

SWEET POTATO *Speak*

NEWS
ABOUT THE NC
SWEETPOTATO
INDUSTRY

ISSUE 01 | MARCH 2019

Branding North Carolina SweetPotatoes

We are moving forward with branding North Carolina sweetpotatoes. The NC Brand Task Force, chaired by Heather Barnes, Marketing Specialist from the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (NCDA&CS) has been meeting over the last year to develop this program.

Our last meeting, ended with draft legislation that will establish the program and give NCSPC the authority to oversee this project.

The Brand Task Force will continue to meet with the next focus on drafting policy. Brand policy will set quality standards for sweetpotatoes sold under the North Carolina brand, set licensing categories and fees, as well as establish a protocol for inspections and collecting program fees.

The North Carolina Brand Program will start with packers and expand over time to include retailers, brokers, processors and other segments of the industry. This program is **100%** voluntary and is of no

cost to the growers. However, growers may be required some additional record keeping or certifications. This program will not keep a packer from selling any sweetpotatoes, instead, it commands a premium for those that meet the quality standard.

Idaho Potatoes and Vidalia Onions have shown that a branded program is a proven method for marketing a crop: their methods have resulted in up to 25% mark-ups in price.



The faster our industry adopts our branded program, the quicker we will reach all segments of the industry until the end consumer is reached. Our goal is for the consumer to demand North Carolina sweetpotatoes from retailers. Just like Idaho and Vidalia, we are on our way to larger promotional programs to market and sell your sweetpotatoes! If the market demand is North Carolina, it can only mean a higher monetary increase for all!

Questions? Contact the NCSPC office and we'll be glad to share further detail.

The North Carolina SweetPotato Commission Inc. is a nonprofit corporation made up of over 400 sweet potato growers along with the packers, processors and business associates that support them. The sole purpose of the commission is to increase sweet potato consumption through education, promotional activities, research and honorable horticultural practices among its producers. Thanks to the six sweet potato farmers that chartered the commission in 1961, the commission has supported its growers and maintained North Carolina as the No. 1 sweet potato producing state in the United States since 1971.



2019

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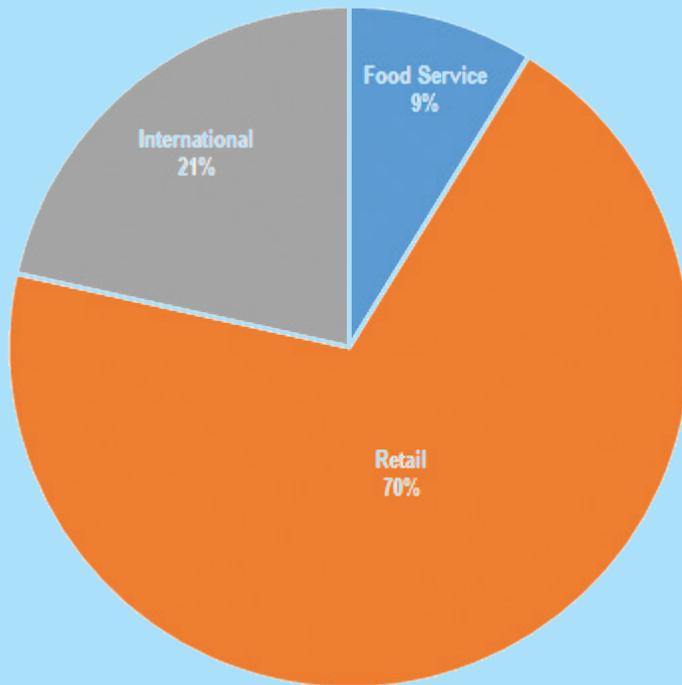
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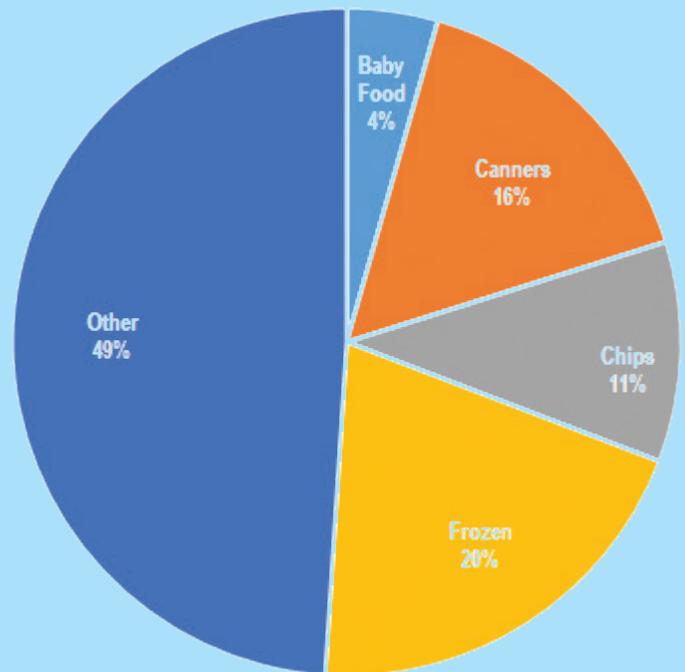
NC MARKETING REPORT

NOVEMBER 11, 2018 - FEBRUARY 02, 2019

During the listed time frame 3,815,619 - 40 pound cartons of fresh market sweetpotatoes were shipped.



During that same time period there was an additional 60,684,943 pounds of sweet potatoes sent to various processors the breakdown is as follows:



The F.O.B. price ranges for this time period are:

US # 1	\$15.00-\$17.00
US # 2	\$8.00-\$10.00
Jumbos	\$9.00-\$11.00
US # 1 Petites	\$10.00-\$14.00

The 2018 crop season total to date (August 19, 2018 thru February 02, 2019) is: 5,521,666 (40 pound cartons fresh market sweet potatoes)... this compares to 7,653,342 (40 pound cartons fresh market sweet potatoes) for the total to date last season of the 2017 crop.

*Source: NCD&CS **Market News**

For questions, comments, concerns or if you are willing to become a contributor, please contact Karrie Gonzalez, NCD&CS Market News Supervisor, at (919) 707-3121 or Karrie.Gonzalez@ncagr.gov



CAPITOL BRIEFS

Federal & State

North Carolina Report: John Cooper - Connect C

On February 11, Sonny Perdue, Secretary of Agriculture, held a Town Hall meeting in North Carolina, at the University of Mount Olive, with a packed house of farmers and other ag industry representatives. Secretary Perdue has stated he is aware that now is the most critical time for NC agriculture since 1975 with disaster funds essential for some farmers to remain in business. Our farmers in North Carolina are very much aware of the extreme hardships that the farming industry has faced in these past few months. The Secretary has requested that banks “hang in there” with the farmers. The Federal Disaster Program is expected to be released from the National USDA office soon.

USDA-NRCS is working on the storm damage affecting drainage. USDA Rural Development is working on infrastructure including broadband, water/waste, and community facilities. USDA is partnering with other entities to have the best opportunity to enhance rural prosperity. The Secretary encouraged local farmers to work with schools to ensure that all children benefit from the availability of nutritious food.

The Winter edition of “NC State” (the alumni magazine of NCSU) was almost entirely devoted to the sweet potato industry featuring local, national and international production and marketing. Thanks to NCSU researchers, I look forward to ordering sweetpotato fries at my favorite fast food restaurant in the not too distant future!

Federal Report: Brad Edwards - Jenkins Hill Consulting

H2A - Recap - Senators Tillis and Burr and Reps. Rouzer and Holding were instrumental in trying to include language last December in the end of the year budget deal to “temporary freeze” the Adverse Wage Rate Increase. Because this issue had jurisdiction with the Judiciary Committee, they were unsuccessful in getting full support of the Judiciary Committee members to do this. Clearly, there was no budget deal in the end and the government shut down on December 21, 2019. These members continue their outreach legislatively, but with a Democrat majority in the House it is unlikely any legislative measure will move forward, in addition 60 votes would be needed in the Senate and they lack those votes this Congress.

USDA (Ray Starling) continues the effort of canvassing election on the issue with the parties involved and is still hopeful after this canvassing is completed that Department of Labor will Propose a rule to freeze future H2A Adverse Wage increases. This process will take time to go through the rulemaking process.

Disaster - Congress continues to work on disaster relief from last year’s hurricanes, wild fires and flooding. Both House and Senate have passed similar legislation that would make available more funds for agriculture related commodities affected and waiting to be included in a legislative vehicle to go to POTUS for his signature.

Budget - Congress recently passed a Continuing Resolution (CR) for the remaining government funding bills through the end of this fiscal year (Sept. 30, 2019). In addition, Congress has included some funding for the southern border wall.

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The North Carolina SweetPotato Commission's partnership with French|West|Vaughan continues to be a sweet relationship. Over the last few months, FWV has continued to help keep North Carolina sweet potatoes on the tip of tongues everywhere!

Team FWV created a sizzle reel highlighting all of their activities and results to date that was unveiled in February, on our private Facebook group. Be sure to check it out, we have to admit, it's pretty sweet. The team was also in attendance at the annual meeting, learning firsthand about challenges and opportunities facing the industry.

North Carolina sweet potatoes were top of mind this holiday season thanks to a national shout out in American's No. 1 food lifestyle publication, Taste of Home. The article, [25 Most Essential Holiday](#)

[Recipes, Ranked](#), listed the North Carolina SweetPotato Commission's sweet potato pie as the No. 2 most essential holiday recipe for the 2018 season. Yum!

During this time we executed our first influencer campaign, we partnered with three healthy food influencers throughout December. Influencers developed original sweet potato recipes and shared the content on their social channels and blogs. Content was also shared on the commission's social channels and blog. Not only did the campaign prove successful as an upper funnel awareness tactic, it also accounted for our top social posts in the month of December! We encourage you to take a stab at whipping up these delicious recipes that are posted on our website: North Carolina spiralized sweet potato latkes, North Carolina sweet potato quiche and North Carolina sweet potato tater tots.

On the social side of things, FWV and your NCSPC staff recently participated in a Twitter chat hosted by registered dietitian, Leah McGrath of Ingles Markets, using the hashtag [#NCSweetPotatoSavvy](#). From both an engagement and relationship building engagement perspective the chat was a huge success, receiving more 1.8K impressions, and over 900K hashtag impressions! Plus, we are still seeing residual conversation on Twitter over one week later.

Work is also in full swing on the new and improved website, which is slated to launch in June. Don't forget to join the private Facebook group ([NCSPC Private Group](#)) for the latest industry updates!

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UPCOMING

- Feb. 25-27 Lobbying – Washington D.C.
- Feb. 26 Bi-Weekly Status w/ FWV PR
- Feb 27 Snow Hill Middle School Class Visit
- Feb 28 GAP Workshop – Hampton Inn, Benson, NC
- March 1 Sweetpotato Wine Dinner – University Club, Raleigh
- March 12 Bi-Weekly Status w/ FWV PR
- March 20 Legislative Ag Day – Raleigh, NC
- March 26 Bi-Weekly Status w/ FWV PR
- April 1 Flavors of Carolina
- April 1 Junior Chef Competition
- April 2 NC Ag Export Seminar - Concord, NC