

August 2006

Southern

FARMER

Young grower steps up

By PAM GOLDEN

HE'S young. He grows tobacco. And he has stepped up to lead the Florida Tobacco Growers Association.

Maybe Jackson Lord's youth is what's needed to infuse optimism in an industry short on such.

"I'm somewhat optimistic," Lord says. "I think it will get better. If it doesn't, we're in a good position to walk away from it."

Lord, 32, farms with his father, Sidney, near Live Oak, Fla. He was raised on that tobacco farm and came on full time after earning a bachelor's degree in finance. He's been around long enough to endure quota cuts and a quota buyout. He's survived cucumber mosaic virus, tomato spotted wilt virus, and now, sore shin, a disease similar to black shank, caused by a rhizoctonia strain.

He's watched the number of growers in the association dwindle to about 20 — and he's not sure he should count all of them separately.

"A lot of them farm together," he says.

But Jon Deas, the former president, isn't among them. He no longer grows tobacco. He and his son, Westley, added peanuts to their operation and dropped the tobacco crop as a

Key Points

- Florida Tobacco Growers Association has new president.
- Jackson Lord follows Jon Deas, who quit growing tobacco.
- Lord's first order of business is better contract prices.

result of low prices and heavy disease pressure.

Ultimately, Lord says, he figures he was named president "by default."

Ken Dasher thinks Lord's youth may be just what the organization — and the agricultural industry as a whole — needs. Dasher, who farms in the same county, has worked side by side with the Lords. He also works on behalf of the industry, serving on the Flue-Cured Tobacco Cooperative board. He's proud to see a young farmer doing the same.

"I like to see younger guys interested in our industry. For the future of domestic tobacco, these younger guys need to be involved," Dasher says. "My hat's off to Jackson for taking the leadership reins."

On the other hand, Dasher says, he worries the manufacturing side of the industry isn't focused on keeping domestically grown tobacco as a viable agricultural enterprise.

"I hope these companies will start paying a living wage to guys who keep growing to-



WORTHY MISSION: Jackson Lord, 32, was elected president of the Florida Tobacco Growers Association in February. His mission: to work for better prices for growers. "As it is, there's not much margin for error," Lord says.

bacco, especially these younger guys," Dasher says.

And that is Lord's focus for the association.

"We'd like to get a little better price," he says. "I don't

know how much the grower's association can impact price, but we're going to see what we can do."

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Corn can conquer drought

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Take a midseason peek at the '06 cotton crop

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NewsWatch Notes

Price rises for flue-cured

Growers who contracted with the Flue-Cured Tobacco Stabilization Corp. can expect to make 2 cents more a pound when they deliver eligible advance-grade tobacco to their marketing center.

"We have 16 different grades ... the minimum and maximum are 92 cents and \$1.62 per pound," says Stabilization CEO Arnold Hamm. Stabilization directors voted to raise the price per pound for eligible advance-grade tobacco in response to higher production costs.

"The action by the board was done to help keep tobacco farmers viable and keep them on the farm."

Golden Peanut has Valor

The Southern Peanut Farmers Federation and Valent gave Golden Peanut Co. the Valor Award at the Southern Peanut Growers Conference July 16-19.

Golden donated germplasm from its AgraTech line to the National Peanut Research Lab run by the USDA Agriculture Research Service in Dawson, Ga., to help launch a national breeding program.

"Establishing a new peanut breeding program is exciting, but it's a long process," says Randy Griggs, Alabama Peanut Producers Association executive director.

"The donation from Golden Peanut Co. allows us to start that program almost immediately," says Marshall Lamb, NPRL research leader. "It's a tremendous head start."

The Valor Award, sponsored by Valent, is given for meritorious service.

"The Valor Award is given to a person or an organization for stepping to the plate and doing something to benefit the peanut industry as a whole," Valent's John Altom says. "When Golden Peanut Co.'s leaders donated the breeding lines, they showed valor."



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