



Louise and Gary Lirette with Glenn Austin, NRCS District Conservationist, Natchitoches Field Office.

Quality Product . . . Quality Environment

Gary and Louise Lirette and their son Stephen have been raising chickens near Marthaville, Louisiana, for over 12 years.

During an average year, the Lirettes will raise 3 million chickens, and these chickens find their way to fast food restaurants across the nation.

The Lirettes are dedicated to producing a quality product and maintaining a quality environment, and they use innovative conservation measures to minimize the effects of their farm on the land.

Little Flower Enterprises

The Lirette’s farm—Little Flower Enterprises—began in 2000, with 300 acres of land and six chicken houses.

Five years later, the Lirettes purchased 40 acres of forest land and built 6 more chicken houses in the middle of the new property. The forest provided a natural buffer for the new houses.

Today’s farmer has to be an engineer, a soil scientist, an agronomist, a chemist, a biologist, and an environmentalist—all rolled into one, and the Lirettes are no exception. They operate their farm to make a profit, but they plan their farming activities around what is right for the environment. From the design and placement of chicken houses, to the proper use of fertilizer on the hay fields, to the proper disposal and removal of poultry waste, the Lirettes must stay progressive to keep an environmental edge to their farm.

The Lirettes work with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service to identify ways to protect and conserve natural resources while enhancing farm operations.

“I think working with NRCS has given us a better understanding of our farm’s impact on the land,” says Louise Lirette. “They help us plan and implement what is right for our farm and for the environment.”

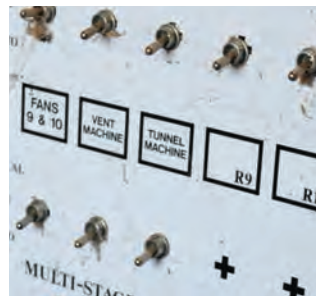
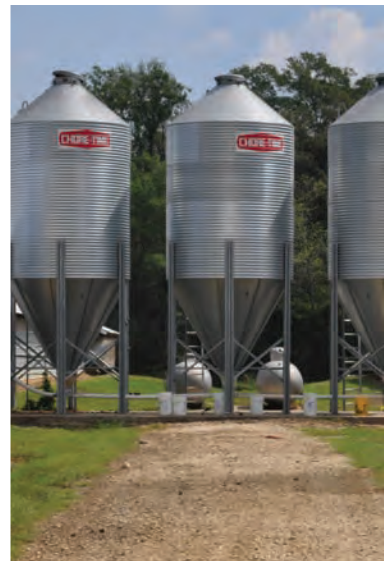
Louisiana’s Master Farmer Program

Gary Lirette is a Certified Master Farmer. This means he has successfully completed a voluntary three-phase program (training, field days, and conservation plan development) to address agricultural environmental concerns and enhance production.

As part of the Master Farmer Program, the Lirettes worked with the Natural Resources Conservation Service to develop a conservation plan that was suited for their farm.

Their conservation plan includes Best Management Practices (BMPs) for:

- 1. Nutrient Management:** Soil samples are taken every three years to test the soil for nutrient status and pH. Litter samples are taken on a yearly basis.
- 2. Pesticide Storage and Safety:** All pesticides on their farm are stored and applied properly.
- 3. Buffer Management:** Buffer zones are established on all hay meadows on the farm to eliminate the risk of litter contaminating streams.



Conservation practices on the Lirette's farm were installed through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program. To find out more about this program, contact your local USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service office or Soil and Water Conservation District. A directory of offices is included on the back page of this publication.

“All farmers want to be good stewards of the land. . . .”

- 4. **General Farm:**
Precautionary measures are taken with storing diesel in tanks and disposing of oil on their farm.
- 5. **Poultry Mortality Management:**
Composting of dead poultry and litter is used in accordance with specifications in the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG).



On average, the Lirettes raise 3 million chickens a year with an average weight of 4.25 pounds per chicken. They sell approximately 13 million pounds of chicken meat per year.

With so many chickens being raised on the farm, one would be surprised that there is only a poultry mortality rate of 2.5 percent.

The Lirettes compost the dead chickens using litter, manure, and rice hulls. When the composting is complete, a useful end product is created that the Lirettes sell to other farmers for use as fertilizer.

“All farmers want to be good stewards of the land, that’s their livelihood and they respect the land and understand what the land can do for them,” says Gary Lirette. “Working with NRCS keeps us doing the right thing and keeps us ahead of regulation—a winning combination for any farmer.”

Gary, Louise, and Stephen Lirette **Conservationists**