

# Another StrikeForce Conservation Success Story...

## Taylor County, Georgia

July 2011

### EQIP Assistance Rescues Small Farmer from Drought

Amos Lawrence was at a loss. He wanted to continue farming on his 15 acre property in Reynolds but he had a major problem that was standing in his way: a severe shortage of water.

"I didn't have water. I lost everything that year,"

Lawrence remembered. That was in 2010.

Before becoming a full-time farmer, 61-year-old Lawrence worked at Fort Valley State University for several years before retiring as a mechanical superintendent in 2007. It had always been a dream to return to farm life after retirement.

Lawrence grew up on a farm in Alabama and for a short time he farmed row crops in the 1970s.



Lawrence grows watermelon, okra, peas and corn on 15 acres in Taylor County.

office in Fort Valley. FSA previously assisted Lawrence with drought insurance.

"The ladies over at the FSA office told me to go visit Mr. Ray Jones (District Conservationist in the NRCS Fort Valley office). They saw I was struggling. I met with Mr. Jones and he said he'd come out here and take a look at my land to see what could be done. When he came out, he saw that I was attempting to irrigate with small ground based units that weren't adequate," Lawrence explained.

After visiting the farm, Jones suggested that applying for an Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) agreement might be a step in the right direction in solving Lawrence's water quantity issue.

When Lawrence was approved for the EQIP agreement, he said "That was very good. I was really blessed to get it."

Although it's still in the beginning phase, technical assistance provided by Ray Jones and the financial assistance through EQIP funds have helped Lawrence get a well up and running that supplies a micro-irrigation system.

The well pumps 100 gallons a minute. The micro-irrigation system delivers a steady drip to the crops.

Currently, the micro-irrigation system has been installed on five acres but will eventually cover all of Lawrence's 15 acres.

When asked what he liked best about EQIP, Lawrence simply stated "It takes the doubt out of farming. It inspires you to continue."

Now that less time is being spent worrying about crop loss, Lawrence can spend more time growing his operation. Right now he grows watermelon, okra, peas, and corn but hopes to grow other crops year round now that water isn't an issue.

"The water is going to be the real key to this operation," Lawrence said.

Now, that he has hope for his farm, Lawrence says he can also spend more time sharing his love of the land and value of farm life with his 20-year-old



Amos Lawrence and his son A.J. are all smiles as they pose in front of their new well.

son A.J. who helps out when he's not attending college.

"The knowledge you get on a farm can't be compared. An all-around farm boy is a smart and sharp guy," Lawrence said. He wants his son to one day give back to the land by being a good steward

**"It (EQIP) takes the doubt out of farming. It inspires you to continue."—Amos Lawrence**

and keeping what he calls our country's backbone, farming, in place.

Taylor County is a designated StrikeForce county in Georgia. The USDA StrikeForce Initiative



This is one drip irrigation hose that constantly waters crops on one acre on Lawrence's land.

Fond experiences pushed him to make his way back to the farm.

"I was in heaven when I was on a tractor," Lawrence said.

But those memories didn't prepare him for the hardships he would face. Last year, after struggling to get by without water for his crops, Lawrence reached out to the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

He'd been told about the agency through his relationship with the Farm Service Agency (FSA)



Fresh ground water has been a life-line for the small farmer's growing operation.

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

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