



Sunbelt Ag Expo

Southeastern Farmer of the Year

News Release
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For Immediate Release

JERRY WYANT NAMED 2023 NORTH CAROLINA FARMER OF THE YEAR

Jerry Wyant was raised on the same farm in Vale, North Carolina, where he's been planting crops and raising livestock for the last 52 years. Wyant said, "I'm the fourth generation to live on this property. My great-grandfather bought 280 acres in the mid-1800s and cleared approximately 40 acres to farm. As time went on, my grandfather and father cleared even more land."

After high school Wyant went on to earn a BS degree in management and Cost Accounting at Kings Business College in Charlotte, North Carolina. Following graduation, he worked for Firestone of Charlotte and later for Vermont American Corporation as a cost accountant and office manager. He eventually became a manufacturer's sales representative for the company. In the early 1970s, it was apparent that his dad needed help on the farm, so he left the corporate world for full-time farming.

Jerry Wyant has been married to Linda Wyant since 1972. They met in the same church where both of their families were long-time members. She learned hard work by growing up on a dairy farm. They have three grown children: twins Robert ("Tommy") Wyant, 46, and Susan Wyant Barrett, 46, and David Wyant, 40, and a number of grandchildren. Wyant noted, "Our farming operation is a family one. After our two sons graduated from college, they joined the family business. Our daughter is a CPA and helps on the farm by handling the bookkeeping. Even our grandchildren are involved."

For example, the grandchildren pick up roots in freshly cleared land and spend hours riding in the combines with either their dad or their grandfather. Some raise quail, chicken, and baby calves and sell eggs. Others have baled straw at wheat harvest time and run the combine during the summers. Both daughters-in-law and Linda Wyant have served as 'go fors' and run the lead vehicle with flashing lights to move big equipment on the highway. Linda cooks lunch for all the farm workers every day and does all the mowing on the farm.

Wyant started off with 400 acres of farm land, 100 of which were rented and 300 owned. He now has a total of 1800 acres, with 1040 acres rented and 760 acres owned. Wyant Farm's crop yields are as follows: 725 acres of wheat yielding 78 bushels/acre; 1400 acres of soybeans yielding 53 bushes/acre; 100 acres of corn yielding 176 bushels/acre; 20 acres of alfalfa hay yielding 2.75 tons/acre; 120 acres of grass hay yielding 2.25 tons/acre; 70 acres of



grass seed yielding 600 – 50 lb. bags. On 725 acres he grows wheat straw yielding a total of 42,000 bales. He bales straw in 40-pound rectangular bales and saves on labor costs by investing in a stack wagon and a bale handler to mechanize the moving and loading of the straw bales. Wyant also has a cow/calf operation of Black Angus breed consisting of 120 brood cows yielding 110 feeder calves/year. In addition, he is now feeding out steers and heifers and selling steaks and hamburgers to individual customers.

Wyant said, “On our farm we harvest our own crops and store them in bins of varying sizes, from 3,000 bushel bins to 26,000 bushel bins. I enjoy driving a combine and seeing the grain come into the bins, especially in good years. We use tractor trailers to haul the wheat and corn to Renwood Mills in Newton and the soybeans to ADM in Kershaw, South Carolina. We also use futures contracts by marketing ahead six months and do our own hauling of these crops. Our cattle are transported directly to the auction barn, and we carefully watch market trends and balancing pasture conditions.”

Wyant cleans his grass seed and has samples tested for germination and purity. He added, “We sell grass seed from the farm and deliver to wholesale customers as well. We bag deer corn and sell it at the farm. And we sell the straw by the tractor trailer load, hauling it to various landscape businesses within a four-county area. We deliver large loads of hay to our customers and sell smaller hay loads directly from the farm.” Wyant also occasionally provides land improvements for others in the community using his own equipment. On the off-season he delivers wheat and soybeans to market for several local farmers, helping to defray the cost of owning four tractor trailers.

On the county level, Wyant is a past member and vice president of Lincoln Jaycees, a past board member and president of the Union Volunteer Fire Department, and a past member of the Lincoln County Planning Board. In 1994, the Wyant’s were named Soil and Water Conservation Farm Family of the year. He is currently president and board member of the Lincoln County Farm Bureau and a past chairman of the Voluntary Ag District Committee. On the state level, he is currently serving as Vice President of the North Carolina Farm Bureau and a member of its executive committee and board of directors. On the national level, Wyant has regularly attended the American Farm Bureau Annual convention and has been a voting delegate to the AFBF Annual meeting for over 20 years.

Each year in March, Wyant participates in Ag Day at the Legislature, meeting with state representatives to discuss issues that will impact agriculture and his farming operation. In 2015, he participated in a trade mission to China with the North Carolina Commissioner of Agriculture. In previous years he has traveled all around the US with NC Farm Bureau’s Executive Committee to participate in conferences on irrigation techniques, farm labor challenges, desert farming, equine enterprises, agritourism, water, rights and fishing challenges.

At the county level, Linda Wyant has served as the chair of Lincoln County Farm Bureau Women’s Committee and a retired school teacher from Lincoln County Elementary. She also serves as the chair of the Lincoln County Farm Bureau Women’s Committee. At the state level, she is a member of the North Carolina Farm Bureau State Women’s committee and a former presenter at Sessions for the NCFB Women’s Annual Leadership Conference. On the national level, Linda has been a long-term attendee of the annual American Farm Bureau Convention.



As with all farm operations, there have been some challenging times for the Wyant Farm, including a near total wipe-out of a soybean crop due to drought one year in the 1980s. Then there was the bankruptcy of Mid State Mills in 2013 when Wyant was owed nearly \$150,000 for close to 20,000 bushels of wheat but couldn't get paid even after a major lawsuit. Wyant suffered severe financial losses from both incidents but was able to bounce back by using savings to cover his losses. "And, as ever," Wyant added, "when commodity prices are low and input costs are high, there's a question about profitability."

Wyant added, "Another problem that my grandfather, my father, and I have battled is flooding in the bottom lands, making it impossible to plant crops. After years of digging and re-digging the drain ditches with no permanent drainage, I had to give this land over to a stream restoration project which converted it to a wetland nature habitat."

Taking an education seminar on specific weed management, he learned about the proper herbicides and has been able to control weeds in pastures and crop lands. He added, "We're also aware of the importance of pollinators in agriculture and have begun limiting our spraying to times of day when bees are not active. We built an EPA-approved pesticide shed where all our chemicals are housed, mixed, and properly and safely contained."

Over the years, Wyant has added 200 acres of tillable land and practices no-till on 1800 acres, saving topsoil, decreasing erosion, and increasing yields. He has added waterways and field borders to his acreage, along with three new ponds, and fenced out all his streams to prevent cattle from polluting them. Wyant also uses drones to map fields and download data to his iPad. He recalled, "For three years we took pictures of the fields and sent data back to our laptop, but now we've switched to Climate Field View Plus, a data integration and analysis system that gives us yield analysis, field region reports, field health imagery, manual seed scripts, and fertility scripts."

As Wyant Farm has increased its acreage and equipment, the necessity for storage has grown as well. "To meet this need," he said, "my sons and I built a new shop using recycled steel materials that we welded together. We also poured the concrete floor, added insulation, and put up metal walls and a roof in the 30 X 100 ft. facility. We've also built two metal straw sheds, a hay shed, and a metal equipment shed."

Jerry and Linda Wyant are active members of Daniels Lutheran Church, where they've served on the church council, taught Sunday School, and been involved with the choir and music ministry. Each year the couple travels to the National Farm Bureau Convention, wherever it may be. With a few days' leave on either side of such trips, they've sampled local offerings like snow mobile jaunts in Park City, Utah. The family also likes to go boating on Lake James and take in the amenities of the fish camp at Harbor Inn at Hickory, North Carolina. Wyant said, "We don't always have to go far because there's some nice bass fishing on our farm's four ponds."

Jerry and Linda Wyant's grandchildren will be the sixth generation to farm on the family property. Wyant says one of the most important lessons he's learned from his long years in agriculture is to stay humble in the face of the almost constant unpredictability of Mother



Nature. "All you can do is work hard, do your best, and have faith in the good Lord that it will balance out in the long run," he said.

Jerry Wyant was nominated for North Carolina Farmer of the Year by Luke Beam, NC Farm Bureau field representative. He commented, "This year I've observed Jerry Wyant continuing to expand his operation with an automated grain dryer system and to improve infrastructure on his farm, all the while being dedicated to addressing environmental concerns. He has also set in place a firm succession plan with his sons, giving them each a 50 percent interest, for the future of the farm. Jerry's commitment to financial, environmental, and family stewardship is phenomenal. And he's a topnotch spokesman for the ag industry in North Carolina."

A distinguished panel of judges will visit Jerry Wyant, along with the farms of the other nine state finalists, the week of August 14–18. The judges include David Wildy, Manila, Arkansas, the overall winner of the award in 2016; Joe West, retired Assistant Dean UGA Tifton Campus; and Darren Parker, Vice President, Massey Ferguson North America.