

Swisher Sweets/Sunbelt Expo Southeastern Farmer of the Year

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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GILLEY NAMED ALABAMA FARMER OF THE YEAR FOR 2007

MOULTRIE, GA – Billy Gilley, a poultry/cattle farmer from Holly Pond, has been selected as the 2007 Swisher Sweets/Sunbelt Expo Southeastern Farmer of the Year for Alabama.

In 1989, he purchased his first farm and built four 40'x500' broiler houses with Ingram Farms but continued to work at a factory at night. In 1993, he was able to quit his factory job and return home to farm.

Today, Gilley's farm covers 350 acres, up from the 30 acres he purchased in 1989, and he has been selected as the 2007 Swisher Sweets/Sunbelt Expo Southeastern Farmer for Alabama. He was selected for the honor in judging conducted by the Alabama Farmers Federation and was nominated by Matthew Durdin.

Gilley now joins nine other Southeastern state winners as a finalist for the Swisher Sweets/Sunbelt Expo Southeastern Farmer of the Year Award for 2007, which will be announced during the Sunbelt Expo in Moultrie, GA, on Tuesday, October 16th.

As the Alabama state winner, Gilley will now receive a \$2,500 cash award and an expense paid trip to the Sunbelt Expo from Swisher International of Jacksonville, FL, a jacket and a \$200 gift certificate from the Williamson-Dickie Company, a commemorative fireproof home safe from Misty Morn Safe Co., and a \$500 gift certificate from Southern States. He is also now eligible for the \$14,000 that will go to the overall winner and the use of a Massey Ferguson tractor for a year from Massey Ferguson North America.

Swisher International, through its Swisher Sweets cigar brand, and the Sunbelt Expo are sponsoring the Southeastern Farmer of the Year Award for the 18th consecutive year. Swisher has contributed over \$740,000 in cash awards and other honors since the award was initiated in 1990.

Today's operation annually produces 1,072,500 birds (4,500,000 pounds of meat) that are contracted through Tyson Foods. There's also 200 head of purebred Charolais cattle.

"I sell my purebred Charolais bulls private treaty to purebred and commercial cattlemen," said Gilley. "My purebred Charolais heifers go back into the herd or I sell them for show heifers and club calf projects."

“All commercial cattle are sold through auction barns,” he added.

In addition to the poultry and cattle, hay plays an important role in the operation with 60 acres producing four tons per acre.

“I feel that God has truly blessed me to be able to earn a living doing something that I truly love and enjoy -- farming,” he added.

There’s also plans for growth in the future. “ I plan on purchasing some more land in the near future if it becomes available,” he said.

Gilley and his wife Terri have two grown daughters Angela Gilley and Jennifer Dias. Angela is working on her masters degree at Alabama A & M University.

Previous state winners from Alabama include: Ricky Wiggins of Anderson, 1990; George Kiser, Sr. of Foley, 1991; Allen Bragg of Toney, 1992; Sykes Martin of Courtland, 1993; David Pearce of Browns, 1994; Glenn Jones of Blountsville, 1995; Raymond Jones of Huntsville, 1996; Dan Miller of Greensboro, 1997; Homer Tate of Meridianville, 1998; Eugene Glenn of Hillsboro, 1999; George T. Hamilton of Hillsboro, 2000; Bert Driskell of Grand Bay, 2001; Charles Burton of Lafayette, 2002; Bruce Bush of Eufaula, 2003; John B. East of Leesburg, 2004; James A. Wise of Samson, 2005 and Glenn Forrester of Columbia, 2006.

Alabama has had one overall winner with Raymond Jones of Huntsville being selected as the Southeastern Farmer of the Year in 1996.

Gilley’s farm, along with the other nine state finalists, will be visited by a distinguished panel of judges during the week of Aug. 6-10. The judges for this year include Rogers Reynolds, retired executive with Farm Credit; Dr. Jim Butler, retired Agricultural Engineer and Research Leader and Elwyn Deal, retired Clemson University Extension Service.

Note to Media: The farm of Billy Gilley will be judged on Tuesday, Aug. 7 from 8 a.m. to 11 a.m. (CDT). The address of Mr. Gilley’s farm is 135 County Road 1684, Holly Pond, AL. If you would like to join the judging process, please call Bobby Batson (704/788-7025) or contact the farm (256/708-4700).

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