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Hoover Family Farms – Suwannee Valley BMP Success Story



Bradley Hoover, II, Photo courtesy UF/IFAS

individuals from the Suwannee County Extension team the Hoovers have worked to improve their irrigation and fertilization efficiency.

About 40-50 different varieties of vegetables including several types of lettuce, kale, beets, and broccoli are grown on 20 acres. As a certified organic farm, the Hoovers have seen the importance of crop rotation and how it enables them to limit the pesticides labeled for organic production to a bare minimum. A few other pest management systems the Hoovers have implemented to lower their need for spraying include scouting, trapping using sunflowers and bringing in beneficial insects using buckwheat.

LIVE OAK, FL, December 11, 2015 – Rooted from the five generations of family farming, Bradley Hoover and his son, Bradley Hoover II, operate their certified organic family farm in northwest Suwannee County. The Hoovers initially started their organic farm eight years ago and currently farm 20 of the 40 acres they own. Their goal was to make a living on a small acreage family farm. Over the years, through many challenges and lots of hard work, they have developed their farm into the very successful family business they had envisioned.

The Hoovers desire to be good stewards of the land. In order to conserve their natural resources they have implemented Best Management Practices (BMPs). With the assistance of a few

Over the course of the past several years the Hoovers have been transitioning toward using all plastic beds, which helps conserve nutrients longer. Since most of the fertilizing is done pre-plant, it is essential that the nutrients last as long as possible. Also, they have begun to use mostly drip irrigation, which they have placed on timers. Bradley Hoover II expressed how cost effective it has been for the business to reduce the quantity of water used.

In order to be a self-sustaining business, it was important that the Hoovers found just the right niche for their product. This niche has been through wholesaling their vegetables and working to make the best quality vegetable they possibly can. Along with the conservation practices, the Hoovers also work hard to select the strongest plants. In order to grow year round, the Hoovers have implemented row covers on a lot of their crops. Last year through the use of these covers the Hoovers were able to sell vegetables 52 weeks out of the year.

Bradley Hoover said that he sees plenty of room for growth in the future of the organic market. If that does happen and the current market continues to grow, Hoover said, "I love it, and I hope to keep on farming for the rest of my life."

This story is the fourth in a series of articles provided in partnership with the Suwannee River Water Management District, the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, the Suwannee River Partnership and the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services' Office of Agriculture Water Policy. This series highlights the remarkable work of local farmers practicing sustainable and environmental best management practices. Interview and article submitted by Andrew A. Horvath, UF/IFAS staff writer.

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