

Cecil Ramagos - Iberville Parish, Louisiana

Getting an Edge in Farming

Iberville Parish Farmer Certified as Master Farmer

**Good for the Farm
Good for the Farmer
Good for the Environment**



Cecil Ramagos, a third generation sugarcane farmer, carries on his family's farming tradition with help from his daughter, Katie; sons Matt, Andy, and Ben; and wife Sally on their 1,479 acre sugarcane farm in Iberville Parish.

In farming it is important to have an "edge." Ramagos' edge is the Master Farmer Program. Cecil Ramagos was certified as a Louisiana Master Farmer in 2011.

"Being a Master Farmer is like having a Gold Card," Ramagos said. "Being a Certified

Master Farmer lets everyone know that you understand the basics of being a good land steward and are utilizing this knowledge on your farming operation. Certified Master Farmers also receive additional points when competing for Environmental Quality Incentives Program financial assistance."

To become a Master Farmer, the farmer must complete a Resource Management System (RMS) plan on their operation. Ramagos worked with the Natural Resources Conservation Service and Lower Delta Soil and Water Conservation District to develop

his RMS plan. His plan addresses crop residue, crop rotation, grade stabilization structures, precision land forming, nutrient and pest management, and field borders.

"The Master Farmer Program allows farmers to understand what they are doing on their farms and makes sure that the right practices are being planned and implemented," said District Conservationist, Jerry Hall.

Three Phases of the Master Farmer Program

Certified Master Farmers must complete three phases: Phase I of the program, "Opens your eyes and makes you more mindful of things that get put on the backburner," said Ramagos. In Phase 2, "You can take bits and pieces of what other people are doing on their farms and apply what you learned on your farm." In Phase III, "You receive benefits on your farm from the different conservation practices that have been installed."



If you are interested in the **Master Farmer Program** or development of a **Resource Management System** plan, contact your local NRCS office. A directory of offices is included on the back page of this publication.



The Master Farmer Program began in 2001 as a way for farmers to learn up-to-date, research-based conservation practices in a comprehensive manner. It is a partnership of five agricultural entities – the LSU AgCenter, Louisiana Farm Bureau Federation, Louisiana Cattlemen's Association, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry (LDAF), which has the authority by law through the Commissioner of Agriculture to approve the certification.



Cecil Ramagos Conservationist

Cecil Ramagos worked with District Conservationist Jerry Hall and the staff at the Addis Field Office to develop an Resource Management System (RMS) plan for his farm.

Ramagos' RMS plan addresses the following:

Crop Residue: Reduces Erosion, Improves Overall Soil Health, Improves Soil Moisture Retention

Crop Rotation: Breaks Pest Cycle, Improves Plant Condition

Grade Stabilization Structures: Reduces Soil Erosion, Improves Water Quality

Precision Land Forming: Reduces Soil Erosion

Nutrient and Pest Management: Improves Water Quality, Improves Plant Condition, Improves Air Quality

Field Borders: Improves Water Quality, Improves Wildlife Habitat