

# There is Gold in West Texas

"The majority of cotton farmers aren't big corporations, but rather families working hard each and every day to make sure people have clothes to wear."

When driving around West Texas, there is one thing that can be seen for miles and miles – cotton. West Texas has the largest concentration of cotton in the country; the skylines are the encompassing vision of pure white cotton or as some call it "white gold". The year in cotton has become what some may call the white gold rush of West Texas.

West Texas, amidst the economic recession, has thrived in 2010. According to Darren Hudson, Director of the Cotton Economics Research Institute, the price of cotton hit a record high price and has helped West Texas stay afloat in the recession.

The cotton shortfall in China and India was a reason this record price was made. China and India did not produce enough cotton for their demand, and this caused the rush of exports from the United States. The United States was still recovering from a high demand and lower yielding year in 2009. When this surge of exports happened in 2010, it was beneficial to the U.S., according to Hudson.

"It was the perfect storm between a good weather year and good price year for most farms," Hudson said.

Although cotton has always been a prominent commodity in West Texas, it has not always been thriving.

Norman Hopper, Co-director of the International Cotton Research Center, said in past years, West Texas was looked upon poorly for the cotton crop.

"If you go back far enough in the cotton industry, cotton produced on the high plains 30 to 40 years ago was considered poor quality cotton. We had the image that we produced mediocre to low quality cotton," Hopper said. "But over the years, due to the commitment of many cotton scientists, the quality of our cotton is right up at the top."

Hopper said that without the help of everyone involved – producers, companies, associations and researchers – the High Plains might not be where it is today. Today, it is in high demand. It is similar to the famous gold rush in California in that everyone wants more and cannot get enough for the moment.

Samantha Yates, production specialist for the Cotton Economics Research Institute, shared what she believes is important for people to know about the cotton industry.

"The majority of cotton farmers aren't big corporations, but rather families working hard each and every day to make sure people have clothes to wear," Yates said. "Most everyone you see has on at least one article of clothing made out of cotton, and that is thanks to our cotton farmers." **T**

Suzanne Watson | Alice, Texas

