COTTON & TOBACCO

Construction Update: New Lubbock Cotton Classification Complex

Aerial photo taken in August 2020 shows construction in the early phases of the project.

The construction of the new Cotton Classification Complex in Lubbock, Texas, which began in May 2020, continues to make substantial progress. This 30,000 square-foot classing complex will be constructed, owned and operated by USDA, AMS, Cotton and Tobacco Program (C&T), and located on the Texas Tech University campus (across from the Rawls Golf Course), through a unique cooperative agreement with the University signed in July 2019. This partnership will foster opportunities for Texas Tech and other universities to learn more about cotton fiber measurement and grading operations by having direct access to the facility in a learning and teaching environment. This is the first collaboration on a cotton classing facility between the C&T Program and an institution of higher learning.

The new facility will boast major energy efficiency and conservation, state-of-the-art automation systems, real-time business analytics technology, and advanced control systems. A unique feature of the complex includes an observation mezzanine and viewing window, for visitors and tours to enjoy a bird's eye view of the cotton classing process taking place in the

Photo taken in late July 2021 shows current progress.

classing laboratories below. This flagship facility, with a more prominent and centralized location, will be a world-renowned part of the global benchmark that is the USDA's cotton classification system, with the capacity to class 4 million bales annually. Once completed, the Lubbock Cotton Classification Complex will be the second largest classing laboratory worldwide.

The Cotton & Tobacco Program has experienced some construction delays and the facility will not be completed in time to class the 2021 crop. The delays are primarily attributed to supply chain issues on some major items including the chiller, lights, windows, etc. C&T looks forward to classing the 2021 crop in the current facility, located on Ironton Avenue in Lubbock, while preparing for an early 2022 move to the new facility, followed by a grand opening ceremony. The new facility will have upgrades to all lighting, insulation, and mechanical equipment required to maintain the 70 degrees (+/- 1 degree) Fahrenheit with 65 percent (+/- 2 percent) relative humidity laboratory conditions for the classification of cotton.

The photos above show progress from August 2020 through July 2021. (Aerial photo courtesy of Harvey Madison, Harvey Madison Photography.)

Below, find out more about the progress, with media articles and video interviews throughout the project, courtesy of Southwest Farm Press:

- **Texas Tech, USDA sign historic agreement** (July 2, 2019)
- **Texas Tech, USDA to bring cotton classing facility to campus** (July 2, 2019)
- **State-of-the-art cotton classing lab, classroom taking shape** (April 20, 2021)
- **Cotton classing automation system under construction** (May 28, 2021)
- **New cotton classification complex: Model of energy conservation** (July 5, 2021) with **Additional Video** (July 26, 2021)