

Gulf American Shrimp, LLC, *Gulf County*



Mark Godwin, Manager, began Gulf American Shrimp Farm in 2003. Its first farm raised production came on line in 2006. The family owned business “Woods Fisheries” boast of five generations of seafood history. Wood’s Fisheries has been in the shrimp business since the early 1860’s, their source of shrimp being the Gulf of Mexico. Mark Godwin, a son-in-law of Buddy Woods Fisheries, decided to add another niche to their shrimp business, farm grown “Pacific White Shrimp”.

Gulf American Shrimp Farm is a 300 acre inland operation located in the Howard Creek Community about 14 miles from the Gulf of Mexico. The farm utilizes high quality, low salinity water from a well 1200’ deep. This low salinity water has proven to be ideal for the production of the Pacific White Shrimp (*Litopenaeus Vannamei*). The Shrimp are raised outdoors in open ponds averaging about 5 acres each. At present Mark has managed to construct 12 ponds with a total of 55 acres in production. The domesticated venture of producing the pacific white shrimp has proven to be feasible. Mark’s plans are to have another 50 acres in production by 2013. The ponds are open (not covered) with earthen bottoms composed of fine clay to minimize permeability.

Each pond is aerated mechanically with 2 HP paddle-wheel aerators at an average rate of 4.5 Hp per acre. By way of a host computer located on-site, oxygen levels are monitored 24/7 and aeration levels are controlled automatically through individual probes in each pond. Early on Mark invested in

specialized software, designed for the aquaculture industry, which turns the aerators on and off as needed and also chars the oxygen levels and temperature in each individual pond. He can monitor each pond remotely and also turn aerators on/off manually from his home computer or cell phone.

The ponds are stocked at rate of 200,000 shrimp per acre .20 of an inch in size in April. The grow-out cycle is about 165 days which means they are harvested in late October or early November. Shrimp are fed a high protein ration three times daily to minimize growth, and sampling occurs weekly to determine growth rate. Shrimp is harvested not the traditional way of seining but by draining the ponds to a very low level of water and using a shrimp harvester to pump the shrimp into 1200 pound iced totes. Shrimp are harvested at night to increase efficiency and maximize production. After harvesting, shrimp are processed by the parent company “Wood’s Fisheries” and sold as chemical-free farm raised shrimp to seafood markets, restaurants and grocery stores.

Improving Agriculture through Extension Involvement

In 2008 the Godwin Family was honored as Gulf County Extension Service’s Outstanding Farm Family of the Year. Mark is a strong supporter of Extension and our educational programs. He is a member of our Overall Gulf County Agricultural Advisory Committee. He is a strong supporter of 4H Programs in which he has hosted many farm tours. He has sponsored and given numerous scholarships to help pay the cost of underprivileged youth attending 4H events, clinics and camps.

Impacting Agriculture in the Northwest District

Mark is truly an innovator in the seafood industry. His business plan and efforts have proven that the Pacific White Shrimp can economically be produced in our Northwest District Coastal Counties. With a high demand for quality shrimp from the Gulf of Mexico and other salt water bodies, the cultivation and domestication of shrimp are becoming more feasible.

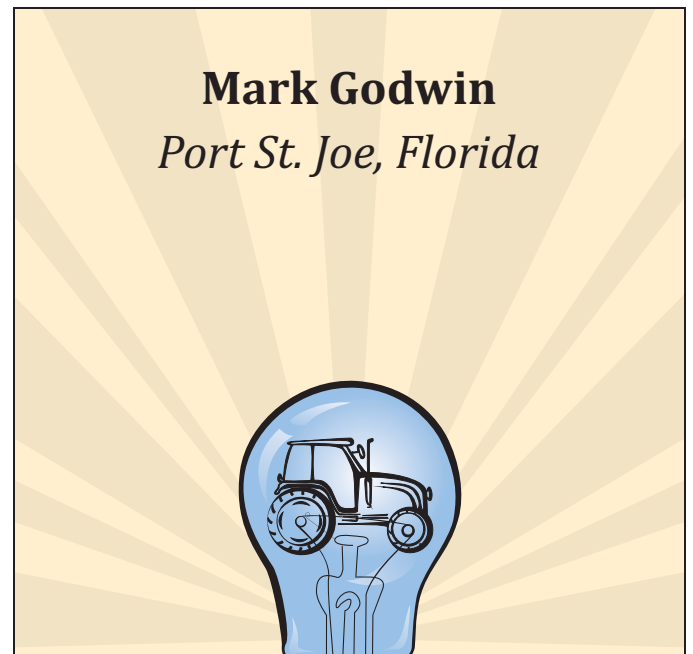
Mark also serves on the Board of Supervisors for the



Gulf County Tupelo Soil and Water Conservation District. The Godwin Family is very involved in their local community. Catherine, Mark's wife, is a volunteer in the local public school system. Mark and Catherine are active in their local church ministries where they teach Sunday School Classes and Summer Vacation Bible School. They are an outstanding example of the Farm Family that has been the backbone of Gulf County, Florida and our nation. Being a Farm Family and Ag innovator is a way of life for Mark Godwin and his family. ■



Northwest Florida Extension District



2012 Agricultural Innovator