

Okaloosa County News Release



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Photo: (L-R) Jennifer Bearden, Nick Marshall, Maryann Marshall, Landon Marshall, Helen Marshall, and James Marshall

Marshall Farms honored as an Agriculture Innovator by UF/IFAS Extension and Farm Credit

Larry Ford, Jackson County, Selected NWF “Innovator of the Year”

Marshall Farms was recognized as the Okaloosa County Agriculture Innovator of the Year by Jennifer Bearden, Okaloosa County Extension Agent. Marshall Farms is among thirteen Innovative Farmers and Ranchers were recognized on Friday August 17, by University of Florida IFAS Extension and Farm Credit of Northwest Florida. This year’s event took place at the Jay Community Center in Santa Rosa County, and is the second year these two organizations have teamed up to honor a selection of the top innovative farmers in the Florida Panhandle.

James and Nick Marshall operate Marshall Farms located in Baker, and produces cotton and peanuts on over 2100 acres in Okaloosa County. The father and son pair strive to make sound decisions that conserve the natural resources that they use to grow their commodities and some examples of why they gained this recognition are:

- Marshall Farms leads the way in Okaloosa in the use of technology such as Grid Soil Sampling and GPS-guided planting.
- Were the one of the first farmers in our county to use Precision Agriculture to soil sample, fertilize and lime
- They recently purchased a round bale cotton picker, which saves time and money for the operation. They also use a self-propelled peanut combine to increase efficiency.
- With just over 2100 acres, the pair has to maximize productivity in order to stay competitive.

Nick is a third generation peanut farmer who recently was interviewed in the Southern Peanut Growers’ “Growers We Dig: Nick Marshall” video on www.youtube.com. Because all 2100 acres are managed mainly by just James and Nick, efficiency is of utmost importance.

From this distinguished pool of 13 farmers, an “Innovator of the Year” was selected to represent Northwest Florida. This year **Larry Ford, of Malone, who represented Jackson County** was selected as the Farm Credit of Northwest Florida Agriculture Innovator of the Year. Ford is well known as an excellent cotton, peanut, corn and cattle farmer. Innovator of the Year, Larry Ford, highlights include:

- Pioneer in Florida providing the first on-farm testing of conservation strip tillage, and is still working with researchers to refine this farming technique.
- Collaborator with the University of Florida’s 10 year, sod-based crop rotation research project, that utilizes bahia grass in rotation with peanuts and cotton to reduce nematodes, diseases, and other pests and increase crop yields.
- Ford has worked extensively to help the faculty of the UF/IFAS North Florida Research and Education Center and UF/IFAS Jackson County Extension Agents to develop innovative, but practical solutions to farming challenges.
- Ford has also been a leader in agriculture serving six years on the National Peanut Board, and as the chairman in 2006. While serving in this capacity, Ford traveled with a team to Mexico and Japan to help promote the use of peanut products in these countries.

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The purpose of the Agriculture Innovator Recognition Program is to annually recognize innovative farmers and ranchers from 16 Florida Panhandle counties, from Jefferson west to Escambia County. UF/IFAS County Agriculture Extension Agents nominate one honoree from each county that are recognized at the annual awards luncheon. Bringing these top-notch farmers together for the event, will further innovation. Highlighting these creative and successful farmers will also help increase awareness of the diversity and innovation of today's modern agriculture. By sharing the story of the highlighted farmers and ranchers with local and regional media, the general public will gain a new appreciation for the business of agriculture in their area.

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