

# DOING IT BETTER

**FOR FOUR GENERATIONS, THIS MISSISSIPPI FAMILY HAS EMBRACED NEW WAYS TO PRODUCE HIGHER QUALITY CROPS**

In the early 1970s, brothers Edwin and Terry Dulaney were proud to be the third generation working the ground their grandfather and his brother cleared for timber and began farming in 1913. They followed the same hands-on "do it right" approach to farming that began when that first ground was broken.

As Edwin and Terry managed the operation near Clarksdale, Mississippi, they wanted a way to keep their good help employed year-round, and to generate more income. Growing higher value seed crops – rice, soybeans and wheat – they reasoned, could be the answer.

"We knew we were growing crops that could provide good seed. We didn't have to change any agronomic practices, as we always tried to maintain high standards," Edwin recalled.

Dulaney Seeds was formed in 1991 and continues today with Edwin's sons, JD and Wayne, continuing a couple of family traditions ... seed production, hands-on operation, ag education at Mississippi State University, and a

desire to always do things better.

"Not all our cropland is in seed production, but we treat it all like it is," JD explains.

Today, the Dulaney family operate as two businesses: Dulaney Seeds, and their farming operation, "Gen 4 Farms" named to recognize their spot in the farm's progression.

Gen 4 Farms encompasses about 5,900 acres, nearly all irrigated, and grows all the rice, and most of the soybeans labeled as Dulaney Seeds. Their seed wheat also comes from their farm, as well as from contracted growers.

Having the seed business has given the Dulaney family reason to structure their operation a bit differently. Edwin and Terry have semiretired from the farm and actively promote Dulaney Seeds, working with university researchers and managing seed plots throughout the mid-South.

JD manages overall farming operations, and Wayne serves as lead agronomist for Dulaney Seeds. He also handles the farm's agronomic and marketing needs.

With all four family members focused on efficient, high-quality seed production, they're quick to adopt practices and equipment that will make a difference.

Timeliness underpins everything. Edwin says his father emphasized two things: Have good planting equipment and more harvesting equipment than you think you'll need.



To that formula, they've added autoguidance and site-specific precision farming capabilities.

"For overall efficiency, I'd say autoguidance has been our single biggest improvement," JD says. They invested in autoguidance in 2002, and found they could plant 1,600 acres of soybeans in the same amount of time with two tractors and planters that previously took three, JD says.

Another autoguidance advantage, he says, is doing precision bedding and planting. "We can put in a lot of hours and still do a good job." They plant with a pair of Case IH 1200 Series planters, set up to plant 17 30-inch rows, with their two MX275 tractors set to clear 90-inch rows. This tire setting provides ample clearance for mud when the tractors are working in rice.

"We're rowing 12 rows, planting 17 rows and harvesting eight rows," Edwin says. "Autoguidance has done away with the need to keep everything on the same row pattern."

They've used the accuracy of autoguidance to introduce other efficiencies. As their rice fields are precision land formed to manage

**On tracks, the Dulaney's Axial-Flow 8120 combine handles pavement as well as it does the muddy field conditions they bought it for. As seed growers, the Dulaney's see firsthand the advantage of the Axial-Flow threshing system for delivering a clean, whole sample.**



**Wayne, JD and Edwin Dulaney, standing in one of their rice fields yielding more than 200 bushels per acre. All the rice seed they sell is grown on their farm.**

combines because of their ability to deliver whole grain and clean samples. Wayne says he also saw the difference as he took twice-daily samples from the combines of growers who grow some of their seed soybeans.

"We only accept seed growers with Axial-Flow combines," he says. "On other combines, the best I could get them to was about 92 percent uncracked seed, so that's starting with 92 percent germination. With the Axial-Flows, we can get 98 percent or better. There's a knack to setting them up, but once you learn an Axial-Flow combine, it's probably the simplest system out there."

JD says their initial experience with the Axial-Flow 8120 has shown it easier to clean out for the inspections by a seed improvement association inspector required each time they move to another field. "There are doors at the bottom of the augers, and it's more open overall. Cleanout takes much less time."

The Axial-Flow 8120 on tracks is the latest in the long line of improvements and practices that help the Dulaney family do a better job of farming. Other examples include their ability to capture excess flood irrigation water and apply to several more fields before it's played out, thanks to a lock-and-dam type drainage system, and the specialized grain handling and storage structures that JD designed and built as a certified pipe and plate welder. They handle a lot of their own shop work, but with the equipment's increased level of technology, they increasingly count on their Case IH dealer for service and for advice about the equipment that will work best for them.

"Our Case IH dealer is a fine group to do business with," Edwin says. "They take care of any problems and they're interested in meeting our needs." ■



water with straight levees, rather than contoured ones, JD sets his autoguidance in the tractor used for rice seeding to make six seeding passes, automatically skip 8 feet, then make six more seeding passes. "That 8 feet is where the levee goes, so I'm not planting ground I'm going to chew up with the levee plow. I'm saving that seed," JD says.

In corn, Wayne says he strives for a net effective plant stand of 95 percent, and to make every ear fill out. "That's what you need to get the higher yields," he says, noting that most growers likely average 75 to 80 percent net effective stand in good corn.

The difference, Wayne says, includes giving the plants a good start. "We put down starter fertilizer with the planters, then come back shortly after emergence with a close sidedress of nitrogen," he says. Running injection knives on both sides of the plant, just 5 inches away, is another application where autoguidance enables an agronomic practice that would be much more difficult without it, JD notes.

Every year, the Dulaney family look for more ways to bring precision farming practices into the operation. With more than a decade's worth of yield maps as reference, they're able to closely evaluate the cost/benefits of spray applications, fungicides and foliar feeds, and to make variable-rate applications of P and K.

Not that all their work is done by machine. To assure the purity

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they maintain for their Dulaney rice varieties, their rice fields are hand-rouged by crews several times during the growing season. "We manually remove the off-types," Edwin says. "Every acre is walked at two different stages."

Like other mid-South farmers, the Dulaney family's desire for ample harvest capacity has been shaped by a hurricane or two. The year Hurricane Rita came through, they had purchased a new Case IH 2388 Axial-Flow combine, and kept their older 2188, rather than trading it. "I didn't think we'd need

it, but it was paid for, and we figured it would be helpful if we added more acres," Edwin recalls.

As it were, they ran the two machines hard to finish all their rice the day before the storm. "Fields that were still standing were laid down flat like a roller went over them. You don't forget things like that," Edwin says.

Now, they're running four Axial-Flow combines: one 2188, two 2388s and a new Axial-Flow 8120 on tracks. They had demoed an 8120 when it was introduced, and liked it. During 2009's wet harvest, Edwin says they saw how an 8120 on tracks performed "while we were struggling with the mud, making a mess and getting stuck," he says.

That experience, plus their recent acquisition of additional land, prompted them to buy the Axial-Flow 8120 on tracks for 2010's harvest. "I've gotten into some mud with this machine and never knew it," JD says. "For us, in rice, it's doing what two and a half 2388s will do."

As seed growers, the Dulaney family go way back with Axial-Flow