

Another Strikeforce Conservation Success Story...

Baker County, Georgia

September 2011

New Well Saves Small Farmer's Vegetable Operation

Johnny Long first tried farming as a hobby. He wanted an activity to keep him occupied during retirement.

"My sister Lucille encouraged me to do this. Matter of fact, she pushed me to get into it," Long said.

Soon after giving it a shot, he realized his hobby was going to take a lot of hard work. That was back in 2003. Now, eight years later, Long still recalls how tough it was for him to get his farming operation off the ground.

"NRCS has helped a lot of black farmers come a long way."—Johnny Long

Long said, "I couldn't do anything. I burned up a well trying to get water to my crops."

He became so discouraged that he admitted he stopped farming until he saw a silver lining. "I quit because I couldn't afford to water it and then I figured out how to get some help," he said.

Long's sister, Lucille Benton, told him about the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and how the

agency might be able to help him with his water problem.

When Long visited the local service center in Newton, Soil Conservationist Eugene Barber informed him about a program called the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). Barber encouraged Long to apply for the program.

"Eugene went out of his way to help me. He pushed me to try to get assistance," Long said.

Once Long was approved for EQIP, the financial assistance provided through the program helped him get a well installed on his farm. It includes a 220 gallon tank that pumps up to 60 gallons a minute to a solid-set irrigation system on Long's five acres of vegetable crops.

This new system has helped Long improve his operation that specializes in peas, cream crowder, purple hull, okra and ladyfingers.

"It is so much better. I can time it and go in the house and not worry about my crops getting water."

Not only was Long able to get a new and more energy efficient well for his farm, technical assistance has helped him with an irrigation water management plan.

This plan focuses on documenting rainfall and when it is best to irrigate crops.

Pest management concerns have also been addressed through EQIP. Agricultural pest infestations were managed to reduce the adverse effects on plant growth, crop production and the environment.

"Goodness, I can produce more," Long explained.

A nutrient management plan has helped Long with his goals of



Johnny Long has been farming for eight years on his Newton property.

reaching optimum crop production by improving the chemical and biological condition of the soil.

Overall, Long said he is very happy with the technical and financial assistance provided by NRCS.

"NRCS has helped a lot of black farmers come a long way."

Baker County is a designated StrikeForce county in Georgia. The USDA StrikeForce



A solid-set irrigation system waters crops on more than five acres of Long's land.



A 220 gallon tank pumps 60 gallons of water a minute to Long's crops.

Initiative is designed to help relieve persistent poverty in high-poverty counties.

 **Natural Resources Conservation Service**

229-734-5823

**Flint River
Soil And Water
Conservation District**

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