

Barton Family Farm, *Holmes County*

Submitted by Extension Agent(s): Shep Eubanks

Ken Barton is the 2013 Holmes County Ag Innovator of the Year. Ken and his wife Rhonda have been farming together in Holmes County for over 32 years. Ken and Rhonda grew up on local farms and Rhonda is a third generation farmer here in Holmes County. Together they operate a 1,200 acre diversified farm raising peanuts, cotton, oats, hay, and beef cattle. It is not unusual to see Rhonda on the tractor cutting cotton stalks or operating the module builder during cotton harvest. They have two children, Tonya and Chad, and four grandchildren, who are also involved in the family farm. Daughter Tonya is married to Kevin Amerson and they have two children, Kason, age 7 and Kolton, age 4. Tonya is an elementary school teacher at Bethlehem School and Kevin is employed with Dothan Livestock as a field representative. Kevin also has a cow/calf operation and produces oats and hay. Tonya, Kason, and Kolton are always eager to help with the hay operation or assist in working the cattle. Chad is married to Ashley Miller and they have two children, Kenny age 4, and Kaylee age 2. Chad is employed at Fort Rucker as an aircraft mechanic. Chad is also a 50/50 partner in the row-crop operation of the farm. Ashley is a stay at home mom and helps out on the

farm by running errands and picking up parts or supplies. Kenny and Kaylee love the time they spend in the field or in a tractor helping Ken and Rhonda.

Ken is a strong advocate of utilizing GPS technology, grid sampling, and variable rate fertilization for crop production to increase efficiency, protect natural resources, and reduce production costs. His farm is an excellent example of utilizing best management practices including crop rotation and integrated pest management in an agricultural operation.

In 2003, in addition to his farming activities, Ken became the Executive Director of the Florida Peanut Producers Association where he represents the peanut farmers of the state of Florida in Tallahassee and Washington, D.C. He has provided strong leadership to the organization and is heavily involved in research, promotion, and education as it relates to Florida peanut production, leading to innovation in varieties, cropping systems, and youth education.

Ken and Rhonda are members of the Florida Peanut Producers Association, the Southern Peanut Farmers Federation, Florida Cattlemen's Association, and Florida Farm Bureau Federation.



Improving Agriculture through Extension Involvement

Ken has a distinguished history of working with Extension to promote timely research in peanut production, provide and facilitate funding for research, and participate in planning, promoting, and conducting producer field days and short courses. Ken is a long time member of the Panhandle Peanut Short Course planning committee and the Panhandle Row Crop Short Course planning committee and has served in an advisory capacity for Extension Agents in most of the counties across the Panhandle who are involved in crop production Extension activities. Locally in Holmes County, Ken has participated in Cotton Variety Trials over the years, and has been a strong supporter of local Holmes County Extension educational programs. Ken has also supported and participated in youth educational activities in Holmes County including the annual Ag in the Classroom for Holmes and Washington County 5th grade students. He is also very active representing the peanut industry across the state with FFA and 4-H at events such as the Florida State Fair.

Impacting Agriculture in Northwest Florida

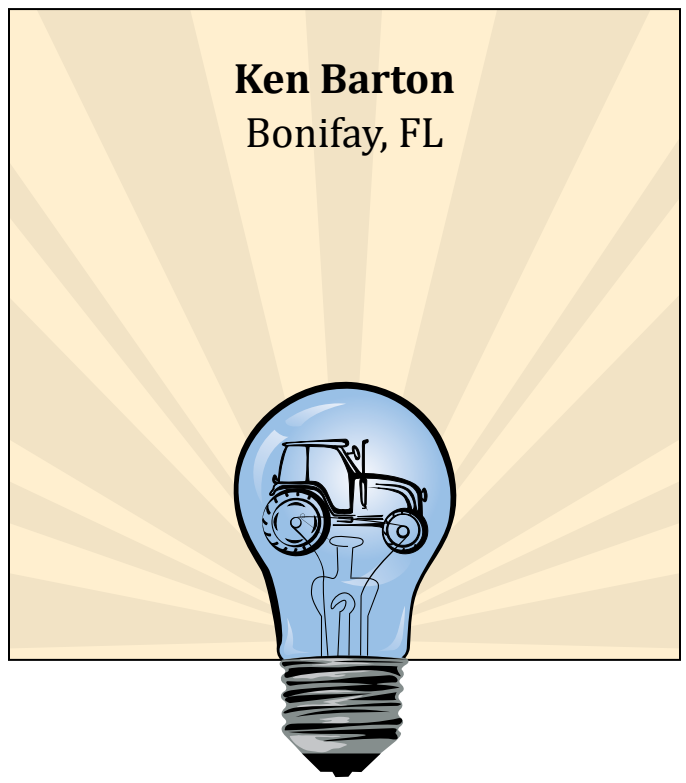
Ken Barton has been a leader in the peanut industry locally, statewide, and nationally since 2003. He has worked closely with state and federal legislators in promoting the



peanut industry, diligently working to insure the viability of agriculture in our local region and across the state of Florida. He has also hosted international delegations for tours of the peanut industry working to improve economic opportunities for area farmers. Ken and Rhonda are committed Christians who would like to express that they are thankful and grateful to their Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, that He allows them to be stewards of His creation. Ken Barton and his family are an outstanding example of the farm families that are the backbone of Holmes County and our nation! Being an innovative farm family and making their living in agriculture has always been their way of life! ■



Northwest Florida Extension District



Ken Barton
Bonifay, FL

2013 Agricultural Innovator