

Another Conservation Success Story...

Fannin County, Georgia

July 2011

Conservation is a Family Legacy for Mercier Orchards

Great apples, tasty peaches, smart marketing, efficient production, sustainability and conservation are all part of the Mercier Orchards brand.

In the 67 years since Agronomist William Mercier established Mercier Orchards it has grown into a working model of conservation.

Forty years later, his son Tim Mercier, is ensuring the legacy continues by focusing on a philosophy of sustainability and conservation.

“We want to grow and do things in an environmentally friendly and economically feasible

“In my time working with the Mercier’s, I have seen that their commitment to conservation began with the conception of the orchard.

William passed his ideology on to Tim, and as Tim improves management techniques, and passes his knowledge on to his children, that commitment to conservation continues,” Doug Towery said.

The EQIP contract has allowed

the Mercier family to begin updating 50 acres of a big gun irrigation system with a more efficient drip irrigation system.

This transition will save 900,000 gallons of water every week. In addition, the new system puts more size on their apples at a cheaper cost, which in turn, will sell better in the road side market and on their wholesaler’s shelves.

“EQIP is a program that identifies needs and provides a reasonable seed to get a project off the ground to help you conserve. This program allows us to take limited water and use it more efficiently.”

Mercier explained.

Not only does the drip irrigation system offer the chance to conserve more water, it will also cut down on their need to spray for pests, according to Mercier.

“It’s hard to control insects and pests when



District Conservationist Doug Towery and Tim Mercier continue to work together on installing the new drip irrigation system on several acres in Mercier Orchards.

there’s too much water in the soil,” Mercier explained.

“We want to grow and do things in an environmentally friendly and economically feasible way.”—Tim Mercier

Although Mercier admitted that he is taking a chance with drip irrigation, he says the good growers want to be ahead of the curve when it comes to conservation, trying better methods of farming.



Mercier Bakery serves up delicious pastries filled with fresh fruit to orchard visitors and the local Blue Ridge community.

way. That’s sustainability. We work at that as our philosophy,” Mercier said.

Growing apples, peaches, strawberries and other fruit on more than 200 acres of land isn’t easy. One of the biggest challenges for Mercier Orchards has centered on a limited water resource and how best to use it in the family’s production.

“This is very critical because we now grow high density root systems that are designed five feet apart and these systems can’t tolerate dry situations,” Mercier said.

Through the technical and financial assistance provided by the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Mercier Orchards has been able to begin addressing this water quantity concern.

After applying for and earning an Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) contract, Mercier has been working with District Conservationist Doug Towery to implement a plan to conserve water in the orchards.



Mercier Orchards is located in the heart of the Blue Ridge Mountains. The family operation specializes in apples, peaches and even strawberries.

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Conservation & Development
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**NRCS Natural Resources
Conservation Service
706-745-2794**

**Blue Ridge Mountain Soil and
Water Conservation District**

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