

# **SWISHER SWEETS/SUNBELT EXPO** **SOUTHEASTERN FARMER OF THE YEAR**

## **Press Release**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **TOM ROBERTSON, JR. NAMED 2007 MISSISSIPPI FARMER OF THE YEAR**

MOULTRIE, GA – Tom Robertson, Jr., a cotton/corn farmer from Indianola, has been selected as the 2007 Swisher Sweets/Sunbelt Expo Southeastern Farmer of the Year for Mississippi.

He leased his first 800 acres near Lake Washington in 1967 and combined it into his father and uncle's operation that was located nearby.

The operation has swelled to over 10,000 acres today leading to his selection as the 2007 Swisher Sweets/Sunbelt Expo Southeastern Farmer of the Year for Mississippi. He was selected for the honor in judging conducted by the Mississippi State University Extension Service and nominated by Tommy Baird.

Robertson 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 Mississippi state winner, Robertson 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.

Cotton, corn and soybeans remain as the backbone of today's vast 10,000-acre operation. Cotton is grown on 6,000 acres and yields 1,000 pounds per acre while 4,000 acres of corn produces 170 bushels per acre.

There's also 100 head of Angus cattle and catfish ponds cover 1,500 acres, yielding over 4,000,000 pounds of catfish per year.

"I market all my grains myself through Delta Western and Farmers Grain Terminal," said Robertson. "We let Staplcotton handle the sales of all my cotton.

"We are also involved in many other companies, all of which are related to the agriculture industry," he added. "Plus, I'm very fortunate to have my son Ben farming with me and carrying on the family tradition."

Robertson and his wife Lois also have another son, Bill, who lives in Jackson, and a daughter Mary Pillow who lives in Atlanta.

Previous state winners from Mississippi include: Hugh Arant, Sr. of Ruleville, 1990; Bill Hawks of Hernando, 1991; Kenneth Hood of Gunnison, 1992; Tol Thomas of Cruger, 1993; Rick Parsons of Vance, 1994; Ed Hester of Benoit, 1995; Bill Harris of Benton, 1996; Robert Miller of Greenwood, 1997; Ted Kendall, III of Bolton, 1998; Wayne Bush of Schlater, 1999; William Tackett of Schlater, 2000; Willard Jack of Belzoni, 2001; Hugh Arant, Jr. of Ruleville, 2002; Rick Parsons of Vance, 2003; Sledge Taylor of Como, 2004; Laurance Carter of Rollins Fork, 2005 and Brooks Aycock of Belzoni, 2006.

Mississippi has had three overall winners with Kenneth Hood of Gunnison, 1993, Ed Hester of Benoit, 1995 and Willard Jack of Belzoni, 2001.

Robertson'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 Tom Robertson will be judge on Tuesday, Aug. 7 from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. (CDT). The address of Mr. Robertson's farm is 65 Holly Ridge Road, Indianola, MS. If you would like to join the judging process, please call Bobby Batson (704/788-7025) or contact the farm (662/207-0666).

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