

Gene Thornton's Farm Serves as USDA Demonstration Site

Written by Eddie May-Coosa Valley RC&D

Gene Thornton is continuing in his efforts to serve as a USDA Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) demonstration farmer at his Roanoke, AL Sneaky Crow Farm. His most recent field day event was held on May 19, 2012. The plastic culture/micro-irrigation demonstration field day began at 10:00 a.m. and ended around 1:00 p.m. with lunch. Small Scale farmers from all over Alabama attended the field day event.

Eddie May, Executive Director for the Coosa Valley Resource Conservation and Development Council started the event off with a warm welcome followed by a historical overview of the farming history and operations by the farm's prominent owner, Gene Thornton.

Craig Johnson, USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service-District Conservationist presented a slide presentation which highlighted the programs that are tailored for the small scale/limited resource farmer. He advised the group about program eligibility and how they could receive technical and financial assistance from his office.

Victor Khan-Tuskegee University Plant Breeder conducted a hands-on plastic culture/micro-irrigation management workshop and seminar. Victor will covered such topics as soil preparation, micro-irrigation installation, row spacing, moisture management, pest management, fertilization techniques, selecting proper mulch color and various other topics.

Gene Thornton is also a certified organic farmer. He used the Alabama NRCS Organic Farming Initiative Program to assist him in the certification process. Craig Johnson provided Gene with the financial and technical assistance in helping him to achieve the certification.

The field day was sponsored and coordinated by the Coosa Valley Resource Conservation and Development Council in Oxford, Alabama. Coosa Valley RC&D is a 501-c-3 organization which serves an eleven county area in east central Alabama. The Randolph County Soil and Water Conservation District will also provide coordination and support for the event.

Dr William Puckett, State Conservationist for the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Alabama is very committed to ensuring that all farmers (large and small) are fully aware of and fully able to participate in the programs offered by NRCS. Julie Yates is responsible for Program Outreach and she is very supportive of the field days and demonstrations that are implemented throughout Alabama.

For information about NRCS Small Scale Farmer Programs in Alabama please contact Eddie May at 256.283-1208 or your local NRCS office.