

# Nixon Farms, Okaloosa County

Submitted by Extension Agent(s): Jennifer Bearden

In high school, Shannon Nixon was active in FFA, serving as President of the Baker Chapter. Shannon learned a lot about farming from his family and other farmers in Okaloosa County. In 1988, Shannon began farming on his own. In his farming practices, Shannon strives for cost efficiency and maximizing yields. He tries to be a good steward of the land and an advocate for agriculture in the community. He was the first farmer in Okaloosa County to use conservation tillage. That first season's cotton yield was excellent causing other farmers to take note. Like many farmers, he has modified harvest equipment to fit his needs. Just to name a few, he modified a cotton picker to pick two-in-one skip row cotton, which decreases boll rot in wet seasons. He also modified a combine to harvest soybeans

more efficiently. Shannon balances cost with expected return on investment in deciding whether to adopt new technologies. Shannon adopted use of GPS guidance in the fields because he sees many benefits from this technology. He also sprays fungicides at night for peanuts and uses liquid inoculants in furrow to increase yields. He has used aerial surveillance to scout crops for diseases, skips or other issues. He gathers information to identify the weak areas in his production, as he grows cotton, peanuts, soybeans and wheat. He is also an early adopter of social media and is very comfortable using various forms of communication. Through face-to-face conversations, social media and traditional media, he communicates the importance of agriculture to our community.





## Improving Agriculture through Extension Involvement

In just this past year, Shannon hosted a Master Gardener field trip on his farm and was the monthly meeting speaker for the Okaloosa Master Gardener Association. He serves on the Overall Extension Advisory Committee and Agriculture Advisory Committee. Shannon helped introduce the new agriculture Agent to other farmers in Okaloosa county. He spent time orienting the new Agent to various production practices in the county. As the event coordinator, Shannon included the agriculture agent as a speaker in the 2012 Farm Bureau Legislative Farm Tour. He was eager to be a part of a video project to increase citizen awareness of agriculture in Okaloosa County. A video of Shannon planting peanuts can be found on the OkaloosaAg YouTube channel.

In the past, Shannon has participated in on-farm variety trials for cotton and Mepiquat Chloride application method trials. Shannon is always willing to help Extension in any way he can. His regular communication with the office helps the Agent keep the pulse of row crops in the county.

## Impacting Agriculture in Northwest Florida

Shannon serves on the Okaloosa County Farm Bureau board and the Okaloosa USDA Farm Service Agency County Committee. He has served on the Yellow River Soil and Water Conservation District board. He has been very vocal about deer damage in row crops, which led to a study

on wildlife damage by UF IFAS in 2010 and to numerous meetings with FWC and Florida Forest Service on the issue.

Shannon is not afraid to talk to the media about agriculture and was recently featured on the front page of the Northwest Florida Daily News. Shannon also is not afraid to use social media to advocate for agriculture. Shannon represents agriculture well and is not afraid to speak out on issues that are sometimes controversial like deer populations and genetically modified crops. I am confident that he will continue to speak out on issues affecting area farmers. ■



**Shannon Nixon**  
Baker, FL

