

# Market-savvy grower reaps what he sows

**R**ICHARD Atkinson works to do everything right for his family, his land and his business.

He wonders what the government next will decide he's doing wrong.

"They don't have any hands on; they don't know how it works," Atkinson says.

The second-generation farmer in Belvidere, Tenn., who started his row-crop operation with his brother and 150 acres is most noted for his business acumen. He markets 5,000 acres of corn, soybeans and wheat to the best advantage — and put in 325,000 bushels of storage to give him an edge with Tyson, a local buyer.

"Sometimes they have hiccups in their railroad, and we can get a little better price because we can get the corn to them quicker," Atkinson says. On-farm storage, he adds, is "a necessary evil."

Atkinson uses a Tennessee Extension program called Manage to develop his annual crop marketing plans. He nor-

## Key Points

- Richard Atkinson is the Tennessee Farmer of the Year.
- Business acumen keeps this farmer in business.
- Atkinson worries government regulation will choke farms.

mally prices about 50% of his expected production during the winter and spring prior to harvest. He says he can cover his production costs by locking in prices of \$4 per bushel for corn that yields 125 bushels per acre.

These days he farms with his son-in-law, Jimmy Latham, and his son, James, when he is home from Louisville, Ky., where he attends seminary at Boyce College.

They forward contract about half their crops, farm no-till and only use chemicals as needed at the minimum needed.

"When it costs \$20 an ounce and that ounce is for an acre and a half, it's going on an acre and a half," Atkinson says.

They pray for rain. They watch the markets closely. And they buy Group Risk Income Protection, or GRIP, insurance.

Potential changes in insurance, rumors of changes at the Food and Drug Administration that would bring more inspectors on-farm and proposals for increased regulation of chemical treatments push Atkinson to pay attention not only to market moves, but also to government oversight decisions.

"The chemical issues are going to be the big thing," Atkinson says. "If they start requiring us to go get a permit every time we treat, that's going to be a train wreck."

While the federal government decides how to monitor the dust coming from his combine, Atkinson will keep his farm on the fast track to economic success and environmental sustainability. That's what makes him the Tennessee Farmer of the Year in the 2009 Swisher Sweets/Sunbelt Expo Southeastern Farmer of the Year competition.



**TENNESSEE FARMER OF THE YEAR:** Perseverance pays off for Richard Atkinson, who was previously nominated for the Tennessee Farmer of the Year award before winning the title this year.

*AgriGold wishes to congratulate*

**Richard Atkinson**

Swisher Sweets/Sunbelt Expo

Tennessee Farmer of the Year 2009



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A small toast to the State Winners  
of the 2009 Swisher Sweets/Sunbelt Expo  
Southeastern Farmer of the Year

Doug Langley, Shelbyville, KY ■ Richard Atkinson, Belvidere, TN



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