



Celebrating 27

MISSISSIPPI STATE – Farmweek is turning 27 years old this fall. As part of the anniversary celebration, the television program is now available each week throughout North America on RFD-TV, Rural America's Most Important Network.

Farmweek is the weekly agriculture news program of the Mississippi State University Extension Service. The television program is produced by MSU's Office of Agricultural Communications. The first show aired October 3, 1977, on what is now the Mississippi Public Broadcasting network. In those early years, each week's program was produced in Jackson, Mississippi, at the M-P-B studios and then broadcast over the 8-station network. Now Farmweek is produced each week at the Mississippi State University Television Center on the campus in Starkville, in northeast Mississippi.

"While the shows have advanced technically along with all television production, the basic building blocks remain the same," said Artis Ford, Managing Editor and Farmweek co-anchor.

"The format hasn't changed much through the years, and topics include traditional agriculture, land management, timber, wildlife and fisheries, aquaculture, ag-related businesses and more," Ford said. Each week's program includes a news segment, an episode of Norman Winter's Southern Gardening, a market segment, and a feature segment. There is also a calendar segment informing viewers of upcoming events, such as field days and Extension short courses.

"The program originated as a link to the agricultural community from the Extension Service, but it has since evolved to focus more on providing laymen with a background in agriculture," said Leighton Spann, Farmweek co-anchor and market segment producer. "We still try to provide a link to commercial farmers, while trying to inform the general public of what is going on in agriculture since it is such a major player in the Mississippi



economy." In addition to co-anchors Artis Ford and Leighton Spann, feature reporter Brian Utley also helps produce the program. The Southern Gardening segments feature Extension horticulturist Norman Winter and are produced by Tyson Gair and David Lack. "By far, the most popular part of the show is the feature segment, which usually focuses on good land managers or innovative people," co-anchor Ford said. "Regardless of a person's ag background, these features appeal to everyone."

Occasionally, Farmweek does deviate from its familiar format to go on-the-road for special theme programs from major agricultural events. Using the remote production truck and crew of the University Television Center, Farmweek originated from the 2003 Sunbelt Agricultural Exposition in Moultrie, Georgia. Some of the other remote broadcasts have included the Beltwide Cotton Conferences in New Orleans and Nashville, the Corn Classic in Nashville, the Southern Soybean Conference in Memphis, and the Catfish Farming Trade Show in Greenville, Mississippi. Once, Farmweek even originated from the middle of a Mississippi soybean field.

Farmweek is Mississippi's oldest and only locally-produced agricultural television program. It is a vehicle for Mississippi State University specialists, scientists and researchers, as well as specialists from other agencies, to use in presenting useful information and land management advice directly to viewers. This is usually done by showing viewers what other Mississippi residents have accomplished. One gauge of the program's effectiveness is the fact that viewers often contact Farmweek producers or the individuals involved in a story to find out how they can implement the particular practice or program that was demonstrated in a segment. Another gauge of Farmweek's