

## Dr. DeWitt T. Gooden III, Recipient of the 2013 Tobacco Science Research Conference Lifetime Achievement Award

*Laudatio to the award given by*

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DeWitt T. Gooden III grew up on a small tobacco farm near Elizabethtown in Bladen County, North Carolina. Dr. Gooden came up through the tobacco program at North Carolina State University, first as a county agent and then through two graduate degrees. While working on his Ph.D. degree, he managed the variety testing program that was to become the industry standard for cultivar evaluation, disease management and chemical constituents. His present appointment as an emeritus faculty at Clemson University still includes the management and programming of the South Carolina tobacco team.

Prior to coming to Clemson University, Dr. Gooden was employed at the University of Georgia and North Carolina State University in tobacco related positions as well as with Philip Morris where he served as an agronomist with responsibilities for work in the USSR and Nigeria. He brought to Clemson University a high level of agronomy expertise and a special knowledge of industry and international agriculture.

Dr. Gooden brought a rare combination of scientific curiosity and practical orientation to tobacco agronomy at Clemson. A review of his research reveals a wide range of publications from greenhouse management of water quality (bicarbonate issues), efficacy and residue management of growth regulators, to post harvest processing through curing energy management.

Regardless of the complexity of the project, his primary goal has been the improvement of tobacco production through a systems approach. All of his projects are designed to have implications for tobacco culture in the southeastern USA and improved prosperity for agribusiness.

When greenhouse tobacco seedling production was first introduced to South Carolina, it became apparent that something was drastically wrong in the coastal counties of South Carolina. Plants were stunted, chlorotic and grew very poorly. Dr. Gooden determined that bicarbonate levels from wells along the coast were too great to support plant growth in a hydroponic system.

He went on to develop a system for adding battery acid to counteract the bicarbonate levels, allowing the production of excellent quality seedlings. As an added benefit, the lower pH levels in the greenhouse float system altered root shape, root branching, and reduced *Pythium* disease without sacrificing transplant quality. The water-testing program at Clemson University today includes the bicarbonate testing and neutralization methods he developed.

Dr. Gooden's main strength has been his ability to coordinate, participate, and utilize the team approach in solving complex problems across different disciplines. His curing work is the perfect example.

Twenty percent of the cost of producing tobacco resides with the cost of curing fuel. Although he's admittedly not an engineer, Dr. Gooden understands systems management as a key to success. These approaches have led to a series

of studies where computer assisted damper controls; wall and pad insulation, burner efficiency testing, and heat leakage through seals and walls were all evaluated for their impact on propane curing efficiency.

The resulting management system has resulted in drastic documented reductions in propane use. Dr. Gooden's studies on curing efficiency have had a huge impact on producer profits and the viability of the South Carolina tobacco industry. Producers understand the impact of his recommendations and look to him for guidance in all aspects of production knowledge acquired through a lifetime of dedication to the industry and farmers.

The success of the tobacco industry rests on the quality and integrity of our leaf. With Dr. Gooden's experience, both within academics and industry, he uniquely understands the need for a uniform and high quality product.

Nearly a decade ago, he instituted a Quality Assurance Program for South Carolina Tobacco. Participating producers were required to certify that pesticides were applied at recommended rates, nitrogen fertilizers were applied within extension guidelines, growth regulators were applied within labeled rates, leaf was harvested a minimum of three times, and the product was free of non-tobacco contaminants. This was a forerunner of the U.S. Tobacco Good Agricultural Program's (GAP) becoming standard practice today.

Dr. Gooden's research record is strong for a faculty member with extension responsibility and his papers indicate a broad expertise and research program. He published extensively on the soil persistence of herbicides, as well as sucker control, planting date, nematode control, tobacco marketing, strip tillage, drip irrigation, seedling production, and disease management.

His warm and sincere personality has made him an ideal tobacco team leader, research participant, extension specialist, industry agronomist, university faculty and colleague.

For his tobacco knowledge, his ability to focus on serious tobacco production issues, his relentless perseverance, his contribution to the scientific literature, and most importantly, for his contribution to tobacco science and its economic impact to the tobacco industry, his achievements are most deserving of this 2013 TSRC Lifetime Achievement Award.

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