

# Another Conservation Success Story...

## Effingham County, Georgia

October 2011

### Organic Farmer Benefits from EQIP Assistance

Shirley Daughtry knows how to take a little and grow it into something bigger and better.

Her patience and dedication to organic farming has made it possible to develop a very small operation into a successful business. She runs Heritage Organic Farms in Springfield.

*“I was spending so much on cover crop seeds. NRCS helped cut that expense,”—Shirley Daughtry*

Daughtry first started farming after she bought a few acres in Effingham County more than 30 years ago.

“I bought this in 1980 and it was just a blank soybean field,” Daughtry said.

By 1990, Daughtry had become Georgia’s very first certified organic farmer. Even though



Daughtry also raises chickens which she feeds with organic feed.

this was a big accomplishment for the small farmer, Daughtry was having a tough time managing resources on her farm.

Her big concerns were water management, soil erosion and nutrient management.

After learning about the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) through her involvement with Georgia Organics, Daughtry applied for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

Once she was approved for a contract, Daughtry was able to address her resource concerns. First, she was able to build a solid-set irrigation system on 1.5 acres of the small farm.

Daughtry was also able to save money on cover crops.

“I was spending so much on cover crop seeds. NRCS helped cut that expense,” Daughtry explained.

Cover crops help cut down on soil erosion and specific types such as clover can provide added nutrients to the soil.

These nutrients can improve plant growth. Rotating cover crops also helps in pest management. By rotating different types of crops in a field through the seasons, pests can be better controlled.

Daughtry is especially pleased with the results she has seen from building a small hoop house on her farm.

“It (EQIP) works. You see results. I’ve experienced less soil erosion and an increase in sales. The hoop house controls wind and rain; lessens stress on plants and essentially increases production.”

Daughtry added, “Our sales went up by \$1,000 by adding this hoop house.”



A hoop house has helped Shirley Daughtry increase crop production on her small farm.

NRCS Soil Conservationist, Phil Hall has worked with Daughtry on her conservation plans and said, “She’s a wonderful lady. She is really up on organics and she shares her story with other organic farmers and tells them how NRCS helps.”

Daughtry is also interested in teaching future generations about the importance of conserving



Daughtry grows okra, peppers and tomatoes. These crops and others have benefited from the installation of a solid-set irrigation system on her farm.

our natural resources and sharing her views on growing organically.

“If we don’t do something, we are going to run out of food. Future generations need to know the reality of what we’re dealing with now,” Daughtry said.

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Ogeechee River Soil And Water  
Conservation District

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