

Farming gives Delta family a rewarding life



By Brittnie Burton
MSU Ag Communications

BELZONI -- After 47 years of farming through ups and downs, Wanda Hill still is able to appreciate the rewards of her career.

Hill farms in Humphreys County with her husband, Herbert, and brother-in-law, Charles. They grow soybeans followed by winter wheat and cotton. Until 2014, they were also catfish farmers.

Every morning, two of Hill's sons and three of her grandchildren join her for breakfast before the younger ones leave for school. This opportunity to strengthen family ties is one of Hill's favorite aspects of farm life.

"I truly enjoy living on the farm. Sometimes you lose a couple of battles, but you keep going with agriculture," Hill said. "It is a rewarding life that teaches children good work ethics and what it takes to bring a family together."

Hill's favorite memories are from spending time with her three sons in the field.

"When my boys were growing up, every day we would take a hot meal to their daddy and set up a table to eat while the boys played in the field," Hill said. "Farming is personal, and having contact with your family all day, every day is rewarding."

Hill is close not only with her family, but also with her community. She is the co-chair of the World Catfish Festival in Belzoni, has worked with the Farm Bureau Safety Department, and volunteers at the Catfish Museum and the local school.

Hill is also a member of Mississippi Women for Agriculture, which is partnered with the Mississippi State University Extension Service. This organization gives Mississippi women the chance to form friendships, share ideas and develop new ways to make their production agriculture farms and agribusinesses more successful.

Sylvia Clark, vice president of Mississippi Women for Agriculture, said Hill has done a lot to promote farming in Mississippi.

"Through Women for Agriculture and the Farm Bureau Federation, Wanda has made quite an impact on women farmers, not only in the Delta but across the state," Clark said.

Hill and her family built their first catfish pond in 1978. Raising catfish is an intense, year-round job that requires constant maintenance and regulation.

"I enjoyed feeding the fish the most, because watching the fish come up to eat the feed is like watching plants grow in a field," Hill said. "We loved raising catfish and had mixed emotions about quitting this year, but it was no longer profitable for us."

Jimmy Avery, MSU Extension Service aquaculture specialist and director of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Southern Regional Aquaculture Center, admires Hill's passion.



Wanda Hill, a Humphreys County farmer, helps promote agriculture throughout Mississippi because she feels farming is rewarding. (Photo by MSU Ag Communications/Kat Lawrence)

“Wanda is a tireless worker who has a way of making others want to pitch in to help her accomplish her goals,” Avery said. “She goes the extra mile to promote Mississippi products across the U.S.”

Hill still helps promote U.S.-grown products, including catfish, through the State Women’s Committee with the Farm Bureau Federation. The committee hosts Agriculture in the Classroom, a workshop that shows teachers how to incorporate agriculture into their curriculum.

“We are trying our best to teach children where food comes from, to tell them about the safe and affordable supply of food we have in the U.S. and to encourage people to buy locally grown food,” Hill said.

For more information about Woman for Agriculture contact Sylvia Clark by phone at 662-325-1696 or by email at sclark@humansci.msstate.edu

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