

## SUCCESS STORY – TIM & BETTY HUDSON, COLDWATER, MS

Farms 2500 acres cropland, grazing land and forest land

Tate-DeSoto County, Coldwater, MS

Soybeans, corn

### H & H Farms: Practicing conservation tillage for more than 30 years

About 30 years ago, a couple of farmers near Coldwater, Mississippi, thought Tim Hudson was crazy when they noticed he wasn't tilling his cotton fields. He was out in his field, and two of his mentors, whom he describes as old-time farmers, stopped by, and one said: "Tim, looks like you're gonna get a stand of corn and soybeans, but you can't get a stand of cotton that way."

Despite what those farmers and others said, Hudson continued to practice conservation tillage on his farm. He was young and starting out as a farmer, and said he simply couldn't afford the fuel, the tractors or labor costs to till his fields. Economics dictated that he practice minimum till and no-till on his cropland. "I went into it trying to figure out a way to stay in business," Hudson said. "I'm trying to get the most out of land I work instead of having the most land to work."

In addition to practicing minimum- to no-till, Hudson also rotates crop, grades stabilization structures, diversions and streambank stabilization.

"My dad was a firm believer in pipes," Hudson said, so he went to the DeSoto County SWCD and the National Resources Conservation Service for help to install pipes, apply conservation practices, and enhancements to control erosion and improve water and air quality. He wanted to create grazing lands and wildlife habitat. "The SWCD helped a bunch, and I worried them to death," Hudson said.

One of eight children, Hudson is the only child that stayed on the farm. He inherited family land, and has doubled the acreage of the original family farm. He plants 1,000 acres of row crop, and grazes about 600 head of beef cows; 200 of them are momma cows. "I work the branch bottoms and have cows up on the hills." By grazing the cows on the hills and rotating the livestock feeding areas, it helps control erosion and protect water quality, Hudson said.

Hudson uses GPS guidance and drift-reduction technology to determine where he will plant and fertilize, ensuring the target plant gets the fertilizer and nutrients for crop and forages. With proper planning, Hudson keeps the air and water cleaner because the soil isn't moved into streams and water bodies by wind or soil erosion. He has installed shallow-water areas and wildlife-friendly fencing to enhance wildlife habitation, and leaves grain standing in the fields for wildlife food.

By regularly taking soil samples, Hudson ensures his soil is healthy. The presence of earthworms is an indicator that his soil is good, he said. He doesn't plant cover crop because by planting the bottoms in his fields and grazing cattle on the hills, there's no need for cover crop.

Regarding the success of his minimum- to no-till farming, Hudson said: "As of right now we're starting to see a little bit of resistance, but we've been rotating for 30 years. We are seeing a little bit of cockle burrs; we're just on it quick. We've kind of stayed ahead of the game on that with rotation." Hudson rotates crops and also rotates chemicals as needed.

"Being a farmer is not a job; if you look at it like a job and the economics of it, it's not like being an accountant or banker. Farming is a life," Hudson said.