

sweetpotato speak

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news about the nc sweetpotato industry



Proposed New Greenhouses at NC State for the Production of Certified Sweetpotato Plants

The Micropropagation & Respository Unit (MPRU) on the NC State University campus was developed by faculty in the NCSU Departments of Plant Pathology and Horticulture in the 1990's to produce pathogen-free "elite" sweetpotato plants from tissue culture. These elite plants must pass certification by the NC Crop Improvement Association (NCCIA) to be sold by the MPRU to the NC Certified Sweetpotato Seed Growers. The seed growers extensively increase production of certified plants (with further NCCIA inspections) to provide annual planting stock for sweetpotato growers statewide.

In its inaugural 1998/1999 season, the MPRU produced and distributed 2,490 elite certified sweetpotato plants to seed growers. The certified plants have been produced in available greenhouse space within the research greenhouse facilities located adjacent to the MPRU on the NCSU campus. Given the exponential growth of the NC sweetpotato industry in recent years, the number of certified sweetpotato plants produced and distributed to seed growers by the MPRU has more than tripled to 8,161 elite plants in the 2015/2016 season. Since the MPRU competes with NCSU researchers for greenhouse space among the existing campus complex, a total of only 6,500 sq. ft. of greenhouse space that meets NCCIA standards is available for production of certified sweetpotato plants in this facility. Three successive rounds of plants are tightly-packed into the available space each year, presenting constrained plant growth conditions and challenges for adequate pest control in close proximity to the other sections of the research greenhouses. Sweetpotato plant production from the MPRU has simply outgrown greenhouse capacity.

With the support of the NC Certified Sweetpotato Seed Growers and the NCSU College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, the Department of Plant Pathology submitted a proposal to Golden LEAF in Spring 2016 to construct and operate a greenhouse facility dedicated to the production of elite certified sweetpo-

tato plants for the North Carolina sweetpotato industry. Three greenhouses of 5,000 sq. ft. each were proposed to safeguard against individual greenhouse failure and allow production of multiple different sweetpotato cultivars among designated greenhouses. A consensus of NCSU faculty, college administration, and certified seed growers agreed that the proposed new greenhouse facility should be located on NCSU property and be operated and maintained under NCSU control. A tentative location for the new greenhouses within the NCSU Horticulture Field Labs has been identified and submitted for consideration by the NCSU Space Committee – the proposed location is within 0.5 miles of the MPRU.

An informal notification from Golden LEAF was received by NCSU on June 2 that would provide sufficient funds to construct two of the three proposed greenhouses – when confirmed this support would provide at least 10,000 sq feet of new greenhouse space dedicated to elite certified sweetpotato plant production from the MPRU. An ambitious goal would be to have the new greenhouses constructed and operational to house elite certified sweetpotato plants produced from the MPRU that would be ready for distribution to seed growers by Fall 2017. The NC Sweetpotato Seed Growers have also approved a proposed new MPRU sweetpotato plant production system starting the same year that the new greenhouses become operational. Each elite plant produced for seed growers would be derived from a single tissue culture plant (no longer from repeated cuttings of greenhouse 'mother' plants) – this new practice is being adopted by the National Clean Plant Network and provides optimal trueness-to-type in the plants derived directly from tissue culture. The upgrade to the elite sweetpotato production system in combination with the new greenhouses at NCSU that are dedicated to certified sweetpotato plant production would be fundamental to the growth and continued excellence of the sweetpotato industry that has made North Carolina #1 in the nation.

2015-2016 Associate Members

- 5 Girls Produce
Clinton, NC
- Arcola Hardwood Company
Warrenton, NC
- ASPEN Sales Group
Bedminster, NJ
- Atlantic Packaging
Wilmington, NC
- B&B Produce
Benson, NC
- Barfoots of Botley
West Sussex, UK
- BB & T Bank
Smithfield, NC
- BB Hobbs Company
Darlington, SC
- Benchmark Bldg. & Irrigation
Murfreesboro, NC
- Brandt Ag Products
Godwin, NC
- Carbon Cycle Energy, LLC
Boulder, CO
- Carolina Eastern-Benson
Benson, NC
- Carolina Farm Credit
Statesville, NC
- Carolina Innovative Food Ingredients
Nashville, NC
- Clinton Truck & Tractor Co.
Clinton, NC
- Coastal Agro Business
Greenville, NC
- Corey Produce
Robersonville, NC
- Crop Management Services
Princeton, NC
- D & S Farms
Atwater, CA
- Diversified Services
Jacksonville, IL
- Farm Fresh Produce
Faison, NC
- Farm Pak Products
Spring Hope, NC
- Frost, PLLC
Raleigh, NC
- Getsco
Middlesex, NC
- Godwin Produce Co., Inc.
Dunn, NC
- Global Minority Labor Solutions
Morrisville, NC
- Ham Produce Co.
Snow Hill, NC
- Manry-Rawls
Franklin, VA

CAPITOL BRIEFS

The General Assembly went into session on Monday April 25th. Capital City Strategies is involved with much of the major legislation including the budget, tax reform, the farm act, Certificate of Need (CON) and E-Verify.

Budget - The House and Senate have agreed to a \$22.225 billion limit, a 2.3% increase over 2015. They are currently working on a final compromise with teacher and state employee pay as a major difference. The Department of Agriculture will have very favorable revenue.

Tax Reform - The standard deduction has been increased to help those who earn less income. In 2017 the personal income tax rate will be roughly 5.5% and the corporate rate will be 4%.

Farm Act - There are twenty sections in the farm act including allowing Wildlife Management to cull feral swine from aircraft, allowing local preference in school food procurement, an extension of the sunset for constructing renewable fuel facilities, establishing a voluntary assessment on deer feed, excluding certain repairs from building permit requirements, clarifying eligibility for expanded gas products service to agriculture fund, and amending the income requirement for qualified farmers for sales tax exemption.

Certificate of Need - The Senate stripped a bill that named the Bobcat as the state cat and replaced it with language that would repeal CON, which would adversely affect rural hospitals and surgical care facilities.

E-Verify - House bill 1069, the 2016 NC Employee Protection Act, has moved from the House Committee on Regulatory Reform to the House Committee on Appropriations. The bill would exempt all agriculture and businesses employing less than five people from E-Verify.



Pictured left to right: Jeffery Lee, US Senator Richard Burr, US Senator Thom Tillis, Executive Director Kelly McIver, Brent Leggett and Rob Hill

The FY 17 Appropriations process continues to move forward in Congress. Both chambers have marked up a majority of the FY 17 spending bills and their intent is to complete as many of them prior to July 15 recess before the National Party Presidential conventions. Being that it is an election year, it appears Presidential politics will play into whether Congress is able to finish all the appropriations bills prior to the September 30, 2016 deadline.

NCSPC Hill visits February 29 - March 2, 2016

Several of your NCSPC board members and Executive Director Kelly McIver, along with representatives of Capital City Strategies, visited members of the North Carolina delegation earlier this year in Washington, D.C. Members of the Commission visited with the following Senators and Representatives: Senators Richard Burr and Thom Tillis, Representatives David Rouzer, Renee Ellmers, George Holding, Walter Jones and staff from Representatives GK Butterfield, David Price, and Richard Hudson. The Commission members discussed a variety of issues that included H2A related issues for immigration reform, exports and impact of the Affordable Health Care Act on NC agriculture (HR 1387, Sponsored by Renee Ellmers).

Acreage Reporting Compliance Program

What to expect in the field

Producers recognize the benefits of our organization and diligently report their acres, however a potential for errors always exists. Until the 2015 crop production year, the NCSPC did not have a viable mechanism in place to audit and ensure compliance across the state. We now do.

Using satellite imagery during the 2015 crop year, the NCSPC completed the first year of sweet potato acreage audits. First, sweet potato crop satellite imagery was employed to identify and locate the sweet potato fields within our state. Field agents then visited tracts listed as unreported sweet potato acreage to ascertain and physically verify the accuracy of the satellite imagery data. We also worked with personnel at each county's Farm Service Agency office to ensure that all clerical errors were identified and corrected. While the process is still

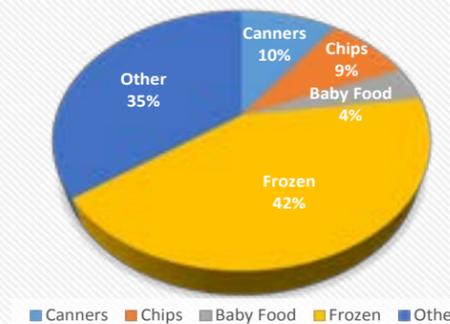
being refined, a number of non-reported or mis-reported acres were identified. The accuracy of acreage reporting is important and will have a lasting impact on the future of our industry. All sweet potato growers benefit from the marketing and research efforts of the Commission. Therefore, compliance agents will, again, be visiting sweet potato fields this year to verify reported acreage. Agent vehicles



will be clearly marked and we ask your cooperation with their quick visit to verify the data provided to us by USDA and collected satellite imagery. If you have any questions or concerns, please

feel free to contact our office at (919) 894-1067. It is important that all growers comply with the general statute in regards to sweet potato assessments; our continued compliance efforts will ensure that all do.

NC Marketing Report February 7, 2016 thru April 30, 2016



Total - 40 Pound Cartons 4,185,701

The FOB Prices ranges for this time are:

- US#1 \$15-\$17
- US #2 \$8 - \$10
- Jumbos \$8 - \$10
- US #1 Petite \$12 - \$14

The 2015 crop season total to date (August 16, 2015 thru April 30, 2016) is: 11,338,113 (40 pound cartons fresh market sweet potatoes)... this compares to 11,419,258 (40 pound cartons fresh market sweet potatoes) for the total to date last season of the 2014 crop.

* Source: NCDA & CS Market News



**Total Pounds in addition to
Fresh Market 76,209,317**

2015-2016 Associate Members

- McCain Foods
Lisle, IL
- McCall Farms/Bruce's Yams
Wilson, NC
- Ministry of Agriculture & Fisheries
Kingston, Jamaica
- Moody Dunbar
Dunn, NC
- Nash Produce
Nashville, NC
- Nature's Way Farms, Inc.
Faison, NC
- NC Certified SweetPotato Seed Growers Association, Inc.
Nashville, NC
- NC Yam Festival
Tabor City, NC
- Netafim
Fresno, CA
- Pratt Industries
Laurens, SC
- Quality Equipment LLC
Dunn, NC
- Russett House
Bedminster, NJ
- Sager Creek Vegetable Co.
Turkey, NC
- SAIL- Sea, Air, Integrated Logistics
Wilson, NC
- Scott Farms
Lucama, NC
- Snow Tractor & Equipment
Ayden, NC
- Southern Container
Wilson, NC
- Southern Produce
Faison, NC
- Spring Acres Sales Co.
Spring Hope, NC
- SSI Packaging Group
Richmond, VA
- Steele Plant Company
Gleason, TN
- Strickland Brothers Enterprise
Spring Hope, NC
- Techmark, Inc.
Lansing, MI

Assessment Policy of The North Carolina SweetPotato Commission, Inc.

In January 2016 a continuing referendum was conducted to allow sweet potato growers and producers to assess themselves an amount of \$15/acre. This assessment will be for six (6) years and the vote passed, unanimously. In accordance with the referendum results, the NC SweetPotato Commission will invoice all producers, based upon USDA crop certification data.

DEFINITIONS:

Producer - A producer is any individual, partnership, firm or corporation who is an owner, producer, handler, storer, processor, manager, or has a financial interest in one or more acres of sweet potatoes.

Operator - An operator is any individual, partnership, firm or corporation who is determined by the USDA Farm Service Agency as being in general control of the farming operation on the farm.

Duly Certified Agency - The North Carolina SweetPotato Commission, Inc.

Unharvested Acres - Rows and plants are intact with no sweet potato roots turned up.

POLICY:

1. Sweet potato producers shall certify all planted sweet potato acres (seed, commercial, charitable, livestock/wildlife or home usage) to the Farm Service Agency in the county in which the acreage is located.

2. Unless stated to the contrary at the time of certification, the operator of a farm shall be considered as the producer.

3. The final date for certification of sweet potato acreage is July 15 of each year.

4. **The North Carolina SweetPotato Commission shall send by mail to all known sweetpotato producers an Annual Assessment notice and a NCDA&CS form entitled Report of Commodity Assessment to be used by the producer to report the correct total acreage of sweet potatoes planted (1.0 acres or more). Invoicing shall occur on or before October 15 annually.

5. All assessments are due on November 15 of each year.

6. The producer shall remit to the NCDA&CS the proper amount of assessments due (total number of planted acres @ the rate of \$15.00

per acre) and the farm serial numbers and/or landlords using the NCDA&CS form. The check and form shall be mailed to:

NC Department of Agriculture & Consumer Service Division of
Marketing
Attn: Rachel Holly
PO Box 27647
Raleigh, NC 27611

7. Any producer who fails to pay assessments by January 1 of each year shall also pay a penalty of ten percent (10%) of the unpaid assessment, plus interest at the rate of one percent (1%) of the unpaid assessment balance for each month the assessment remains unpaid.

8. If an assessment remains unpaid 60 days after the due date of November 15, the North Carolina SweetPotato Commission shall take any action deemed appropriate by the Board of Directors to recover unpaid assessments and penalties and the reasonable costs of such action, including attorney and court fees.

9. There will be no refunds of assessments paid.

10. No exemption of assessments due will be granted to any producer receiving loss payments from Noninsured Assistance Program (Farm Service Agency NAP) and/or sweet potato Disaster Relief Programs.*

EXCEPTIONS:

A. Sweet potato plant beds, if certified as "seed".

B. Unharvested acreage will be exempt from assessments if ALL the following criteria are met.

1. The county in which the acreage is located has been declared a disaster by the Farm Service Agency.

2. A Failed Acreage Report (FSA Form 576) is filed by the NAPS deadline or November 1 whichever comes first.

3. Submit verification of unharvested acreage to the North Carolina SweetPotato Commission using the appropriate Farm Service Agency crop inspection forms with certification of the Farm Service Agency.

International Sweet Potato Week

Germany - Switzerland - Poland



International Sweet Potato Week took place this year from March 14th to 24th, 2016. mk², marketing representatives of North Carolina Sweet Potatoes in Germany, Switzerland and Poland promoted this unique campaign, initiated by the NCSPC and the American Sweet Potato Marketing Institute. For ten days, consumers learned about the characteristics of the healthy allrounder at retailers or via the newly launched social media accounts. Tasty recipes and helpful tips for cooking offered an incentive and showed how the orange root vegetable can be prepared.

In Germany and Poland, mk² created awareness for International Sweet Potato Week by sending out a press release to important trade press, importers and wholesalers. For retailers and wholesalers in Germany, mk² offered packages of promotional material including posters, recipe cards, brochures and displays to draw customer's attention to International Sweet Potato Week. Almost **200 packages** were distributed in Germany and Switzerland. In cooperation with a Polish partner agency, mk² negotiated with ALMA and Biedronka, two major players on the Polish market. 36 ALMA delicatessen markets and more than 2,500 Biedronka stores, the country's largest discounter, participated in the campaign.

Prior to International Sweet Potato Week, German and Polish NCSPC facebook pages were launched at the beginning of March ("Süßkartoffeln aus North Carolina" and "Slodkie Ziemniaki"). On the German facebook page, mk² conducted a sweepstake which was announced on flyers at the POS. To attract customers' attention, mk² also placed a short article on International Sweet Potato Week in weekly and daily German newspapers.

The overall feedback of International Sweet Potato Week was excellent. Germany's largest retailer Edeka sold 240 kg of sweet potatoes in one single store at one weekend. They positioned sweet potatoes very prominently right at the entrance of the hypermarket. Further large retail chains like Lidl, Swiss MIGROS and REWE group as well as wholesalers participated in the campaign. In Poland, ALMA sold 9,300 kg of sweet potatoes, which constitutes **a rise in sales of 34.7 %**. At Biedronka, **sales boosted by 25 %**. Polish customers were also very interested in our recipe cards. Both chains together distributed **235,000 recipe cards** and **3,000 POS signs** for International Sweet Potato Week. All participating retailers were very pleased with the results and are looking forward to repeating this activity next year.

Board of Directors

Rob Hill, PRESIDENT

Tull Hill Farms
Kinston, NC

**Brent Leggett, VICE
PRESIDENT**

Leggett Farming Partnership
Nashville, NC

**George Massengill
SECRETARY-TREASURER**

Hill Top Farms
Four Oaks, NC

Adam Wooten

Wayne E. Bailey Produce Co.
Chadbourn, NC

Jeffery Lee

Jeffery Lee Farms
Four Oaks, NC

Jim Jones

Jones Family Farms
Bailey, NC

Johnny Barnes

Barnes Farming Corp.
Spring Hope, NC

Keith Smith

KS Farms
Four Oaks, NC

Stacy Thomas

Ham Produce, Inc.
Snow Hill, NC

Thomas Joyner

Nash Produce
Nashville, NC

Scott Sullivan

Sullivan Farms, Inc.
Lucama, NC

Robert Boyette

Boyette Brothers Produce
Rock Ridge, NC

2015-2016 Associate Members

Timac Agro USA Inc.
Reading, PA

Triangle Insurance & Assoc.
Louisburg, NC

TRP CPAs, PLLC
Dunn, NC

Trust Freight Services
Jamaica, NY

Valent
Lumberton, NC

Vick Family Farm Partnership
Wilson, NC

Wada Farms Marketing
Raleigh, NC

Wayne E. Bailey Produce
Chadbourn, NC

Williamson Produce
Wilson, NC



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