

2026 Mid-South Gin Show Survey

Executive Summary

SURVEY OVERVIEW

The survey, conducted by the Mid-South Gin Show / Southern Cotton Ginners Association via Google forms was publicized by social media, newsletters and outreach to grower and ginner groups. The survey though closed can be seen [here](#).

Responses were received from January 28 - March 6, 2026

Total Responses: 188

Primary Regions: Mid-South (120, 63.8%), Southeast (41, 21.8%)

Looking at respondents, the most common roles in the industry were:

- Producers: 103 (54.8%)
- Industry Associates: 38 (20.2%)
- Ginner & Producers: 20 (10.6%)
- Others: Ginners, consultants, ag bankers, landowners, students (27, 14.4%)

The primary crops represented show the diversity of operations with stats showing (in descending order):

- Soybeans (120 respondents)
- Corn (113)
- Cotton (84)
- Wheat (47)
- Rice (44)
- Livestock (32)
- Peanuts (15)

The survey asked a number of questions about the outlook, challenges faced, etc. Using a combination of open and rating-based responses, the survey allowed for quantifiable and qualitative input both.

KEY FINDINGS

1. Cautiously Pessimistic Outlook

52.1% of respondents expect to be worse or much worse off over the next two years (rated 4-5 on a 5-point scale where 5 = much worse off).

- Average outlook score: 3.60 out of 5 (median: 4.0)
- Only 9.0% expect improvement
- 38.8% neutral, uncertain about the future

Critical Voice - Ag Banker: "Many farmers are not going to get operating loans this year."

2. The Cost-Price Squeeze: An Existential Crisis

80.9% identified commodity prices as a top concern, while 60.1% flagged input costs - creating an unprecedented margin squeeze.

The Reality

Farmers are receiving 1980s-level commodity prices while paying 2026 costs for inputs, equipment, seed, and fertilizer. As one producer stated: "We are receiving 1980s prices for the crops we grow but paying vastly inflated 2026 costs for all inputs."

Breaking Points:

- "Prices below cost of production"
- "Nothing is bringing down input prices"
- "Can't have commodity prices low and expense prices high... no way to get ahead or come on with a profit"
- "Don't foresee us farming in 10 years, no money to be made. Will probably auction off everything and file bankruptcy"

3. U.S. Agriculture Losing Global Competitiveness

78.6% say U.S. agriculture has declined in competitiveness over the past 5 years (based on farmer perceptions)

Current competitiveness assessment:

- Average rating: 3.60 out of 5 (where 5 = least competitive)
- 55.2% rate U.S. agriculture as less competitive (4-5) compared to South America, Southeast Asia, and Black Sea regions

The Brazil Factor: Multiple respondents cited Brazil's competitive advantages - double-cropping capability, lower input costs, fewer regulations, and aggressive expansion. One landowner who recently visited Brazil reported: "Just spent two weeks in Brazil during their soybean harvest and cotton and corn planting season. Amazing what they are doing. And really scary when you look at their scale and advancements."

4. Market Consolidation and Corporate Power

A major recurring theme was the concentration of market power among agricultural input suppliers:

- Equipment manufacturers (John Deere, AGCO, CNH) - "Equipment prices are extremely too high. Companies are going to price themselves out of business"
- Seed/chemical companies (Bayer, BASF, Corteva) - "Too much consolidation in the seed, chemical and equipment industries"
- Fertilizer suppliers - "Big fertilizer companies need to be investigated heavily for market manipulation"

Industry Sentiment: "Ag is controlled by a few big players in retail, who control our inputs. These monopolies have to be broken up"

5. Rural Communities in Decline

27.1% identified land going out of production as a top concern

Respondents reported:

- Family farms being replaced by corporate operations and institutional investors
- Gins closing across the Mid-South
- Rural communities losing population and economic vitality
- Agricultural infrastructure deteriorating

"Mid-South agriculture is shrinking. Money flows, human capital, communities." - Ginner & Producer

"We are losing local farmers at a fast pace and our communities are dying off... larger producers swoop in and rent it up. They aren't from our state and have no investment into our communities that is why our communities are failing." - Producer

6. Additional Concerns

- Global trade challenges: 39.4%
- Marketplace competitiveness: 38.8%
- Lack of world market competitiveness: 31.9%
- Equipment costs: 30.9%
- Legislation/regulation/policy: 29.3%
- Farm labor shortages: 28.7%
- Stress & mental health: 20.2% (notable given farming culture)
- Farm transition to next generation: 18.6%

WHAT FARMERS ARE ASKING FOR

Top Priority: Trade Agreements and Export Markets (78.8%)

Overwhelming consensus that U.S. agriculture needs expanded market access to absorb production and improve prices. Respondents emphasized:

- Opening new export markets
- Strengthening existing trade relationships
- Addressing trade barriers and tariffs

Second Priority: Farm Policy and Safety Net Reform (44.6%)

Calls for:

- Updated farm bill reflecting current economic realities
- Higher reference prices aligned with actual production costs
- Stronger safety net programs
- Set-aside acres to address overproduction

Third Priority: Agricultural Regulation Reform (34.8%)

Specific recommendations:

- Reduce environmental regulations that disadvantage U.S. farmers vs. global competitors
- Address equipment emission requirements driving up costs
- Create level playing field with international producers
- Antitrust enforcement against input suppliers

Other Actions

- Increased industry coordination (20.1%)
- Infrastructure investment - ports, rail, broadband (19.6%)
- Workforce development (17.4%)
- Technology adoption support (13.6%)

CRITICAL THEMES FROM OPEN-ENDED RESPONSES

Theme 1: Input Cost Crisis

"Nothing is bringing down input prices, and even if commodity prices have some recovery, it is unlikely to be enough."

"The big fertilizer companies need to be investigated heavily for market manipulation. We need stronger trade with other countries or the markets in America to sustain us. Ag equipment companies need to also be kept in check. Their prices steadily rise while ours steadily drops."

Theme 2: Corporate Consolidation

"More competition in the input site - too much consolidation in the seed, chemical and equipment industries."

"Antitrust lawsuits against corporate ag. We are being taken advantage of in input pricing and market manipulation by hedge funds that trade AI platforms. How in the hell do 1 percent of the population feed the rest of the country and we are being forced into bankruptcy."

Theme 3: Competitiveness Crisis

"It is going to be difficult to compete with Brazil where they can always double crop and have cotton and soybean yields that are high. We need to be as efficient as possible, and companies need to quit charging more for things in the US than other countries."

"Everything to do with growing cotton is 10 times higher in the U.S.A. than any other country."

Theme 4: Farm Viability at Risk

"I've never been in a worse position, and I don't see a clear future right now."

"No way to overcome the debt and the interest meter is ticking. Antitrust lawsuits against corporate ag. We are being taken advantage of in input pricing and market manipulation... How in the hell do 1 percent of the population feed the rest of the country and we are being forced into bankruptcy. Our industry and government has failed us."

"Did not plant anything in 2025, not crazy enough to plant something that couldn't pencil in a profit... nothing planted in 2025, probably nothing in 2026 either."

Theme 5: Policy and Leadership Failure

"Legislators working to help farmers instead of working to put them out of business."

"State and Local elected leaders don't seem to understand the plight of Agriculture and how it can affect the economy of our rural communities."

"The current administration (Secretary of Agriculture) seems to be all talk and no action. She keeps talking about all the assistance coming to the producer, but it seems to be too little too late."

Stark Warnings

Several respondents provided urgent warnings about the state of the industry:

From Extension Agent: "The broken record plays over and over with most every farm operation here. Over leveraged financially, major labor issues, consolidation among end users and input suppliers. The farmer holds little power to change their fortunes... Margins for some corporations have put shareholders and profits above their clientele and it has degraded the ability for many operations to stay liquid."

From Industry Associate: "Unless markets improve, the root cause of the disparity between grain prices and input costs changes, the rural communities and family farms are only going to bleed out fully. There will be nothing left in 2028 that resembles anything near what 'local' farming means anymore. This is the pivot point of the century for American Agriculture. It has not been this bad since the great depression or the dust bowl."

From Ginner: "The U.S. agriculture industry is at a pivotal crossroads - we either improve our financial future or watch our industry, farmers and small towns wither away."

SPECIFIC INDUSTRY CHALLENGES

Cotton Industry

Multiple cotton-focused respondents expressed deep concern:

- "We will zero our cotton acres if prices and costs do not improve after 2026 season - we have grown cotton for 80 years"
- "I am afraid that the cotton industry as we have known it, is on its way out"
- "The American cotton industry is in big trouble, and nothing is being done. There is no support other than talking heads with little to no results"

Recommendations specific to cotton:

- Incentivize domestic cotton use over synthetic fibers
- Support BACA Act (Buy American Cotton Act)
- Address technology fee burden on cotton farmers
- Restore cotton gin infrastructure

METHODOLOGY NOTE

This survey captured perspectives from 188 agricultural stakeholders across the Mid-South (63.8%) and Southeast (21.8%) regions during January-March 2026. Respondents included producers, ginners, industry associates, consultants, and ag finance professionals representing corn, soybean, cotton, rice, wheat, and other commodity operations. The survey addressed outlook, concerns, competitiveness assessment, and recommended actions through both

quantitative ratings and qualitative commentary. Competitiveness assessments reflect farmer perceptions based on their market experiences.