

## Summer 2024 & the Start of Harvest Season



The last few months have been a whirlwind of Mother Nature's finest work. We finished harvesting pickles in July with great success. The drought hurt the crop, but what was under pivot irrigation did well. We started the summer with a devastating drought through all of June which turned to continuous rain in July. Hurricane Debby was an additional element in early August. What began as potentially the best tobacco crop we have ever grown, took the brunt of the storm. However, our team worked diligently to get as much of the crop saved as quickly as possible. To add to the chaos, we had a tobacco barn catch on fire during the middle of the hurricane. Thanks to our amazing team and five fire departments that came out in the middle of the night, no one was hurt and we had minimal losses. The corn harvest was what we expected—not great. The lack of rain during the most crucial time in the plant's growth contributed to this low-yielding year. Next in our harvest season is sweet potatoes and picking soybeans in October. This may sound like a bunch of complaining, but we have truly been blessed—everyone is safe, happy, and healthy.



## Farm Fun for Visitors

In July, we were delighted to host Oscar Salinas. Oscar's father, Carlos, is a regional director with the U.S. Soybean Export Council (USSEC), with whom Reggie works regularly. The Salinas family currently lives in Panama but has lived all over the world due to Carlos's job. We exposed Oscar to several aspects of the agricultural industry, including cropping tobacco, visiting a cotton gin and a sweet potato packing and warehouse facility, just to name a few.



## Garrett Turns 85!

On August 14th, we celebrated Garrett's 85th birthday! With festivities in both Topsail Island and Sampson County, he was celebrated all week long. We are truly so thankful and blessed to be able to spend as much time with him as possible. He shows no signs of slowing down his social calendar, either!



## Savannah's Scoop

Quarter three has passed in a blur! I'm continuously amazed by how hard our H2A employees work to assist in harvesting our crops. I have learned more about the tobacco harvesting process and have a new respect for each role—big and small. Dad and I are continuously working through our new dynamic as boss and employee while also being father and daughter. As I've said before, this is not always rainbows and sunshine, especially since this growing season has been especially difficult. I say this to be transparent, but also to bring light to our situation. We have improved our communication tremendously as I take on more responsibility at the farm. I am excited to announce I will officially begin the NC Tobacco Trust Fund Commission Agricultural Leadership Development Program (NCTTFC ALDP) in October along with 33 other agriculturalists from across the state. I am looking forward to expanding my network and continuously growing as an individual and leader to bring back further knowledge and goals to our operation. On a personal note, July was a big month for me. On July 20th, my boyfriend, Kyle Gentry, became my fiancé when he proposed at Topsail Island, and I said yes! We have been soaking up this engagement season and planning our March 2025 wedding. I even got Dad in on the excitement when we went wedding dress shopping! It has been a fun experience so far, and I'm continuously reminded of how amazing my community is.



## Third Quarter Travels



The middle of September was spent in Vietnam and India for Reggie as he traveled overseas to represent USSEC. The first of many meetings was the S.E. Asia U.S. Agricultural Cooperators Conference 2024 in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. This event, organized by USSEC, U.S. Grains Council, and U.S. Wheat Associates, took place from September 9th to 11th and was themed 'Leaders in Agriculture: Delivering Global Solutions Together.' The conference highlighted the U.S. as a leading provider of agricultural solutions for meeting food and feed ingredient needs and gave attendees insights on U.S. agricultural supply chains, covering farm operations, sustainability practices, and logistical considerations for exports to Southeast Asia. Reggie was invited to speak in a session with several other leaders on the topic of Delivering Global Agricultural Solutions.

The following day, the Regional Advisory Council Meeting SEC Asia was held, also in Ho Chi Minh City. In this meeting, attendees gathered to hear the fiscal year accomplishments of the Asia Soy Excellence Center (SEC) as well as global SEC program updates and plans. The SEC program was developed by USSEC to provide protein professionals in emerging markets with workforce development and professional training to ultimately create a cascade of demand for U.S. soy. The program currently operates in the Americas, Asia, India, Nigeria, and Middle East/North Africa.

The final meeting took place on September 16th in Mumbai, India, for the India SEC Regional Advisory Council/Global Advisory Panel Meeting. The importance of the SEC program globally as well as its success to be present in India was discussed by attendees. Like the meeting in Ho Chi Minh City, there were also discussions around the program's relevance, challenges/issues to come in the next 2-3 years, sustainability, and government outreach. As always, it was an honor for Reggie to represent USSEC and U.S. farmers on this latest trip before returning for harvest back home.

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