

# **Swisher Sweets/Sunbelt Expo Southeastern Farmer Of The Year**

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## **Press Release**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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### **MICHAEL SIMON NAMED 1<sup>ST</sup> ARKANSAS FARMER OF THE YEAR**

MOULTRIE, GA – Michael G. Simon of Conway, a versatile farmer with emphasis on dairy cattle, has been selected as the 2007 Swisher Sweets/Sunbelt Expo Southeastern Farmer of the Year for Arkansas.

Simon also has the distinction of being the first Southeastern Farmer of the Year from Arkansas as the Razorback state became the tenth state competing for the most prestigious award in agriculture this year.

“It’s quite an honor to be selected as the first winner from Arkansas,” said Simon. “Agriculture is Arkansas number one industry and I’m very privileged to have been selected.”

In 1969, Simon launched his own operation and has guided it to one of the most versatile in Arkansas and has led to his selection as the 2007 Swisher Sweets/Sunbelt Expo Southeastern Farmer of the Year for Arkansas. He was selected for the honor in judging conducted by the Arkansas Farm Bureau and was nominated by William Dodgen.

Simon 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 16<sup>th</sup>.

As the Arkansas state winner, Simon 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 18<sup>th</sup> consecutive year.

Swisher has contributed over \$740,000 in cash awards and other honors since the award was initiated in 1990.

The dairy operation of the versatile farm includes 112 milking cows with an annual production of over 2.4 million gallons. There's also 85 dairy Heifers and 86 dairy calves (steers and Heifers).

His major crops include 200 acres of corn silage (18 tons per acre), 150 acres of corn for grain (125 bushels per acre), 110 acres of hay (4 tons per acre), 225 acres of wheat (25 bushels per acre) and 59 acres of soybeans (25 bushels per acre).

One of the first problems he had to overcome was equipment. "There was very little equipment when we bought the farm," said Simon. "We had to purchase a lot and had one of the first round hay balers in the county."

Simon and his wife Mary Jo have seven grown children. Tim (35) is a medical doctor in Monticello, Greg (34) is a dentist in Conway, Jeremy (29) is a dentist in Alma, Nick (27) is in construction in Kansas while Frederic (36), Matt (33) and Jason (31) work on the farm.

"No good farm or business is run by one man," said Simon. "We are very fortunate to have a good set up with three of our sons working with us."

There are no previous state winners or overall winner as Arkansas is in its first year of competition for the Southeastern Farmer of the Year Award.

Simon'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 Michael Simon will be judged on Wednesday, Aug. 8, from 8 a.m. to 11 a.m. (CDT). The address of Mr. Simon's farm is 259 Highway 64 East, Conway, AK. If you would like to join the judging process, please call Bobby Batson (704)788-7025 or contact the farm (501)472-2584.

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