



## Fred Wyatt believes in a hands-on farming operation. His hands, that is.

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You can find him sitting at the controls of a big, green eight row cotton harvester right now. He is harvesting his cotton, 5,000 acres of it.

This is a family farm, he will tell you. Don't worry about it being a big family farm, he and his son-in-law, Justin Waldroop, along with their wives, do the work.

There is one additional hired hand, Cole, Fred's three-year-old grandson, who can be found every weekend riding on the harvester with his granddad.

Just the fact the Wyatt's are harvesting such a large acreage of cotton this year and obtaining excellent yields is a dramatic success story in itself.

At one time, they farmed as much as 2,800 acres of cotton, Wyatt said. But that was before the boll weevil shut down dryland cotton farming throughout the southern plains.

"From 1996 until 2000, we didn't have any cotton,." Wyatt said. "The weevils wouldn't leave us enough cotton to make it worth harvesting. So we just quit growing it."

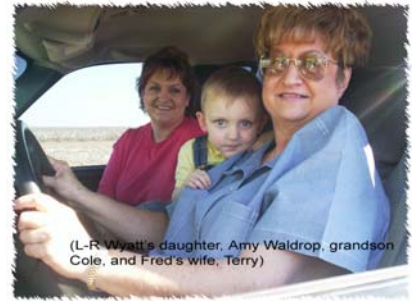
In the 1990's, farmers voted to start area-wide boll weevil eradication programs. To say the effort has been successful is an understatement. The program enabled farmers like Wyatt to get back to growing cotton.

"In 2000, we only had 35 acres of cotton," he said. "Each succeeding year we have increased our acreage until we are harvesting 5,000 acres. We are also happy that our yields have been really good. Our yields this year on dryland cotton have ranged from 1.5 bales per acre to 1.9."

The 2005 cotton year began with a few problems, Wyatt said. "Around 1,500 acres were hailed out last spring and we had to replant it."



Modern stacked gene cotton varieties with built-in resistance to herbicides and insects are helping Wyatt to plant more acres and get good yields, he said. "We planted most of our acres to DPL 2280," he said. "We also have some fields planted with Fibermax 960 and Stonville 5599."



(L-R Wyatt's daughter, Amy Waldrop, grandson Cole, and Fred's wife, Terry)

He not only likes cotton as a money crop, but also for rotating with wheat to clean up weeds that ordinarily grow in continuously grown wheat.

Wyatt uses both conventional tillage and no-till in his cotton farming. "We like no-till where we have blowing sand problems," he said.

Wyatt had some insect problems this year with stink bugs and fleahoppers. A bollworm problem was solved with stacked gene varieties containing Bollgard that combats the worms, he said.

Their cotton is ginned at the Tillman Producers Cooperative gin at Frederick and the Tri-County gin near Chattanooga, he said.

Wyatt is bullish on the modern technology for growing cotton. He also hopes the federal government will leave the current farm program alone and allow farmers to stay eligible for the programs that help them to realistically plan their farm operations each year.

Next spring, Wyatt says he will be back in the field driving a tractor with a 24 row planter, doing what he likes best, hands-on farming.

