

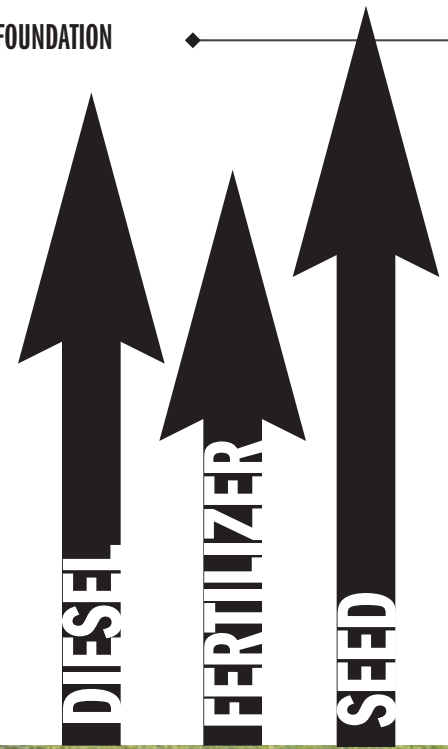
THE NORTHEAST MISSISSIPPI

BusinessJournal

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF JOURNAL PUBLISHING AND THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION

June 2008

THE COST OF FARMING



Farmers hammered by fuel costs

■ Diesel prices are further stretching farmers, who must also cope with increased fertilizer, seed and chemical costs.

BY CARLIE KOLLATH
BUSINESS JOURNAL

Truckers aren't the only ones hurting from record diesel prices — farmers are feeling it, too.

Granted, farmers use offroad, dyed diesel in their farm equipment that is 36.55 cents cheaper per gallon than road diesel, but with the state's average diesel price of \$4.63 a gallon early this month, farmers say the road-tax waiver isn't helping that much.

"I fueled up the other day and I didn't even ask what the price was," said Bill Riley, referring to his on-farm fuel tank that he uses to gas his equipment. "I didn't want to know. It will put it off a month before I get the bill."

Toss in fertilizer, seed and chemical prices that have gone up by double digit rates or more



RILEY



WAGGONER

in the past year, and farmers are facing an even bigger pile of bills.

"There hasn't been anybody making any money in the farming industry in the last five to 10 years, at least not enough to buy new equipment," Riley said. He farms with a 25-year-old tractor, but he says with a big smile, "it's paid for."

"There's a misconception," said Mississippi State University Extension Service area agronomy agent Charlie Stokes. "The public is not really educated on agriculture. They look at the high commodity prices and don't really see the high input

costs ... People just look at the price and think that the farmer is just making a killing. But in reality, the commodity prices have just followed the input prices because they went out the roof."

Riley and Lloyd Waggoner farm 600 acres in the Evergreen community of Itawamba County. It costs them \$300 to \$350 per day in fuel for their larger-size tractor. They fuel up in the morning, and by 1 p.m., Waggoner says the tractor is "hungry."

Like many other farmers in Northeast Mississippi, they are looking at ways to optimize their tractor usage so they don't burn extra fuel.

"We're making one pass with our sprayer and hoping we don't have to go back over," Riley said.

Piggybacking application processes also is popular this season as growers try to conserve fuel.



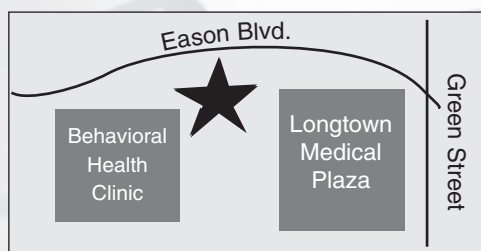
C. TODD SHERMAN

Climbing diesel prices are putting the pinch on farmers like Bill Riley of the Evergreen community. On average, it takes \$300 to \$350 for him to fuel his tractor for a day.

Turn to **DIESEL** on Page 19

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Higher prices don't translate to richer farmers

If you thought we had it bad with gas prices, think about what farmers are having to pay for diesel. While they don't have to pay the 36.55-cent road tax for their fuel, farmers are still having the shell out well north of \$4 a gallon.

Farm equipment isn't exactly cheap, either – it's a big capital expense that, as a farmer, you hope you can make last.

Fuel costs, not to mention fertilizer and feed costs, are slicing deeply into the higher revenue that farmers are getting from higher prices.

It's a no-win situation.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture recently forecast that net farm income will rise 4 percent to more than \$92 billion this year, compared to \$88.7 billion last year. Higher commodity prices are powering the increase.

Considering that the average annual net income nationwide over the past decade has been \$61.1 billion, it's no wonder some farmers are giddy about the potential.

For example, corn was about \$1.86 a bushel four years ago; today, it's fetching about \$6. Soybeans, getting

about \$5.88 a bushel back then, have doubled.

But farmers aren't exactly raking in the big bucks after expenses.

Five years ago, diesel cost about \$1.50 a gallon – it's nearly three times that today. Fertilizer costs have more than doubled.

And remember why corn is so high – the big push for ethanol.

It's the law of unintended consequences. In an effort to relieve the demand on petroleum-based fuel, the government mandated the use of more ethanol, which means a higher demand for corn. But corn also is used for the feed that goes to cows and chickens.

See the problem?

But demand for oil and gas is as high as ever – as are their prices.

Consider this: In January 1999, oil was \$8 a barrel (no that's not a mis-



**Dennis
SEID**

print). Three years ago, in June 2005, oil hit a then-record \$60-plus a barrel.

A little more than a year later, we were hammered with \$77 oil. Now look at oil – it reached a record \$135 last month, and while prices have fallen back, they're still outrageous.

Meanwhile, our farmers are trudging through it all.

While we consumers gripe about the prices we're paying for our milk, meat, veggies, fruit and fuel, farmers are working the land trying to make ends meet.

It's a thankless job, an under-appreciated vocation that we take for granted.

But what happens when there are fewer farmers to grow the things we need? Think prices are high now – just wait.

Agriculture is the state's top industry, employing about 30 percent of all workers either directly or indirectly. It's a \$6.4 billion industry, with more than 40,000 farms in 82 counties.

But they're under some intense strains that won't be easing anytime soon.

So if you have to pay more at the

Tops in Mississippi

Agriculture is the state's largest industry, valued at \$6.4 billion. The top ten agricultural crops in the state are:

1. Poultry/eggs	\$2.33 billion
2. Forestry	\$1.11 billion
3. Soybeans	\$511 million
4. Corn	\$438 million
5. Cotton	\$434 million
6. Catfish	\$223 million
7. Cattle	\$191 million
8. Rice	\$144 million
9. Hay	\$102 million
10. Horticulture	\$100 million

Source: Mississippi State University

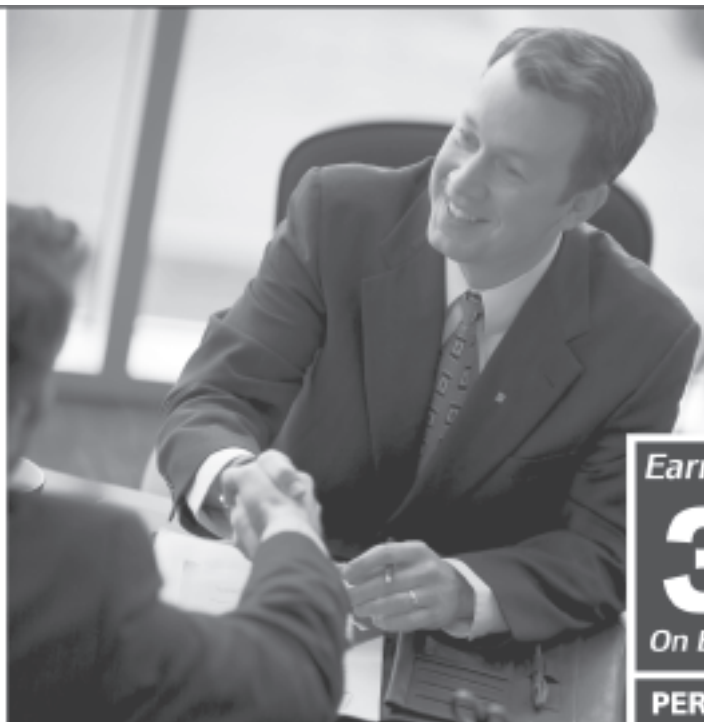
grocery store, think about why we're having to do so. And you might appreciate what farmers are doing just a little more.

Dennis Seid is editor of the Northeast Mississippi Business Journal.

Contact him at dennis.seid@djjournal.com or at 678-1578.

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Logging industry looking for help

■ **The head of the Mississippi Loggers Association is looking for relief in a tough environment.**

BY CARLIE KOLLATH

BUSINESS JOURNAL

The state's timber industry currently is experiencing a "business climate unlike anything we have ever seen," according to the Quitman-based Mississippi Loggers Association.

MLA's Executive Director Cecil Johnson made the point in a letter provided to The Northeast Mississippi Business Journal earlier this week.

His response comes after two Mississippi loggers and MLA members in May asked Gov. Haley Barbour to include several logging-related issues in his call for a special session of the state's Legislature to help provide support for the "failing industry." The letter's authors – Tamme Bufkin of

Hattiesburg-based Circle B. Timber and John Mabry of Liberty-based Sam Mabry Lumber Co. – wrote that the items would provide "immediate relief" for the "major crisis" that the state's logging industry is facing.

The letter said the crisis is a "result of a long term continuation of inflated fuel prices."

The proposed items included a waiver for the rest of the year on fuel tax for on-road and off-road diesel, an increase of highway weight limits to 88,000 pounds and a sales tax waiver on parts and supplies used to maintain and repair logging equipment and trucks.

"Many logging companies have already closed," Bufkin and Mabry's letter read. "Unless immediate relief is provided by the State of Mississippi to this industry, the life of the remaining logging companies

Turn to **LOGGING** on **Page 19**

The Mississippi Loggers Association sent the following letter to The Northeast Mississippi Business Journal on June 3 as a response to the letter written by MLA members Tamme Bufkin and John Mabry. To read Bufkin and Mabry's letter, go to <http://tupelobizbuzz.wordpress.com>.

On behalf of the Mississippi Loggers Association, I would like to address some issues that have recently been aired.

Over the past several months, MLA has brought to the attention of both state and federal government officials issues that are significantly impacting our industry. The most immediate is fuel cost. An overall economic slowdown fueled by a deflated US dollar and other factors beyond our control have contributed to a business climate unlike anything we have ever seen in the timber industry.

All segments of the forest industry are affected at a time when finished products as a whole are at all time lows. With diminishing markets and fewer alternatives for landowners, reduced value of timber sales and increased harvesting costs impact the cycle from farm to market and the overall economic health of our state.

All segments of the forest industry the landowner, the company harvesting the wood and the company processing the raw wood product – are affected during these tough economic times. The health of this industry depends on the health of the three segments. Combined, these industries contribute approximately \$14 billion to the economy of our state. There are approximately 52,580 individuals directly employed in the forest industry with an annual payroll of \$1.6 billion. With value added, another 200,000 jobs are created with a payroll in excess of \$6 billion.

MLA certainly realizes we are not in this alone. Individuals, families and businesses are affected by everything from the price of gasoline to the cost of groceries. As an industry we may not have done the best job of getting our message out, but we feel that it is important for the people of Mississippi to understand the contribution that our industry makes to the economy of this state.

The average logger has an initial investment in equipment in excess of \$1 million dollars. We purchase appropriate weight tags to haul our product and pay federal highway fuel tax in the amount of 24.52 cents per gallon and state highway fuel tax equaling 18.4 cents on each gallon.

For equipment used in the woods, Mississippi collects 5.75 cents on each gallon. Additionally, we pay a federal highway use tax per truck. Understanding the importance of having safe and well maintained highways, we feel we pay our way while at the same time making a significant contribution to our economy. The next time you read the newspaper or watch a new house go up in your neighborhood consider what it took to get there.

Sincerely,
 Cecil Johnson
 MLA, Executive Director



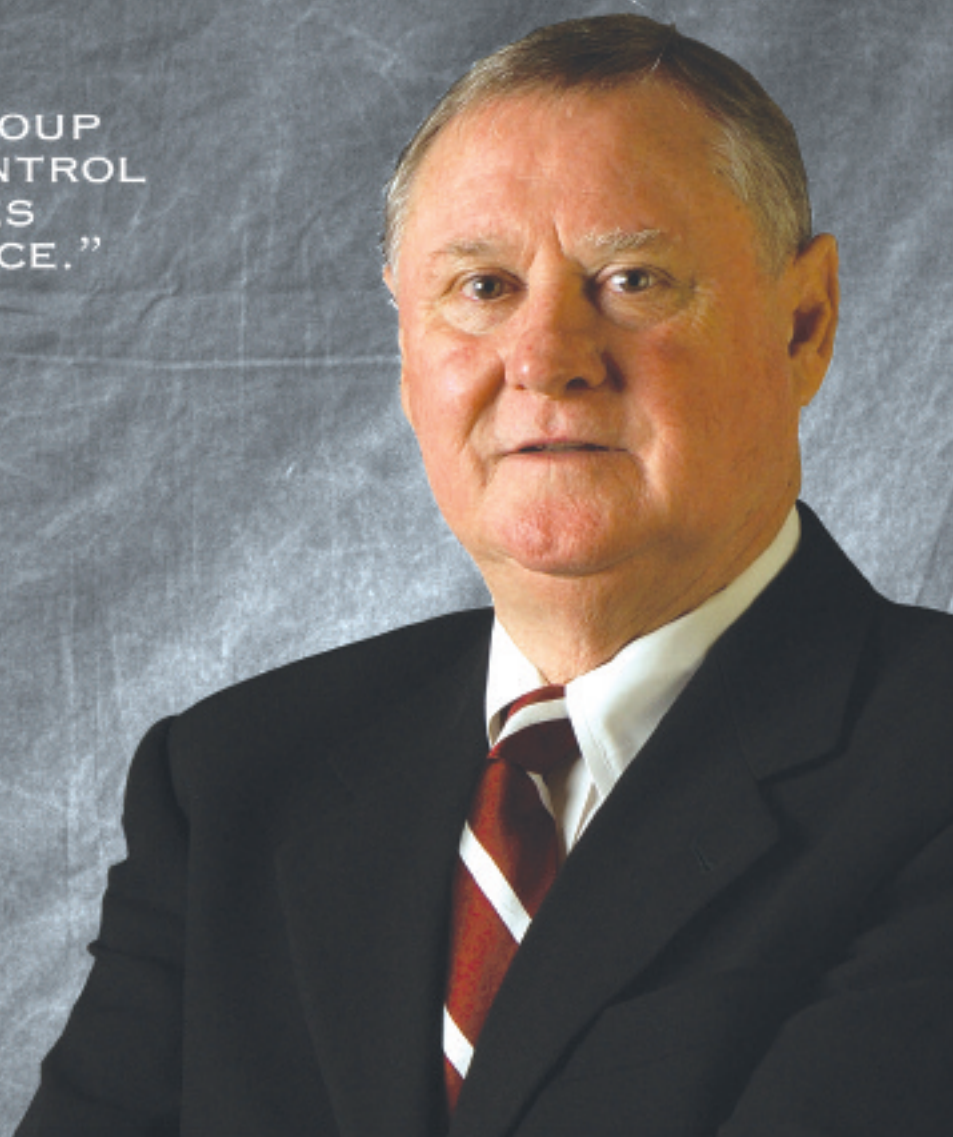
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Catfish farming in NeMiss? You bet

■ **Almost a quarter of the state's catfish acreage is in the region.**

By Dennis Seid

BUSINESS JOURNAL

EGYPT – Brent Wedel has one of the largest catfish farms in the area, managing 21 ponds and some 178 acres of water.

But Wedel Farm isn't in the Delta; it's in Northeast Mississippi.

Catfish farming has long been the domain of the Delta, but Ne-Miss has its fair share, too. And many people don't realize it.

"Between Scuba and Okolona, there are about 15,000 acres of water," Wedel said. "There's a lot more catfish farming going on around here than people are aware of."

Catfish farming is the sixth-largest agriculture industry in the state, valued at about \$223 million. About 370 catfish operations have some 94,000 acres in production.

Wedel got in the business in 1996, just as the industry was



THOMAS WELLS

Warren Giesbrecht, from left, Sammy Kelly and Garik Wedel harvest catfish Wedel Farm in Egypt.

enjoying a resurgence. Like any industry, there have been ups and downs.

Lately, the down has come in the form of higher fuel and feed prices, costs that all farmers are having to handle.

"Last year, we were booking feed at about \$250 a ton; now it's about \$360 a ton," Wedel said.

It adds up. Wedel uses 120-150 pounds of feed per acre per day – that translates to at least 21,000 pounds, or at least

10 tons a day.

Fortunately, the feeding season isn't year-round. Catfish go dormant in the winter, so Wedel and other catfish farmers don't have to shell out food from November to January. Still, it's only a small break.

Back to the Delta

The catfish harvested on Wedel Farm goes to Delta Pride, one of the nation's largest catfish processor based in Indianola. The company has 115 members, who harvest about 1.5 million pounds of fish weekly.

Quality is maintained by sampling the fish. Two or three catfish are "tasted" before a load is sent to the company. A slice of a fish is cut, microwaved for a few seconds and then taste-tested; it's not swallowed, but spit out.

"They taste it to make sure it's 'on,'" Wedel said.

He explained that catfish are naturally bottom feeders. But the feed that is given to them

daily for much of the year floats on the top, forcing the fish to the top of the water, rather than eating whatever is on the bottom.

The fish that are harvested are around two pounds each. Anything smaller is rejected.

On Wedel Farm, about 8,000 pounds per acre can be harvested on a good day.

"We're getting about 75 cents net per pound, but that's been offset by the higher feed costs," Wedel said.

And Wedel hopes that consumers take notice of the catfish they eat – he has little regard for imported fish masquerading as the "real stuff."

"American catfish farmers ensure the quality of the feed and the water so that our fish taste good and are healthy," Wedel said. "You don't know if that catfish from China or Vietnam has mercury or not. You might pay a little more for Mississippi-raised catfish, but at least you know where your money is going."

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2008 has been a 'strange planting season'

■ **Rainy weather has delayed farmer's plans and changed some of their plans.**

BY **Carlie Kollath**
BUSINESS JOURNAL

TUPELO — It's June and farmers in Northeast Mississippi still are trying to get this year's crop in the ground. Typically, everything would have been finished at least a month ago.

"It doesn't sound like we are ever going to finish planting," said Mississippi State University Extension Service area agronomist agent Charlie Stokes. "It's been a mess. I can't ever remember us having so much trouble planting than this year."

This time last year, 97 percent of the state's soybeans were planted, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agriculture Statistics Service. But as of May 25, only 85 percent was planted. Of that, 72 percent has emerged, compared with last year's 91 percent. NASS cited scattered rains as the reason for the delayed planting activities. The rains also have delayed winter wheat harvesting. As of May 25, about 2 percent of this year's wheat had been harvested, compared with last year's 11 percent.

Changing crop mixes

Because of the wet conditions this spring, Stokes said the farmers he keeps up with have wandered a bit from their intended crop mixes, or what they planned to grow, reported earlier this spring. On March 31, NASS released growers' planting intentions on a state-by-state basis. The numbers aren't broken down on a county basis until the end of the year.

Mississippi growers cut back 30 percent of their corn plantings from last year, and upped their soybean acreage by 41 percent. Peanuts also picked up 47 percent more acres in Mississippi this year.

Cotton, on the other hand, suffered another blow. Only 420,000 acres are intended for this year, down 46 percent from last year and the lowest acreage for the state since record keeping started in 1909.

But, along came the rain,

changing those plans.

Stokes said the weather prevented some of the corn from getting planted in April, so growers opted to plant soybeans.

Cotton also replaced some of the acres that couldn't be planted with corn, he said.

"We'll have a bit but not a lot," he said.

And then, Stokes said, a lot of the corn had to be replanted because of heavy rains.

"One farmer had to replant up to three times," he said. "It's been a strange planting season to say the least. We just want to hurry up and get through planting. We're usually well into doing other things instead of getting plants in the ground."

Stokes also said that in light of the back-to-back droughts of the past two years, he has mixed feelings about being inconvenienced by too much rain.

"It's hard to complain about the rain," he said. "It'd be nice to get everything up and then save some of this rain for the summer."

Contact **Carlie Kollath** at 678-1598 or carlie.kollath@djjournal.com.

PEANUT POPULARITY PERSISTS IN NEMISS

■ **About 80 percent of the crop's acreage in the state has been planted.**

BY **Carlie Kollath**
BUSINESS JOURNAL

Peanuts remain the crop darling of Northeast Mississippi farmers this year. Talk to growers about what they have in the ground and you're likely to hear about a few acres of the legume.

Statewide, peanut acreage is up 47 percent this year.

Peanuts traditionally have been grown in the sandy loam soil common in southern Mississippi, Alabama and Georgia, but NeMiss growers started

trying their hand at them as a more drought-tolerant crop.

Birdsong Peanuts is cashing in on the popularity. The national company broke ground this spring on a peanut buying operation in Aberdeen. Birdsong currently operates 58 peanut buying points, but this will be its first one in Mississippi.

Brian Atkins, the buying point manager, hopes to sign contracts for 15,000 of the intended 28,000 acres in the state. His primary customers will be the 30 to 50 peanut farmers in NeMiss. The facility is slated to open Sept. 1.

The USDA's National Agriculture Statistics Service re-

ported that as of May 25, 80 percent of the peanut crop has been planted, compared with 69 percent the previous year.

Charlie Stokes, an area agronomy agent with Mississippi State University Extension Service, said NeMiss farmers are still trying to finish their peanut planting during the "couple of dry windows of opportunity."

"The profitability on that one looks pretty attractive to some people," he said. "They are going to try really hard to get those acres planted."

Contact **Carlie Kollath** at 678-1598 or carlie.kollath@djjournal.com.

Statewide, peanut acreage is up 47 percent this year. Peanuts traditionally have been grown in the sandy loam soil common in southern Mississippi, Alabama and Georgia, but NeMiss growers started trying their hand at them as a more drought-tolerant crop.


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A CDF

Chamber Connection

A publication of Journal Publishing and the CDF Chamber Division – June 6, 2008

CDF is Turning 60!

The Community Development Foundation is celebrating its 60th anniversary in 2008. A year of commemorative events are planned to celebrate this milestone for Tupelo and Lee County's Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development organization. The theme for the year is "Onward and Upward," as CDF hopes to not rest on sixty years of laurels, but continue its mission to strengthen the region through economic and community development projects, with emphasis on creating jobs

On September 21, 1948, the Community Development Foundation was chartered with the following purpose: To coordinate, initiate, promote, develop, and assist in the financing, management, and direction of enterprises leading to the upbuilding of the community, including agriculture, industry, trade, recreation, education, and other matters of civic interest. Later, on October 8, 1948, 88 Tupelo business-

men gathered at Hotel Tupelo to officially form CDF by combining the Tupelo Chamber of Commerce and other associated enterprises. As a result of this meeting, CDF became a united front for nine other organizations with similar goals including the Rural Community Development Council, Tupelo Marketing Company, North Mississippi Livestock Association, Tupelo Area Artificial Insemination Association, Lee County Jersey Cattle Club, Lee County Animal Health Program, Industrial Committee, Merchants Committee, and Agricultural Committee.

In the early years of CDF, visionary leaders shaped this organization, leaning on the slogan "there is no limit to what an organized community can do if it wants to." As CDF celebrates 60 years of service to Tupelo and Lee County during 2008, we truly thank the almost 1,500 CDF members that enable us to continue the mission that was set out for this organization 60 years ago.



State of Mississippi



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JACKSON

The within and foregoing Charter of
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is hereby approved.



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hereunto set my hand and caused
the Great Seal of the State of
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Receipt No. 1795 L.

Original signed by Fielding L. Wright
Governor

Original signed by Heber Lindner
Secretary of State

Recorded in the Secretary of State's office this
the twenty-first day of September, 1948.

Chamber focus

Dear Friends:

From all reports, the Annual Meeting featuring "The Today Show in Tupelo" was a fun, informative, and entertaining way to report CDF's accomplishments last year, and outline plans for the 2008-2009 year. Thanks to the Annual Meeting Program Committee chairman Mary Werner, and committee members Lisa Hawkins, Tom Robinson, Jeff Snyder, and Buddy Stubbs, for planning a really big show.

Congratulations to Beverly Bedford on her recognition as Ambassador of the Year. The CDF Ambassadors continue to be vital links in helping CDF understand the needs of its membership. They attend ribbon-cuttings, groundbreakings, First Friday programs, and any other functions in support of our program of work. Beverly is a true ambassador, and we certainly enjoy having her as a part of the club.

Nominations are now being received



SMITH

for a new class for the Jim Ingram Community Leadership Institute (CLI). Nominees should possess leadership qualities and a degree of motivation toward service in the community. One hundred and thirty-four have graduated from CLI to date. If you would like to nominate someone, please call the CDF office.

The Class of 2008 has successfully completed two years of Institute and was recognized as a part of the CDF Annual Meeting. Congratulations to this group.

Thank you to our members for your continued support of CDF.

Vice President of Chamber Services

Community Development Foundation's Board of Directors for 2008-2009

CDF is governed by a 61-member Board of Directors. The Executive Committee is composed of the CDF Officers and eleven additional members of the Board. CDF's goals and objectives are accomplished through the efforts of members appointed to committees operating under one of CDF's three divisions: Chamber Division, Economic Development Division, and Planning and Property Management Division.

2008-2009 Executive Committee

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Lisa Hawkins
Shane Hooper

David Irwin
Guy Mitchell, III
Mary Pace
Tom Robinson
Jeff Snyder

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Dates to remember

TUPELO YOUNG PROFESSIONALS EVENT
Thursday, June 12
5:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.
MLM Clothiers

FIRST STEPS WORKSHOP
Tuesday, July 1
1:00 p.m.
Renasant Center for IDEAs

FIRST STEPS WORKSHOP
Tuesday, July 15
6:30 p.m.
Renasant Center for IDEAs

BUSINESS ROUNDTABLE
Wednesday, July 23
4:00 p.m.
CDF Boardroom

FIRST STEPS WORKSHOP
Tuesday, July 29
1:00 p.m.
Renasant Center for IDEAs

MISSISSIPPI SCHOLARS



Graduating seniors throughout Lee County, who met the requirements of the Mississippi Scholars curriculum, were honored at various senior recognition events. 63 graduates garnered the Mississippi Scholars honor and were given special tokens of recognition. Pictured, graduates of Saltillo High School were acknowledged for taking the rigorous courses needed to be named Mississippi Scholars.

TYP



The May Tupelo Young Professionals event was held at Accent Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery. Dr. Mark Craig and his staff networked with the group and talked to them about the many products and services that Accent offers. For more information or to become a member of the TYP's, simply send an e-mail to TYP@cdfms.org with your name, business name, mailing address, and e-mail address.



MMS EQUIPMENT



A ribbon cutting was held to celebrate the opening of MMS Equipment Sales in Tupelo. Pictured are the event are: Danny Jurdan, Union County Board of Supervisors; Tommie Lee Ivy, Lee County Board of Supervisors; Joe McKinney, Lee County Board of Supervisors; David Moore, MMS Equipment Sales; Janett Moore, MMS Equipment Sales; Darrell Smith, City of Tupelo; Randy Owens, Union County Board of Supervisors; Jimmy Gunn, Tippah County Board of Supervisors; Phil Morgan, Lee County Board of Supervisors; Smith Heavner, Tupelo City Council; and Peanut Pickens, Union County Board of Supervisors. MMS Equipment Sales is located at 1408 D.L. Collums Drive in Tupelo and can be reached at 662.844.7373.

BUSINESS ROUNDTABLE



The Business Roundtable met May 28 at the CDF office. Members enjoyed informative reports by such businesses as NEW Corp, Downtown Tupelo Main Street Association, and Southern Ice Café. Pictured are members of the Business Roundtable. Also pictured, Gunner Goad speaks to the group about the AT&T Cell Phones for Soldiers program.

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Participants may also drop cell phones off at the CDF office at 300 West Main Street in Downtown Tupelo.

The Cell Phones for Soldiers program was started in April 2004 by 13-year-old Brittany Bergquist and her 12-year-old brother Robbie, of Norwell, Massachusetts. Robbie and Brittany's goal is to help our soldiers serving overseas call home.

They hope to provide as many soldiers as possible with prepaid calling cards.

AT&T is the featured sponsor of this program. AT&T has donated more than \$500,000 worth of prepaid phone cards to Cell Phones for Soldiers and is now offering all 1,800 company-owned wireless store locations across the country as drop-off sites to help recycle used cell phones for the program, through July 2008!



2007-2008 CDF Annual Meeting



During the WCDF "Today in Tupelo" broadcast David Rumbarger, CDF President/CEO, interviewed Mike Robinson of HunterDouglas, as well as Bernard Bean of Eat With Us Group.



The WCDF "Today in Tupelo" show was anchored by Julee Brown, WTVA, and Jack Reed, Jr., 2007-2008 CDF Chairman. Mitch "Willard" Waycaster, 2008-2009 CDF Chairman, gave a forecast of next year's program of work for CDF.



Beverly Bedford, Vice Mayor of Saltillo, was awarded the Ambassador of the Year honor. She is pictured with David Rumbarger.

Bedford named Ambassador of the Year

Beverly Bedford, Vice Mayor of Saltillo, is the 2007-2008 CDF Ambassador of the Year. Bedford worked tirelessly throughout the year, attending 34 of 42 ribbon cuttings and volunteering at such CDF events as the Membership Golf Tournament, Business to Business Connection

and Taste of Tupelo event, and Industry Education Day. She also recruited one new CDF member during the 2008 Membership Campaign. Bedford was presented with a token of appreciation at the Annual Meeting by CDF President and CEO, David Rumbarger.

Highlights from the 2007-2008 CDF Annual meeting



The Jim Ingram Community Leadership Institute Class of 2008 was honored at the Annual Meeting for completing two years of leadership training.

Jim Ingram Leadership Institute Class of 2008

Jewel Bailey
Fred Cook
Gloria Cox
Justin Davis
Wally Davis
Jennifer Dennington
Lisa Dyson
Cathy Freeman
Tommy Green
Skip Johnson
Wesley Jones
Valerie Long
Tony McCoy
Sharon Mitchell
John Oxford
Sandra Perkins
Vance Phillips
Ellen Prentice
Ty Robinson
Terry Russell
David Sykes
Thomas Walker
Jeff Williams

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Renasant Bank
Shannon Elementary School
The Shopping Center Group
North MS Health Services
WLOV-TV
North MS Health Services
BancorpSouth
MS Methodist Senior Services
Bottrell Insurance Agency
Northwestern Mutual Financial
CATCH Kids
Tupelo Police Department
North MS Health Services
Renasant Bank
Appalachian Regional Commission
Sara Lee Foods
Kimbrough CPA Firm
Robinson & Associates
Flexible Foam Products
Access Environmental Solutions
Tupelo Fire Department
Williams Transfer & Storage



David Rumbarger interviewed Lee County Board of Supervisors President Bobby Smith and Baldwin Mayor Danny Horton.



Almost 1,000 CDF members gathered for the 2007-2008 Annual Meeting.



Drew Poppelreiter, Saltillo-native and American Idol contestant, performed his new song "The Fields of Tupelo" for the crowd.



Mitch "Willard" Waycaster gave such a shining forecast for 2008-2009 that he had to wear shades.

STANFORD FINANCIAL GROUP



To celebrate the grand opening of Stanford Financial Group's new Fairpark District office, a ribbon cutting was held. Pictured at the event are David Rumbarger, CDF; John Mark Holliday, Stanford Financial Group; Mayor Ed Neely; Jim Davis, Stanford Financial Group; Neal Clement, Stanford Financial Group; Laura Pendergest, Stanford Financial Group; and Doug McDaniel, Stanford Financial Group. Stanford Financial Group is located at 110 East Main Street, Suite A in downtown Tupelo and can be reached at 662.841.0254.

LITTLE CAESARS



A ribbon cutting was held to celebrate the grand opening of Little Caesars in Tupelo. Pictured at the event are: Richard Carleton, Mall at Barnes Crossing; Marsha Williams, Williams Transfer & Storage; Beverly Bedford, City of Saltillo; Waurene Heflin, Crye-Leike Realtors; Jason Ellis, Little Caesars; Mayor Ed Neely; Mike Naylor, Little Caesars; Les Perry, North Mississippi Medical Center; Marty Ballard, Little Caesars; Julio Montes, Little Caesars; and Emily Addison, CDF. Little Caesars is located at 2434 West Main Street in Tupelo and can be reached at 662.844.7182.

Northeast Mississippi Summer Small Business Lunch and Learn Workshops

The following workshops will be offered:

- | | |
|-----------------|--|
| Itawamba County | Thursday, June 12, from Noon to 1 p.m. led by Dr. Frank Wiebe
"How to Create Repeat Customers with Outstanding Customer Service"
ICDC at 107 Wiygul Street, Fulton
Lunch will be provided. Deadline to register is Wed., June 11, at Noon. |
| Union County | Thursday, July 10, from Noon to 1 p.m. led by Don Fischer
"Disaster Planning for Small Business"
New Albany Civic Center, 127 E. Bankhead Street
A box lunch will be provided for \$7. Deadline to register is Wed., July 9, at Noon. |
| Pontotoc County | Thursday, July 24, from Noon to 1 p.m. led by James Harper
"From Small Business to Global Business: Basics of Exporting/Importing"
Pontotoc Chamber of Commerce, 109 North Main Street
A box lunch will be provided for \$5 from Subway.
Deadline to register is Wed., July 23, at Noon. |
| Lee County | Thursday, August 14, from Noon to 1 p.m. led by James Hendrick
"Inventor Assistance and Technology"
CDF Boardroom, 300 West Main Street, Tupelo
Lunch will be provided. Deadline to register is Wed., August 13, at Noon. |

Participation in the workshops is free, but you must pre-register.
Please call 1(800) 725-7232.
Registration is limited to the first 40 people.

RENASANT CENTER for IDEAs
Tupelo/Lee County Regional Business Incubator

Additional sponsors are Union County Development Association, Pontotoc Chamber of Commerce, Itawamba County Development Council, and Community Development Foundation.



MSBDC @ UM is a member of the Mississippi Small Business Development Centers (MSBDC) network. MSBDC has assisted Mississippi businesses since 1981. Reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities will be made if requested at least two weeks in advance. Contact: Jo Ann Harris, (662) 915-1291 or 1(800) 725-7232 (In MS), e-mail umsbdc@olemiss.edu to pre-register or visit our website at <http://www.mssbdc.org>.

Funded in part through a Cooperative Agreement with the U.S. Small Business Administration.



CBS ELECTRIC



A ribbon cutting was held at CBS Electric, on the grounds of Manning Gardens in Guntown. Pictured at the event are Jason Beasley, Renasant Bank; Emily Addison, CDF; Les Perry, North Mississippi Medical Center; Beverly Bedford, City of Saltillo; Mike Maynard, Weatherall's, Inc.; Marty Stacks, CBS Electric; Mayor Jimmy Anderson; Ann Brazil, Snelling Staffing; Amber Westmoreland, Comcast Spotlight; Connie Snell, My Elegant Clutter; and Marsha Williams, Williams Transfer & Storage. CBS Electric is located at 296 CR 2446 in Guntown and can be reached at 662.348.3152.

TYP Event

Thursday, June 12, 2008
5:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

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growth of the Tupelo/Lee County area.

Please contact the CDF office at
662-842-4521 for further information.



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PHOTOS BY THOMAS WELLS

Keith and Beth Morton farm 1,000 acres in Falkner. Keith recently upgraded his mobile office AKA his tractor with a GPS unit.

FARMING GONE HIGH-TECH

■ **Who:** Keith and Beth Morton
 ■ **Occupation:** Farmers of 1,000 acres of milo, soybeans, wheat and cotton
 ■ **Where:** Falkner in Tippah County

■ **FALKNER** - Keith and Beth Morton this year knocked out the top item on their gadget wishlist - a global positioning system for their tractor.

"Before I put the GPS in, that was my best gadget - the track tractor," Keith said.

Added Beth with a smile, "I actually have more gadgets but he uses them."

With input costs going up, the Mortons, along with several other regional farmers, bought a GPS unit to make the most of their time and their chemical expenditures. The GPS can mark rows in the field and auto steer the tractor. It also can control spraying and planting to minimize and avoid overlap.

"It's already paying off with the time savings," said Keith, after using it for three days in the field. "You don't spend any time hunting around. And you can keep going after dark with this machine, and I know I'm accurate."

Along with the GPS unit, the Mortons use a laptop and a live weather feed to keep tabs on their fields. They keep in touch with each other on their cell phones and Bluetooth headsets and use their digital camera to send pictures of plant problems to crop experts.

"These are gadgets and they are really cool and they are fast becoming essential tools," Keith said. "It's almost impossible to do business in a mobile office without cell phones. I've only been using the auto steer for three or four days, and I'm already convinced that it's the way to go."

- Carlie Kollath, *Business Journal*

Must Haves

GPS UNIT FOR TRACTOR

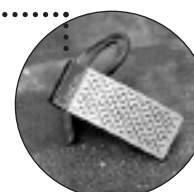
It comes with auto steer. It also keeps track of field information, reducing paperwork. Keith said the system makes farming more eco-friendly because he doesn't over-apply chemicals and fertilizers.



.....
 ■ **LAPTOP** - The Mortons opted for a laptop with a big screen so they can see it at the same time, Beth said. "We have a whopper of a laptop," she said, laughing.



.....
 ■ **CELL PHONE** - "Most people use walkie talkies in their tractors," Beth said. "We use cell phones."



.....
 ■ **BLUETOOTH JAWBONE HEADSET** - Keith uses the headset when he drives the tractor. "[The Jawbone model] uses the vibration in the jawbone and cancels out the rest of the noise. I can stand next to the tractor and it cancels it out."



.....
 ■ **DIGITAL CAMERA** - "If we have problems in the field, we can e-mail a picture to a specialist at State," Keith said, referring to the MSU Extension Service. The Mortons also use the camera for equipment trades.

Wish list

■ **RTK guidance** - The current GPS unit uses satellites that have a +/- 4-inch accuracy and must be adjusted each year for drifting, Keith said. The next step up is RTK, which would put a tower in his fields and make his guidance accurate to 1/2-inch.

■ **Yield monitor** - "We would know what each field produced and what areas produced the best and what areas harvested the least," Keith said. "You can't tell from just looking at [the field]. [The monitor] paints a picture for you and you work on the lower-yield fields and make them more productive."

■ **Variable-rate technology** - The Mortons currently pay a company to run this technology on their fields for lime application, but they wouldn't mind owning the equipment. The technology uses a grid sample to test the fertilizer and pH levels in the fields and then "writes a prescription." Areas that need more lime and fertilizer get more, while others get less. The approach, the Mortons say, has saved them a lot of money in the past. Also, Keith recorded a 5 percent to 10 percent crop yield increase the last time he used the technology.

■ **mp3 player** - Right now the couple listens to the tractor's dash radio when they are working in field, but Beth said she might look at getting her husband an mp3 player "since he spends 15 hours in the tractor."



.....
 ■ **DVR** - "I use it because the season premieres are on when we are harvesting and the finales are on when we are planting," Beth said.

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Diesel

Continued from Page 2

No-till farming option

And, some farmers, Stokes, said are moving to no-till planting this year to conserve fuel. No-till farming is a way of growing crops without disturbing the soil through tillage. Farmers, instead, can use chemicals to kill weeds and plants.

Riley tilled his fields this year, citing a better yield with the method, but he did use chemicals to "burn down" organic materials in the field.

The chemical process, which he said he never uses, saved him a few tractor trips.

Tommy Harrison, a farmer in southern Pontotoc County, said he remembers when farmers drove their tractors to Washington, D.C., in 1979 as part of a protest of farm prices. He likened the "trac-torcade" organized by the American Agriculture Movement to the recent trucking strikes in which truckers are driving slow to protest the high diesel prices.

"The truckers are trying to make a statement and they should," he said.

The commodity prices right now are enough to offset some of the crunch of the increased inputs, but Harrison said he'll get worried when commodity prices fall.

"Inputs seldom ever come back down," he said.

Keith Morton, a farmer in Falkner, echoed Harrison's sentiment.

"We're not out to rip anyone off," he said. "Our margins aren't any higher when our expenses are this high. What we're trying to guard against is the day when commodities fall and the inputs stay the same. We can't afford to have that."

Riley added, "We can't set our prices. We take what we get. We haul our grain to Memphis or the Delta and say, 'What can you give me?' not 'I need \$7.' It's the only industry that I know of that says, 'How much will you give me?'"

"If prices drop back to \$5, it will be over with," Riley said of soybean commodities that have been fetching about \$12 to \$13 per bushel.

Contact **Carlie Kollath** at 678-1598 or carlie.kollath@djjournal.com.

Logging

Continued from Page 4

in our state is short term."

Barbour did not include the items in the special session.

State Department of Agriculture spokesman Andy Prosser said he wasn't aware of the letter, but acknowledged that the logging industry is being hit by the double whammy of high diesel prices and a soft housing marketing.

"We haven't seen this in a long time," Prosser said. "I've never seen where fuel prices affect things so much. And the housing market is so low. It really affects the forestry industry."

The state's forestry industry was valued at \$1.11 billion in 2007, according to the ag department. About 18 million acres or 61 percent of the total land in Mississippi is devoted to forest production. About 70 percent of the land is privately owned, Prosser added.

And, timber is Mississippi's second most valuable crop, according to the Mississippi Forestry Commission. Poultry ranks No. 1.

Prosser said his economy contacts at Mississippi State University forecast that the housing market won't start to rebound until late 2009 or 2010, a timeline the forestry industry isn't excited about.

"It's a huge concern for loggers and for private landowners who want to get higher prices on their timber," he said.

Contact **Carlie Kollath** at 678-1598 or carlie.kollath@djjournal.com.

Corn grown for ethanol feeds feud over food

By **Justin Hyde**

MCCLATCHY-TRIBUNE

WASHINGTON — The ethanol bandwagon has run off the road.

Thanks to rising food prices, ethanol has lost its luster in Washington. Lawmakers reworked the recent farm bill to lower incentives for ethanol. The governor of Texas wants a waiver from federal requirements for more of the fuel in the coming years. And critics from around the world — from food companies to United Nations officials — say ethanol's to blame for more expensive food.

In the middle sit Detroit's automakers, which have made ethanol the centerpiece of their environmental efforts — supporting ethanol mandates, building about 5 million flex-fuel vehicles so far, and pledging to make half their fleets capable of burning 85 percent ethanol fuel by 2012. So far, automakers have sat this debate out, but it could affect efforts to move toward biofuels from other sources.

What's fueling the debate is a jump in food prices not seen in decades. After rising 4 percent last year — the largest increase since 1990, according to federal experts — retail food prices are expected to climb another 4 percent to 5 percent this year. Global de-

mand, weather, oil prices, the weaker U.S. dollar — all have played some role.

But just how much of the inflation in food prices can be traced back to more expensive corn has been a raging debate in Washington over the past few weeks. Ethanol and farm advocates, including the Bush administration, say biofuels play a minuscule role in the overall food price increases, compared with a growing world population demanding more food than ever.

The U.S. ethanol industry has come under special scrutiny since it relies almost exclusively on corn, which is also used by livestock farmers and industrial food processors.

As with oil, corn prices could rise further, despite a startling 48 percent increase over the past year. Yet while prices stand at about \$6 a bushel, and there was a record crop last year, U.S. farmers are expected to plant 8 percent fewer acres of corn this year.

Experts cite several reasons for the reduction: Many farmers swap fields every season between corn and soybeans to preserve the soil; wheat, soybeans and other crops also have seen prices soar, and the costs of growing corn have grown with fuel prices.

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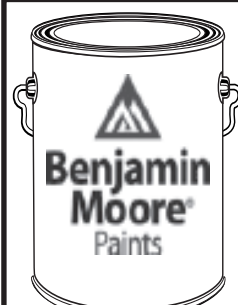
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