

Shep Morris  
 Shorter, Ala.  
 Morris and Morris Farms  
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 Products Raised or Grown: Cotton and grain  
 Size of Operation: 3,000 acres  
 In Business Since: 1976  
 Farm Credit Partner: First South Farm Credit  
 Working with Farm Credit Since: 1980



Successful farmer Shep Morris frequently has his head in the clouds – literally. In addition to running a substantial cotton and grain farm, he is also a pilot, flying recreationally as much as possible. Despite the call of the sky, though, his main interests lay very firmly on the ground, tending his 3,000 acre cotton and grain farm in South Alabama. Working with Shep is his wife, Rite, and his son, Shep, Jr. Two other children, J.W. and Beverly, work off-farm jobs but also help on the farm.

Making this family operation successful has meant evolving with the times, incorporating new processes and technologies to increase efficiencies and yields. Shep was one of the first producers in his area to use no-till and cover crops over his entire farm, reducing irrigation requirements and soil erosion. He started planting corn as a way to enhance this no-till approach – the corn is planted on the same ground as the harvested cotton, softening and cleansing the soil to prepare it for the next cotton planting. Of course, this also gains him an additional crop to sell. Shep was also one of the first cotton farmers in the area to use **chicken litter on a whole farm basis**. “It’s a cycle,” he says. “We grow the corn to feed the chickens, and then use the chicken litter to fertilize the corn.” He also uses **precision technology to manage fertilization and monitor yields**.

Hard work and commitment carry Shep beyond the farm as well. He is on the First South Farm Credit Board of Directors, and has served as chairman of the board and as well as on various association committees including the First South Credit Committee. He also has a seat on the board of the Alabama Cotton Commission, the Autaga Quality Cotton Association and the board of River Bank and Trust. He is president of Macon County Farmers Federation and a supervisor for Macon Soil and Water District. He is also president of Milstead Farm Group, Inc., a ginning operation.

This community involvement combined with successful farm management practices earned Shep and his family recognition from the Farm City Committee as the 2010 Farm of Distinction in the State of Alabama and in the Southeast. Shep has also been named Swisher Sweets Alabama Farmer of the Year in 2010 and a finalist for the Swisher Sweets/Sunbelt Expo Southeastern Farm of the Year.