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## Farmers harvest peanuts on Labor Day



One of the many harvesting combines on Labor Day in Levy County is seen here. This one is being pulled by a John Deere Tractor. Some are self-propelled. Notice the bin of peanuts on top of the machine. That bin will be dumped into a cart, which take the peanuts to a semi-trailer and dumps them in through the open roof. The video 10-minute video below captures this 2017 action as well as some from 2011.

### Story, Photos and Video

By Jeff M. Hardison © Sept. 8, 2017 at 9:37 p.m.

**LEVY COUNTY** – Farmers are continuing to harvest peanuts in the Tri-County Area, and a set of them performed the labor required on Labor Day (Sept. 4) to fill semi-tractor trailer loads of peanuts in Levy County.

The mandatory, recommended and voluntary evacuation orders of Friday (Sept. 8) as a result of Hurricane Irma hitting Florida are going to delay the work, probably; but if gasoline and other resources are available, peanut harvesting might resume later next week.

In the meantime, though, reflecting back to the most recent holiday for some, there are those folks who worked on Labor Day.

Of course, Murray Tillis, his son Harold Tillis and Murray's nephew Jason Tillis were not the only farmers working on Labor Day – even at the acres and acres of fields just north of Levy County Road 347 and 100th Avenue Northwest.

See peanut farming video

<https://youtu.be/xGM9EqloDOA>

And so other farmers were out in the hot sun on Labor Day as is the case on occasion in Florida.

Weather is a factor for crops, and with peanuts the harvest time weather is as tricky as the growing time. Torrential rain from hurricanes are a bother on occasion. High wind at the wrong time can devastate corn crops as it blows down the stalks.

### **DIGGERS, COMBINES AND CARTS**

Peanuts are a vine above the ground with the nut in the ground. The diggers, which are also called inverters,

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often are guided by computerized programs using GPS signals from satellites. The mapping for the digging machines exists from the same blueprint that was used to plant the rows of peanut plants.

The inverters pull the plants up so that the sun can dry them before the combines collect the peanuts and return the vine remnants to the top of the soil.

The diggers travel down rows guided completely by satellites and programs. The operator of this type of tractor and digging machine does not steer it while it is going down the row. By being exact, the loss of peanuts is reduced in comparison to a farmer using line of sight to harvest row by row.

Sometime, farmers must guide the diggers and the combines on fields, however.

The big inverter machines have long curved metal teeth, which dig into the ground and rake out 12 rows at a time, combining them into three windrows. They are called windrows, because they are heaped for the wind and sun to help dry them.

After a period of drying on the field, an even larger combine goes over them and collects the vine and nuts, separating the peanuts from the vine and putting the harvested produce into a hopper at the top of the combine. The combines used on Labor Day are Amadas combines.

Some were pulled by John Deer tractors and some of those combines were self-propelled.

After a period of time, the hopper fills up with peanuts. Then it is dumped by the use of hydraulics on that machine to a large cart, which has its own driver and a tractor. The carts move much more quickly than the harvesting combines on the field.

These carts are pulled by tractors (John Deere was the brand in action viewed on Monday). The carts take the harvested peanuts to waiting semi-tractor trailers.

During the operation Monday (Sept. 4), there were four Sanchez Farm trailers parked and waiting for the first batches of peanuts.

These trailers take the harvested peanuts to places where hot air is blown across the peanuts to dry them and process them, before they are shipped to other interests.

It is ideal to let the peanuts dry on the field to a certain point before putting them on the trailers. This helps reduce the weight for transportation, as well as the cost of the fuel used to heat and dry the nuts.



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## **PEANUT FARMERS**

The peanut farmers invest money in plants, fertilizer, leasing land, and in paying wages of workers, and more.

Among the jobs of the farmer is to make sure the machines are maintained. These machines must be inspected each day before the operations begin. Every moving part must prove to be able to move correctly. As the peanuts dry during the day, combines may need adjustment, as a result of peanuts losing weight as the water evaporates.

To know that all of the machines are operating correctly, a member of the crew goes behind them and inspects what is on the ground. If there are peanuts left, something needs to be fixed.

Farmers have always needed to do more than just plant and harvest. And as technology and machinery have made methods for growing and harvesting more efficient, they have needed to have people to assure the mechanisms all work as they must as well as learn the new methods with machines.