

Tradition and innovation go hand in hand at Lawson Farms.

The Lawsons have been farming in Darlington County for six generations. Lawson Farms was started in 1834 with 333 acres in the Oates Community of Darlington County. In the 175 years since that beginning, the farm has grown to more than 2,400 acres. The family has adjusted to changing times and has diversified wisely. Diversification is nothing new to Lawson Farms. His mother, Betty H. Lawson, preached diversification to him from a young age when she ran the farm single-handed for thirteen years. Her lessons stayed with Laurie and his late wife Betty of 53 years and they have passed these lessons on to their children and grandchildren.

Lawson Farms grows traditional row crops such as soybeans, corn, sweet potatoes, and wheat. Tobacco was the original cash crop and they still grow as much as ever. Timber is also an important part of the operations. This timberland is a registered safe harbor for the endangered Red Cockaded Woodpecker. The Lawsons' commitment to conservation is also evident in their expanded sustainable practices through techniques such as no-till farming.

In 2002, Lawson Farms added a turf operation, which grows several varieties including Centipede, the drought resistant Empire Zoysia, Palmetto St. Augustine, and Tifway 419 Bermuda. After requests from a family friend for turf with "Lawson" quality, Lawson Turf has been heartily embraced by contractors statewide. Most of the turf is sold locally and includes Charlotte, Columbia, Myrtle Beach and everywhere in between.

Jim Lawson likes to say, "We're 80 miles from everywhere in the middle of nowhere."

Mr. Laurie Lawson was with the farm full-time until 1993, when he was appointed the State Executive Director for the Farm Service Agency (FSA), then went on to work for Clemson University as the Assistant to the Vice President of Public Service and Agriculture.. He was re-appointed on November 13, 2009, as the State Executive Director for FSA by the Obama Administration. Mr. Laurie Lawson and his sons William and Jim are Clemson University graduates. William and Jim, run Lawson Farms together. William heads the turf operation and Jim is in charge of tobacco; although they both know the business well enough to switch places. The newest family member to become a full-time part of Lawson Farms is grandson Fields Norwood, 23 and a December 2008 Clemson graduate. He is the son of Betty Coke Lawson Thompson, and is the sixth generation of Lawson's to work on the farm. There are nine more grandchildren to continue the tradition. Lawson Farms is a part of each family member's life regardless of their profession. Son Marvin, grew up on the farm but serves as Darlington County Probate Judge.

Looking to the future of the economy and its affect on agriculture, Lawson Farms will continue the family farming operation for many years to come.