

# SWEET POTATO *Speak*

NEWS  
ABOUT THE NC  
SWEETPOTATO  
INDUSTRY

ISSUE 03 | SEPT 2019



2019

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## NORTH CAROLINA SWEETPOTATOES SIMPLY THE BEST



The North Carolina SweetPotato Commission is committed to supporting its growers and increasing sweet-potato consumption through education, promotional activities, research and honorable horticultural practices among its producers. To be most effective at this, we take very seriously key points to earn and keep your trust through: open lines of communication, stewardship of your assessment dollars, serving you effectively, managing our time efficiently and valuing your input.

It is no secret that the last few years have been increasingly difficult on our

industry. Our commitment to you is to keep open lines of communication to help you understand situations as they arise, and be proactive in the attempt to find resolution. In addition to the quarterly newsletter, we have initiated a weekly e-news blast to disseminate industry happenings in a timely manner.

NCSPC members have access to production, administration, research and meeting information, as well as Nielson marketing data and the US Sweet Potato Council's Statistical Yearbook. All of this is housed on the

**Continued on page 8**

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

### North Carolina Report: John Cooper - Connect C

**The NC Farm Act of 2019 (S315)** has had tremendous discussion on its 26 provisions. However, the branding of sweetpotatoes was fully endorsed by all members in the support of marketing the North Carolina Sweetpotato domestically and internationally. This will be a volunteer program. The major issue for the Farm Act was the regulation of hemp products and the guidelines for smokable hemp. A new provision makes it a Class 2 misdemeanor to sell hemp or hemp products to people under the age of 18.

To date, there was no action taken in the General Assembly on the possible veto override of the budget. The veto measure remains on the calendar for each session but, until there is assurance of the votes needed for override, no vote will be called. Medicaid expansion remains the main point of contention.

**The Small Business Healthcare Act (S86)** passed in the General Assembly. The bill allows groupings of employers in the same trade or industry in an Association Health Plan (AHP). Employers with up to 50 workers could qualify, and there must be at least 500 employees combined to enter into an AHP. Both chambers had bipartisan support for the bill.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has confirmed that 2019 is the worst planting season on record. Heavy rainfall, flooding and wind have prevented over 19 million acres of crops from being planted in the United States and roughly 321,000

acres in North Carolina. The crops drastically affected in our State are wheat and cotton. Farmers are also having difficulty with marketing some of their crops due to the tariff situation with China.



### Federal Report: Brad Edwards - Jenkins Hill Consulting

**USDA/USTR Trade Assistance funding** - The Administration announced earlier this summer another round of trade assistance funding will be available for agricultural interests that have been impacted by current trade retaliatory measures by other countries.

The final eligibility rules for this round of funding are set to be announced in September.

**DoL H2A Modernization Proposed Rule** - The Department of Labor published a notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM) on July 26, 2019 and opened the docket for public comment for sixty days, until September 24<sup>th</sup>. This NPRM proposed rule changes in the areas of transportation, housing, eligibility, recruitment start date and application certification process and fees. It does not address the adverse wage rate increase at this time.



Congress continues to work the Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 appropriations spending bills and will target to wrap those spending bills up by the September 30, 2019 deadline to prevent a government shutdown.

The teams at **Connect C** and **Jenkins Hill** are proud to partner with the NCSweetPotato Commission as we obtain legislation and administrative action at the state and national level that is beneficial to the sweetpotato industry in North Carolina. We appreciate your business and look forward to continuing to serve you.

# MARKETING WORTH MENTIONING

Fall into harvest season with the North Carolina SweetPotato Commission and French|West|Vaughan!



The media relations team has been hard at work to keep the news buzzing about North Carolina's state vegetable. **INSIDER** included North Carolina sweetpotatoes in its article, "One Weird Thing You Never Knew About Your Home State," noting that North Carolina produces the most sweetpotatoes out of any state across the country. What they call "weird" is pretty cool to us!

Additionally, **Reader's Digest** featured North Carolina sweetpotatoes in its article, "**America the Tasty**," also noting that it is the No. 1 sweetpotato-producing state. Other outreach efforts included pitches focused on summer grilling recipes, alternative ways to keep cool in the kitchen while cooking sweetpotatoes – like using a microwave or stove top – and long lead outreach highlighting unique recipes ahead of holiday celebrations and gatherings. FWV is also in regular communication with writers interested in covering the NCSPC in future stories, including outlets like **Well + Good**.

FWV worked with the NCSPC to secure and facilitate the title sponsorship for the North Carolina Museum of History's "**History of the Harvest**" exhibit, where museum visitors and passersby alike have the opportunity to see sweetpotatoes growing throughout the summer, and even dig up a few to take home. An urban garden located in front of the museum in downtown Raleigh, the exhibit features a variety of crops vital to North Carolina's economy. The **NCSPC logo** is displayed prominently on signage throughout the exhibit, which opened in mid-

May when crops were planted and will run through October when they will be harvested. Be sure to stop by and take a look or visit the museum's website to see what events are taking place as part of the exhibit!

In September, FWV will travel to the Big Apple for the **Let's Eat Healthy Speed Pitching** event, where they will have the opportunity to show off North Carolina sweetpotatoes to food writers from top-tier national news outlets. Reporters will learn more about the orange superfood and all of its health benefits, as well as different ways to incorporate the veggie into meals and other recipes. We can't wait to show off the results from this event in our next newsletter!

On the social media side, FWV executed a Twitter chat with Registered Dietician, Leah McGrath to promote July Fourth sweetpotato recipes. The activation generated 173% more impressions than our last Twitter chat in February and resulted in 870K hashtag impressions for the hashtag **#ncsweetpotatosavvy**.

The FWV team provided on-site social media support at the **Touch-a-Tractor** event in Raleigh and a Durham Bulls baseball game, capturing engaging content to share on our social channels. We also conducted a summer influencer campaign and are eager to share recipes and content from our influencers in our next update.



And, lastly, FWV officially launched your new **ncsweetpotatoes.com** website! The team completed a full design refresh. With a primary focus on recipe awareness, the new look not only captures users' attention with the use of bold, bright graphics, but also streamlined the entire eye appealing presentation, making it easier to gather information. Keep watching for updates, there is plenty more to come!

# FWV

# INTERNATIONAL MARKETING

During June and July, MK2 continued working on the activities within the North Carolina SweetPotato Commission's international program. Activities included the launch & update of European websites, introducing new English and Italian websites, as well as updates to the Polish and Swedish versions. To view these news sites you may visit:

Poland Website: [www.slodkieziemniaki-usa.pl](http://www.slodkieziemniaki-usa.pl)

Sweden Website: [www.sotpotatis-usa.se](http://www.sotpotatis-usa.se)

International Website: [www.sweetpotatoes-usa.com](http://www.sweetpotatoes-usa.com)

Italy Website: [www.patatedolci-usa.it](http://www.patatedolci-usa.it)

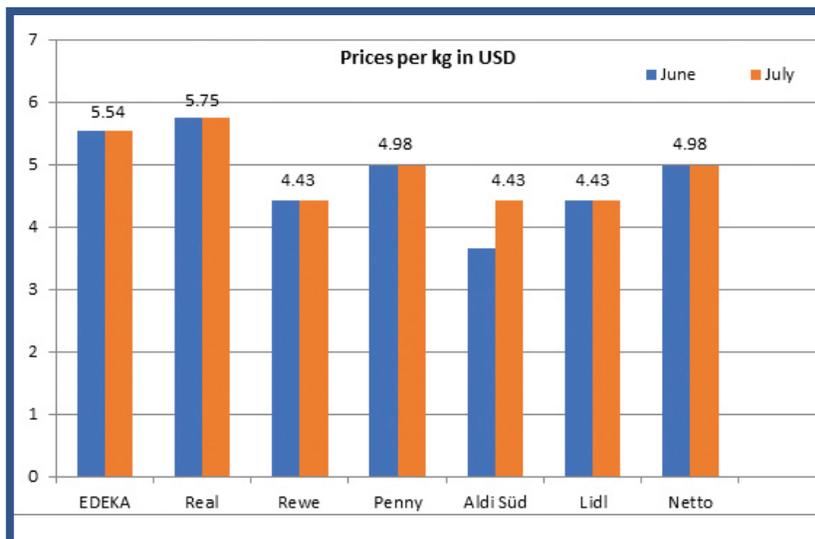
MK2 executed a photo shoot focusing on their latest recipe production: **"Healthy snacking with North Carolina sweetpotatoes."** Eight new recipes were photographed, resulting in nearly 90 photos. These photographs will begin appearing in the upcoming press mailing **"Healthy snacking without guilt."**



During June and July, MK2 continued to update Facebook and Instagram with two to three posts per week. They kept promoting our Facebook page with 150€ per month to incentivize our target audience to discover more about sweet potatoes and subsequently increase our page followers. The German Facebook page received 90,218 impressions and 3,260 page likes, while the Instagram account topped out at 36,668 impressions thus far, and 338 followers. In addition, Instagram and Facebook accounts were created for the Polish and Swedish markets. North Carolina sweetpotatoes are available in most UK retail outlets. Prices were much higher than in past seasons due to limited availability. However, consumers are willing to pay the higher price and so are the buyers of the leading retail chains.



On July 5<sup>th</sup> we carried out an exclusive event at the world-famous Three Chimney's restaurant on the Isle of Skye, Scotland. Seven top chefs and food journalists from the UK participated and tried a delightful sweetpotato course specially prepared for the occasion. The goal of this activity was to introduce North Carolina sweetpotatoes to culinary experts from across the UK, with the hope that they will continue to help raise awareness in the UK. Throughout the trip, participants were encouraged to document the event on their social media channels using the hashtag **#NCSweetPotatoes** and tagging the NCSPC's accounts. In total, posts achieved the equivalence of 12,600 USD media spend. Additionally, MK2 redesigned and reprinted 4,000 hard copies of two of our most successful international brochures to further promote sweetpotatoes at the point of sale, trade shows and media events.



# MARKETING THROUGH EDUCATION



NCDA and your NCSPC staff have been working to ensure North Carolina sweetpotatoes are being highlighted in the classroom. Through a partnership with Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS), the Commission worked with five teachers to create lesson plans for culinary arts classes. Each of the 15 lessons will take 2-3 days of classroom instruction and include hands-on activities. Lessons range from a “Top Chef” cooking challenge to learning about food safety on the farm.

FCS courses are offered in both middle and high school. Lesson plans will be available to teachers across the state to use starting fall of 2019, just in time for the new school year!

During the annual Career and Technical Education (CTE) conference in July, NCSPC's CoCo Daughtry and Heather Barnes, from NCDA&CS, presented a session for FCS teachers. The duo highlighted North Carolina sweetpotatoes and included presentations from the teachers who wrote the lessons to showcase their contributions to the project. Teachers are often responsible for writing their own lesson plans, so getting 15 fact-based lessons into schools is a **big win for North Carolina sweetpotatoes!**

Culinary arts lesson plans are not the only lesson plans we have created for schools. NCSPC has also been working with North Carolina Ag in the Classroom on lesson plans for K-12 focusing on National Common Core standards in the areas of English/Language Arts, Health, Nutrition, Math, Science and Social Studies.

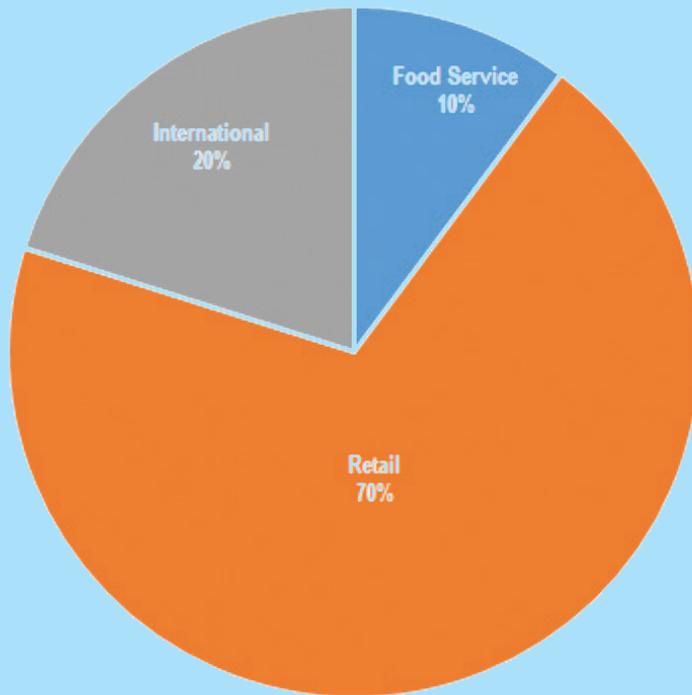
This project, Funded by a USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant, also includes the development of a North Carolina Ag Mag (an agriculture magazine for classroom use) specific to North Carolina sweetpotatoes.

These lessons will be available on both the NCSPC and NC Ag in the Classroom websites. In addition, our lesson plans will be submitted to the National Ag in the Classroom site for inclusion on their website, making them available to teachers and students across the country. That's one **HEALTHY** serving of **North Carolina sweetpotatoes!**

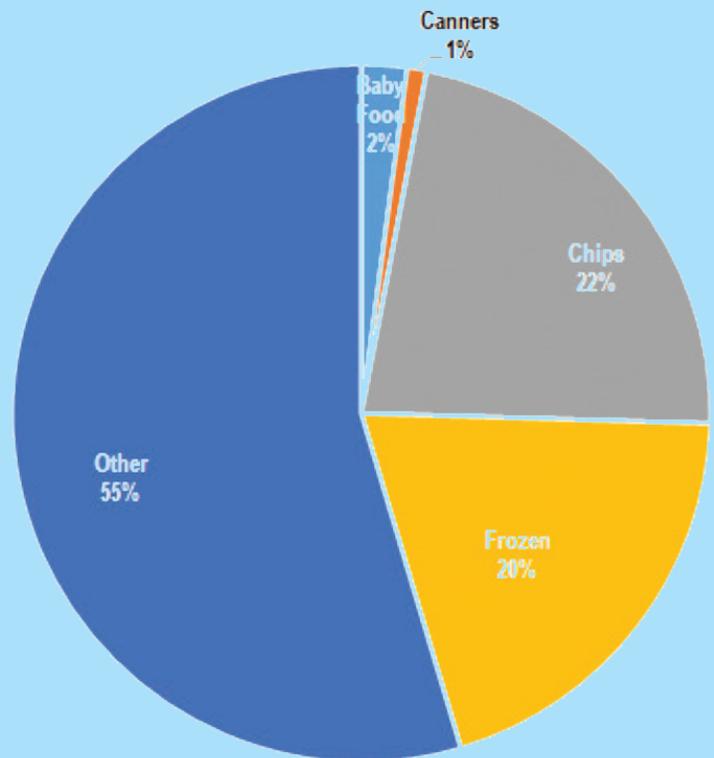
# NC MARKETING REPORT

May 05, 2019 - August 10, 2019

During the listed time frame 2,618,025 40 pound cartons of fresh market sweetpotatoes were shipped.



During that same time period there was an additional 21,995,762 pounds of sweetpotatoes sent to various processors the breakdown is as follows:



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

<b>US # 1</b>	<b>\$16.00-\$22.50</b>
<b>US # 2</b>	<b>\$ 9.00-\$14.00</b>
<b>Jumbos</b>	<b>\$10.00-\$15.00</b>
<b>US # 1 Petites</b>	<b>\$11.00-\$22.00</b>

The 2018 crop season total to date (August 19, 2018 thru August 10, 2019) is: 12,215,012 (40 pound cartons fresh market sweetpotatoes). This compares to 17,007,523 (40 pound cartons fresh market sweetpotatoes) 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](mailto:Karrie.Gonzalez@ncagr.gov).



**NCSU**



**FIELD  
DAY**

**OCTOBER 3, 2019**

## **Cunningham Research Station**

**200 Cunningham Rd.  
Kinston, NC 28501**

Topics include:

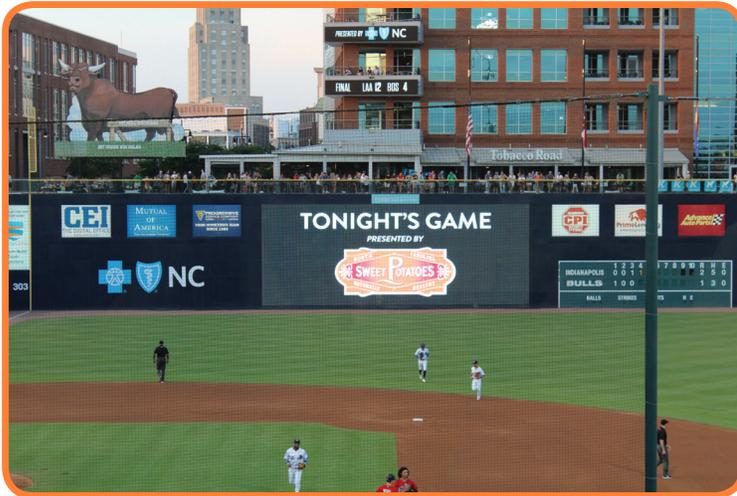
- Nematode control
- Herbicide resistance
- Lorsban alternatives
- Advanced clone selection
- Horizontal transplanter
- Drone applications
- Weed zapper

**REGISTRATION  
STARTS AT**

**3  
PM**



...Continued from cover



**Member Portal** for your use. If you haven't already, it would be worth the time to review the information available at your convenience. The Commission staff is ready to help you navigate your Member Portal or retrieve your login information, should you need assistance.



We understand, that in the midst of a demanding growing season, receiving your annual sweetpotato assessment invoice may create some additional stress. The sweetpotato assessment, which is

mandated by the general assembly, was initiated to provide funding for the Commission to promote NC sweetpotatoes both domestically and internationally, on your behalf, as well as help fund research that will protect sweetpotato crops and ward off any potential disasters. We continue to educate our growers regarding best practices and educational opportunities as they become available. Assessment dollars are used to create and carryout marketing initiatives to get the word out to the world that the North Carolina sweetpotato is the sweetpotato of choice! We take pride in keeping our growers in the forefront of every activity we engage in. How

it will benefit you - that is our **number one focus**. Our Board of Directors and many Committees have tremendous input on how the assessment funds are to be used. As most of them are growers, too, they have a vested interest in the activities we choose. Being good stewards of your money is a top priority in the ever changing economic climate.

The Commission is here to serve you. We value and encourage your input and want to know the challenges you face and how we can help address them. We have both state and legislative lobbyists who are more than willing to go to bat for you. By utilizing the great relationships with both the NC Department of Agriculture and NC State University and their county extension agents, our number one focus is to help you succeed.

As we enter another harvest, we want you to know that you are the driving factor for everything we do at the NCSPC. We are not in it for any fame of our own, but to make **North Carolina SweetPotatoes known worldwide for what they are... simply the best.**



# 2019-20 ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

**Arcola Hardwood Co., Inc.**

252-257-4484  
arcolalumbercoinc.@embarqmail.com

**B&B Produce**

919-894-1803  
bbproduce@hotmail.com

**Barfoots of Botley**

+44-1243-261211  
www.barfoots.com

**BB&T**

919-938-4768  
www.bbt.com

**Benchmark Buildings & Irrigation, Inc.**

252-398-3116  
www.bbandi.com

**Bennett International Transport**

252-206-5444  
www.bennettig.com

**Carolina Innovative Food Ingredients**

919-720-0291  
www.cifi1.com

**Clinton Truck & Tractor Co., Inc.**

910-592-4188  
www.clintontt.com

**Courtier Nordany Broker, Inc.**

506-473-9492  
www.nordany.com

**Farm Credit Associations of NC**

704-761-2897  
www.farmcreditofnc.com

**Farm Pak Products, Inc.**

252-459-3101  
www.farmpak.com

**Georgia Pacific**

404-652-2765  
www.gpcorrugated.com

**Ham Produce**

252-747-8200  
www.hamfarms.com

**Highland Fresh Technologies**

813-951-2912  
www.highlandfresh.net

**International Paper**

910-258-1522  
www.internationalpaper.com

**J.R. Simplot Company**

252-508-2677  
www.simplot.com

**Lancaster Farms LLC**

252-291-9278  
www.LancasterFarmsNC.com

**Manry Rawls**

757-562-6131  
www.manryrawls.com

**Marrone Bio Innovations, Inc.**

904-570-0041  
www.marronebio.com

**Moody Dunbar**

910-892-3175  
www.moodydunbar.com

**Nash Produce**

252-443-6011  
www.nashproduce.com

**Nature's Way Farms, Inc.**

910-594-0096  
www.nwfarms.net

**Pratt Industries**

704-878-6615  
www.prattindustries.com

**Roberson Produce Co.**

912-375-5760  
www.robersononion.com

**Robinson Fresh**

952-683-3266  
www.robinsonfresh.com

**S.A.I.L.**

**Sea Air Integrated Logistics**  
252-243-7245  
www.sail.li

**Scott Farms**

919-284-4030  
www.scottfarms.com

**Snow Tractor**

252-746-8200  
www.snowtractor.com

**Spraying Systems Co.**

800-95-SPRAY  
www.spray.com

**Spring Acres Sales Co.**

252-478-5127  
www.springacres.com

**Steele Plant Company LLC**

731-648-5476  
www.sweetpotatoplants.com

**Strickland Bros. Enterprises**

252-478-3058  
www.stricklandbros.com

**Trinity Frozen Foods**

910-991-5958  
www.trinityfrozenfoods.com

**TRP CPAs, PLLC**

910-891-1100  
www.trpcpa.com

**Vick Family Farms**

252-237-7313  
www.vickfamilyfarms.com

**Wada Farms Marketing**

919-578-4020  
www.wadafarms.com

**Wake Stone Corp - Hi-Cal AgLime**

843-241-5883  
www.wakestonecorp.com

**Weaver Fertilizer Co.**

336-661-1495  
www.weaverfertilizer.com

**Wilco Transportation Services, Inc.**

919-689-2500  
scott@wilcotrans.com



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# UPCOMING

- Sept. 9** | NCSU – All Carolina’s Meal
- Sept. 5-15** | Mountain State Fair
- Sept. 25** | Promotions Committee Meeting 2:00 PM
- Oct. 3** | **Sweetpotato Field Day**  
Cunningham Research Station  
Registration @3:00 PM
- Oct. 8** | BOD Meeting 6:00 PM
- Oct.17-27** | NC State Fair
- Oct. 30** | Ag Foundation Meeting
- Nov. 15** | Sweetpotato Day at Raleigh Farmers Market