Unit 6: Fiber

Lesson 4: Exploring Kenaf

Purpose: I am thinking of a crop; in the United States processing plants for this crop only exist in the southeast. Your first thoughts might go to cotton or tobacco because you know those crops are primarily grown in that area. While cotton is not the correct answer, a close relative to cotton is correct. Kenaf, a plant harvested for two types of fibers has very specialized and unique uses.

Directions: Access the commodities and products tab on the AgMRC website (http://www.agmrc.org) and find the link to the fiber profile page. Utilize information located here to answer the questions below:

1. According to the AgMRC website, kenaf is native to Africa, is related to cotton and okra, and “is adapted to much of the southern United States and parts of California”. In relation to its origins, why would you expect it to be tolerant of southern U.S. climate conditions?

2. What are three uses of the “spongy core fiber” in kenaf plant stalks?

3. According to the AgMRC website, where are some current sites of commercial kenaf processing plants? Why would you expect these facilities to be located here?

4. Kenaf fibers can be processed into poultry house bedding. In which states would you expect there to be a big demand from the broiler industry? (Hint: Look up commodity poultry on the AgMRC website).

5. As of right now, the United States Department of Agriculture does not keep statistics on kenaf production. What could explain this?
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Reinforcement activity: Mindset of a farmer

In this scenario you are a farmer from Georgia, with land well suited for either Kenaf or Cotton production. You farm 100 acres and are in the process of deciding whether you want to plan Kenaf or Cotton this year. Taking into consideration how you rotate crops (what you planted the year before and will plant next year), cost of inputs and potential for revenue returns, explain which crop you would plant. You get to choose your crop rotations, but the numbers for input costs and returns should be researched.