A solution to world’s dead zones could be growing on this Louisiana farm

November 21, 2017 2:45 PM Keith Brannon and Carolyn Scofield
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Meet brothers Mead and Marshall Hardwick whose family farm partnered with the Tulane Nitrogen Reduction Challenge to help finalists test their ideas on a 20,000-acre farm in northeast Louisiana this summer. Video by Carolyn Scofield and Keith Brannon.

The Tulane University Nitrogen Reduction Challenge is offering $1 million to the team with the best solution to reduce nitrogen runoff from farming, the culprit behind vast annual "dead zones" in major bodies of water like the Gulf of Mexico.

This summer, the challenge finalists — four teams from across the country — tested their ideas planting corn on 25 acres of a 20,000-acre farm in northeast Louisiana along the Mississippi River. Meet brothers Mead and Marshall Hardwick of the Hardwick Planting Co. whose family farm partnered with the challenge to help teams implement their innovations in a real-world setting.

Dedicated to conservation and sustainable practices in farming, the Hardwicks believe that farmers can help find workable solutions to reduce fertilizer runoff.

“The American farmer is the ultimate innovator,” Mead Hardwick said. “If you really boil it down to what this contest could be about, it’s throwing a pot of money out there to invite competition and spur innovation.”

The Tulane Nitrogen Reduction Challenge will award the $1 million grand prize Dec. 14.