



Chad Davis Plows Forward the Cost Efficient Way



Chad Davis hails from a long line of farmers in Northwest Florida, but he's not looking back. Instead he's plowing forward to prepare for the next generation.

As the old adage goes, the first step is always the hardest. Getting your feet steady beneath you can be challenging in any career path, but fledgling farmers have a whole different set of financial and logistical challenges ahead of them. Considering the startup costs for a beginning farmer, it's not surprising the average age of new and beginning farmers has reached 46 years old, according to the 2017 USDA Census of Agriculture.

It was primarily this concern - being a young farmer with little credit to his name - that plagued Chad Davis as he pulled the plow in his first farming operation at the young age of 23.

Row Crop Family

Even though Chad was launching his own farming operation from scratch at that tender age, the hard work involved in farm life was certainly not a unique experience for him. As a young boy, Chad's family owned a dairy farm and row crops. Before Chad was of school age, the family sold the dairy and turned their full attention toward row crop

farming. This pursuit drastically impacted Chad and his future decisions.

"I've been out there ever since I was 8 years old... probably earlier than that," Chad recalls. "I grew up helping out where I could. And then when I turned 16 is when I really started getting into the farm. I got my license and was able to pull water wagons."

He pulled enough water wagons and spent ample time on the farm to know this was what he wanted to do for a career, and in 2013 Chad joined with his brother, Alan, to start their own farming operation. Davis Farms, based out of Graceville, Florida, is just shy of the Alabama line, where the two brothers are fourth generation cotton and peanut farmers. Chad acknowledges, "We've got enough acreage to keep us busy throughout the year for sure."

Down-home, hard working, and level headed, Chad comes across as a very cost efficient and common sense kind of guy. At the age of 30, he's husband to Somer and father to his firstborn son, Cooper, who just turned one.

Top left: Chad's view most often includes a field of peanuts. Top right: Chad, and son Cooper, with a peanut trailer in the background.

The Cost Efficient Way

The Davis brothers are now six years deep into their farming enterprise and Chad says, “Over the years, we’ve been trying to build up equipment the cost efficient way.” According to him, that has proven to be quite the challenge. “Starting out as a young farmer, with little credit to your name, most banks don’t want to loan out large sums of money because of the risks involved.”

“I shopped around a little bit,” he admits. But in the end, [Farm Credit of Northwest Florida](#) was the lender for him. “Farm Credit was familiar with working with young and beginning farmers which drew me to them. At Farm Credit, I just felt at home.”

So he financed his first [operating loan](#) with Farm Credit and from there he worked to build up equipment with them at a reasonable interest rate. “They work with you so much better than the regular ordinary bank. They empathize with farmers. They’ve been there. They’ve done it. Pretty much everyone there has grown up in an ag community,” maintains Chad, who recently joined the [Young, Beginning, and Small Farmer \(YBS\) Advisory Committee](#) which is made up of YBS farmers and ranchers who provide recommendations for the Associations outreach efforts to meet the needs of YBS farmers.

One of the many folks who were willing to work with him at Farm Credit was Rural Lending Expert, Logan Chappell. Logan says he first met Chad when he joined the Farm Credit team right



A new peanut picker funded by an equipment loan from Farm Credit.

after Hurricane Michael. “Chad stood out as an impressive young farmer among many in Jackson County who displayed camaraderie after such a devastating storm.”

Logan adds, “His cotton crop was a total loss due to the hurricane and only Chad’s peanuts could be harvested. He is a farmer who knows what a good size is for his operation and he’s been able to find that sweet spot where he doesn’t have to hire extra labor and excess equipment.”

The nature of ag lending is trust built on a relationship and the same holds true for Chad and Logan. “We have lunch together to discuss what he’s wanting to do in the future and what we need to be looking at for next year to assist him

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A new cotton picker, thanks to Chad's equipment loan with Farm Credit.

in meeting his operational goals. I come out and visit him at the farm and see how his crops are looking and check out his equipment,” says Logan.

Logan acknowledges he works hard to make the lending process as easy and time efficient on farmers as possible. “If it’s a busy time of year, I’ll go out to meet them in the field or at their farm because I know they have more important things to do than spend an hour driving back and forth to my office. So, I’ll drive out and they can sign the loan documents on the back of the tailgate.”

A Simple Process

Of the process to secure that first [operating loan](#), Chad reveals, “It was pretty cut and dry. A really easy process.”

The process was so easy, in fact, that he has returned to Farm Credit again and again. He’s taken out an operating loan each year, which provides him the freedom to do all his day to day work, including buying fuel and paying his help. “Being a farmer, there’s times where you might not want to use current cash and need some extra working capital to pay bills and the operating loan helps us do that at the end of the month,” Chad says. “It buys you some time until all your crops are harvested at the end of the year. That helps a lot.”

In addition to his operating loans, he has returned to Farm Credit for [equipment loans](#) as well. With the help of Farm Credit, he has been able to purchase a tractor, a six row planter, a six row basket cotton picker, and is currently in the process of purchasing two four row peanut pickers. “When you’re a farmer, if you don’t have the right equipment, a job that should take you a day, might take you three days,” he explains.

Logan agrees. “In these last two years, he’s really grown his operation a lot and taken it to the next level. They have been able to acquire some equipment that has allowed them to become almost fully independent. A lot of that is through direct loans via Farm Credit and taking advantage of USDA programs.”

According to Chad, financing at Farm Credit is simple. “At the beginning of each year, I sit down with Logan to discuss my operational goals for the year. If I need to purchase equipment that year, I communicate that early during the review process to get pre-approved in order to speed up the financing process when I find the equipment I need.” For him, it’s not just about the ability to purchase the equipment, but also a choice to work with someone who knows your situation and with whom you can relate.

“What made me happiest was the simplicity of being able to go up there and discuss looking at a peanut picker or cotton picker,” he says, “and their eagerness to work with you to get what you need in a timely manner. Like I said, they make you feel at home.”

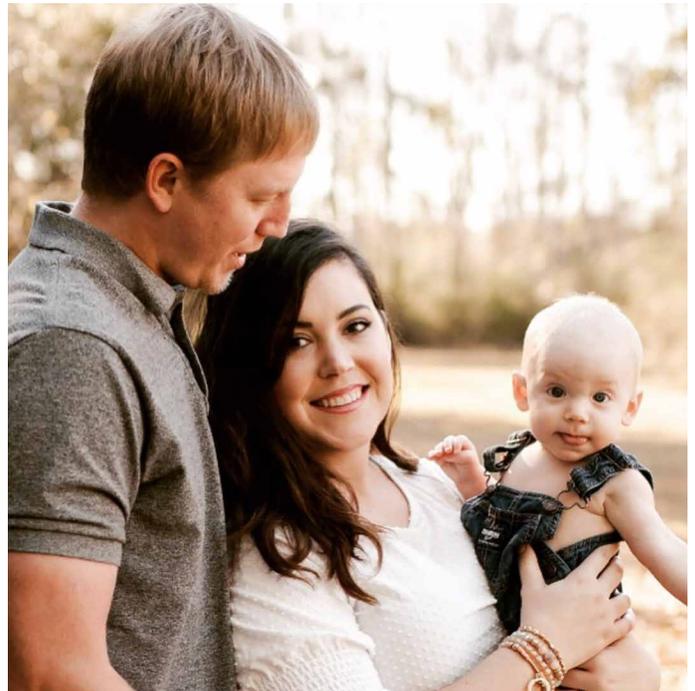
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Planning for the Future

Hailing from a family of five boys who all farm, Chad’s father comes from one of the largest farming families in Jackson County. Still Chad’s not looking behind to family tradition, but rather he’s planning ahead for the next generation in agriculture. Logan says he admires the job Chad and Somer are doing managing their time as a young family and representing young farmers in the area. Both as a community member and a farmer, Logan says, “I admire Chad’s commitment and dedication to producing wholesome food products and fiber.”

There aren’t a ton of young folks getting into farming these days, but Chad Davis is one of them. And he feels his experiences with Farm Credit are significant enough to sway anyone to use them as a lending option whether they are just starting out or have years of experience in agriculture. “Farm Credit is willing to work with young people like me trying to farm from scratch,” says the 30-year-old.

Who knows, perhaps twenty years from now, one-year-old Cooper will be the next generation of Davis’s to take on farming and will turn to Farm Credit to meet his rural lending needs as well.



The Davis Family; Chad, Somer and Cooper.

To find out more about how Farm Credit can help you achieve your operational goals, contact one of our experienced loan officers or visit our website at [GoRural.net](https://www.gorural.net) for answers to all of your financing needs. Because at Farm Credit of Northwest Florida we live up to our mission of “Helping Rural America Grow” and we are an AgVocator for everything that is important to you.