

Another Conservation Success Story...

Appling County, Georgia

March 2008

No-Till Saves Farmers Dream

Jeffery (Jeff) Deen started farming 28 years ago, 8 miles south of Baxley off of the Satilla Church Road, in Appling County, using the conventional tillage methods of a row crops farmer. For him this method of farming was very expensive and time consuming.

He had many problems ranging from soil erosion, degradation of soil quality, polluted runoff, and air pollution from dust. Because of these problems and the cost incurred with run-

"If I had not started no-till farming, I would not be farming today!"—Jeff Deen

ning the farm, Jeff, and his wife Michelle, were considering giving up on farming.

Then he took a class in Sustainable Agriculture and Conservation Tillage held in Douglas, by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Deen said, "I was concerned about soil erosion, water quality and conservation issues, wildlife preservation and increasing organic matter to improve soil tilth." This is what caused him to seek assistance from the NRCS.

Deen decided to convert the operation to a conservation or no-till farm. He not only set goals that would benefit them, he also set goals that would benefit the environment as well; stopping their soil erosion problem, and

the runoff of harmful chemicals and fertilizer into nearby Big Satilla Creek, reduce their need for commercial fertilizer, build organic matter, enhance wildlife, and reduce their fuel and water consumption.

"Deen converted his operation to a systems approach that included cover crops, residue management or conservation tillage, nutrient management, pest management, and irrigation water management on his irrigated acres. He received assistance for these practices through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)," said Joey Futch, district conservationist for the NRCS.

Deen said he liked the EQIP because, "It helps farmers to implement new ideas on their farm that they may not have had the opportunity to do without cost share assistance. If I had not started no-till farming, I would not be farming today."

He also thinned and burned his forest acres through the EQIP Forestry/Wildlife program and he planted longleaf pine and established field borders for wildlife through the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP).

Deen retrofitted a center pivot though EQIP Ground and Surface Water Program to reduce water use from the aquifer. He constructed an irrigation reservoir through the SE Georgia Irrigation Reservoir Program and constructed the first community nutrient management facility through the Community Nutrient Management Facility Program. He also has a forest stewardship plan through the Georgia Forestry Commission.



Jeffery and Michelle Deen stand in front of their no plow zone sign. Jeffery Deen says "I now have time to enjoy since I stated No-till farming."

All of the Deen's hard work has paid off as the farm has benefited from the application of several conservation programs.

"This farming operation has benefited in many ways from the conservation efforts. Soil erosion has been eliminated; water quality has been improved in creeks and streams. Water and fuel consumption have been reduced. Input costs have been reduced by the lessened use of chemical and fertilizer applications. Hours of labor have been reduced. Wildlife has been enhanced and bobwhite quail populations have been reestablished," said Deen.

Deen has a philosophy for future generations; "Take care of the land and it will take care of you."

District Supervisors Frank Miles and J.M. Vaughn stated that, "Jeff has been a leader in conservation as evidenced by his recognition by the Altamaha Soil and Water Conservation District as Conservation Farmer of the year from Appling County for 2005." "I believe in preservation through conservation," said Deen.

Jeff Deen's Philosophy
"Take care of the land and it will take care of you."



Conservation tillage peanuts in a rye crop under a pivot irrigation system.

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 **NRCS** Natural Resources
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