 9 billion bushels, but are still up 24% year over year.

Cotton

The biggest surprise in the report is likely cotton. In January, farmers completing the National Cotton Council survey reported plans to plant 9 million acres of cotton, down 3.2% from 2025. The USDA report, with a survey conducted in March, pegged cotton acres at 9.6 million, up 5% from 2025. We have seen definite improvement in futures prices since January, and farmers in West Texas don't have a lot of options. Arkansas farmers, however, plan to cut their cotton acreage by 10% to 470,000 acres.

Peanuts

Peanut acreage is expected to see a notable pullback in 2026. With total planted acres across the southern region projected to decline 14.4% to 1.65 million acres. Arkansas peanut acreage is projected to fall by more than 20%, placing it among the steepest declines in the region. In addition to Arkansas, South Carolina and Texas are also projected to drop more than 20%, while Mississippi plans the largest acreage cut at 43%.

What's Next

The March Prospective Plantings report is a valuable first look at farmer plans for the new crop year. However, much can change as the realities of farming inevitably impact these early plans. USDA Crop Progress reports provide a weekly snapshot of the planting season, and monthly Supply/Demand and acreage reports update production and price projections, providing further insight into the situation and outlook for the 2026 crop.



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