

Jones Potato Farm

Commissioner's Agricultural Environmental Leadership Award

Jones Potato Farm was established in Manatee County in 1986 as a father-son potato farming operation. In 2001, after developing a solid business in Southwest Florida, Alan Jones bought out his father with great vision for the future. Today, Jones Potato Farm consists of 4,000 acres scattered across northern Manatee County as well as property in Labelle. Jones' farm plan has been built primarily with potatoes followed by a rotation of green beans and cover crops. Potato production includes table stock, chip stock and a wide variety of specialty potatoes. Jones' operation provides the potato industry a solid footing to kick off the fresh potato season. Green beans are used as a rotational crop, beneficial as a nitrogen fixer and soil builder. Cover crops are primarily used to maintain soil health, and for erosion control. Jones Potato Farm also includes citrus and cattle holdings. Jones' dedication to his land as an environmental steward has led him to implement best management practices in the areas of food safety, fertilization, soil and irrigation. His dedication to his business as CEO has led him to work to build a sustainable community through outreach, interaction and philanthropy.

Jones is committed to improving the soil health of each of his operations. He strives to ensure the soils and plants are receiving only what they need. Soil samples are taken regularly to ensure the inputs of soil amendments and fertilizer are producing the best results while maintaining optimum efficiency. Jones understands the different sources of nutrients and the advantages and disadvantages they provide. As a result, he has implemented the 4R Nutrient Stewardship Program, using the practice to apply the "Right source, at the Right rate, at the Right time and in the Right place." His use of the 4R program garnered him the 4R Nutrient Advocate Award in 2013. Jones is the first in Florida to win this national recognition.

Jones has incorporated precision ag into his operation. He has set up grid sampling on all of his farms, not only of the nutrients but also the soil types. With this information and a GPS-guided variable-rate banded fertilizer applicator, Jones has reduced his fertilizer use up to 30 percent. He uses this same data and equipment to place organic soil amendments on the weaker areas of the farm.

Jones strives to conserve and maintain the best water quality possible on the farm. All of his farms operate off low-volume electric pivot irrigation systems that were implemented in 2012. The new irrigation systems have reduced his water use by as much as 70 percent, conserving over 1 million gallons of water per day. Jones has installed float wells to monitor the surficial water table. This ensures soil moisture is maintained at optimum levels. These practices, with the cooperation of Southwest Florida Water Management District and the FARMS Program, not only conserve water, but also help with erosion, irrigation runoff and pollution.

Jones believes his proactive approach to farming serves a greater purpose beyond the fields. His commitment to the community has been instrumental in raising awareness of local

agriculture and its economic impact. He has been involved in the Farm to School Program, not only providing product, but a vested interest in how to make it bigger and better. His time and talents have served the Manatee County Farm Bureau Board of Directors. He also welcomes a variety of local organizations to his farms for farm tours, IFAS field days, research projects and field trips. He is involved in Farmer in the Classroom programs, community leadership events and local governmental issues. He supports local nonprofits that serve children and families.

Jones Potato Farm's vision for the future has been to produce more with less. By adhering to sustainable practices, the business's goals have paid off, drastically reducing its carbon footprint, conserving and improving the available natural resources of our state, providing a habitat for a variety of wildlife and ensuring a lasting community impact for years to come. It gives Jones a great sense of satisfaction that his farming operation is doing its part to feed a nation while making the least environmental impacts possible.

Multimedia



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Video

- [Jones Potato Farm \(YouTube\)](#)