

## About Us

On September 22, 1981 the state's first and only farm news program, "*This Week in Louisiana Agriculture*" signed on the air with CBS affiliate WAFB-TV 9 in Baton Rouge. It aired at 5:30am, immediately following the national anthem, which was preceded by the test pattern.

In a few months the 30-minute ag program, produced by the public relations department of the Louisiana Farm Bureau Federation, would be on three more stations, KNOE-TV 8 in Monroe, KALB-TV 5 in Alexandria and KATC-TV 3 in Lafayette. By 1984 Shreveport station KTAL-TV 6 picked up the program, followed by KPLC-TV 7 in 1986.

Today TWILA, the creation of former Louisiana Farm Bureau PR Director and TWILA Host Regnal Wallace, is seen on 17 broadcast and cable stations across Louisiana and nationally on RFD-TV on the Dish Network and Direct TV. The program is one of the longest-running television programs produced in Louisiana. 2011 marks TWILA's 30th anniversary.

"Our program has changed over the years but the mission has remained the same," said Michael Danna, host of TWILA. "We want viewers to know how important agriculture is in their daily lives. Even if you're not a farmer our program probably has something that will interest you."

Each week host Michael Danna, along with TWILA's team of producers and reporters, Avery Davidson, A.J. Sabine, Neil Melancon, Kristen Oaks, Hillary Whittaker and Valerie Foman travel the state telling farmers' stories.

In March of 2010 TWILA was honored with its first Telly Award® for its coverage of agricultural news. Its "This Week in Your Town" program from Dothan, AL, the self-proclaimed peanut capital of the world, was voted best in category by the Telly Awards® panel of judges.

Over the years the show's content has moved beyond just row crop production to include environmental, legislative and consumer issues. The program was cited recently by a member of the state's Senate Ag Committee as a "video lesson on the importance of agriculture."

Since 2003 the program has become international in scope. TWILA has reported on agriculture from Chile, Argentina, Brazil, China, Japan and Israel.

"In Japan they take rice almost as seriously as farmers from Crowley," said Neil Melancon, who in 2003 reported on trade issues from Tokyo. "They all worry about the same things, face the same challenges and generally have the same problems."

Danna agrees.

"However, farmers in the Gaza Strip have to worry about rocket and mortar attacks," he said. "In Louisiana our farmers fight bugs, but in Israel they fight bugs and bombs."

A.J. Sabine, who worked as a news photographer and crime reporter in Columbia, S.C., Lafayette, La. and in Baton Rouge, said fellow reporters were skeptical of his move to TWILA.

"I joked with my former news buddies that I went from covering cops to covering crops," Sabine laughed. "But having more time to shoot news stories, features and vignettes really lets me use all my creative skills. I know farm news isn't as exciting as corrupt politicians running from cameras, or watching criminals make the 'perp walk,' but farmscapes offer visuals that rival run and gun television. And farmers have some great stories."

"I've learned how important farming is," Sabine continued. "That's why I do my best to tell their stories accurately and fairly."