

Another Strikeforce Conservation Success Story...

Baker County, Georgia

September 2011

EQIP Helps Small Farmer Upgrade Operation

80-year-old Calip Johnson has seen a lot over the years and he has noticed that farming isn't like it was when he first started.

"There's a lot more to farming than a tractor and pliers. Technology is really improving it," Johnson explained.

A lack of technology almost prevented Johnson from doing what he loves; growing watermelons and selling them to

"He's determined. He has done a lot of work out there. He even put his own well in,"—Eugene Barber

folks in the Baker County community.

Before Johnson found a way to make technology work for him, he struggled to irrigate his crops.

"I was trying to water 6.7 acres with a pipe and dragging a water hose around. I tried to

"I went to check it out and when I talked to Eugene Barber (Soil Conservationist), I found out I could do a lot better than dragging around a water hose," Johnson said.

After applying for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Johnson was approved for the program.

The program offers financial and technical assistance for farmers. In Johnson's case, he received financial

assistance for a solid-set irrigation system.

Eugene Barber provided technical assistance by guiding Johnson on how to set up the system and operate it.

Barber said that Johnson not only fol-



Johnson has seen tremendous improvement in his crop since he has a steady supply of water for his farm.

ons as well as turnips, mustard greens, corn, and peas.

Now, instead of dragging a hose around to water his produce Johnson said, "I can stand



Calip Johnson grows watermelon, corn, peas, and turnips on his small Newton farm.

raise watermelons but it wasn't successful until I got water," Johnson said.

Through word of mouth, Johnson learned that the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) might be able to help him with his irrigation problem.

there. He even put his own well in," Barber said.

The solid-set system covers 6.7 acres where Johnson grows his cherished watermel-



Before the solid-set irrigation system was installed, Johnson lost a lot of crops to drought.

lowed all of the specifications, he did much of the installation work himself.

"He's determined. He has done a lot of work out

up at the controls and send water to where I want it to go in the field. I just push a button."

In the time that the solid-set irrigation has been set up on his small farm outside Newton, Johnson said he's seen a big difference in his produce. "That irrigation sure paid off."

Baker County is a designated StrikeForce county in Georgia. The USDA StrikeForce Initiative is designed to help relieve persistent poverty in high-poverty counties.



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**Flint River
Soil And Water
Conservation District**