

# SWEET POTATO *Speak*

NEWS  
ABOUT THE NC  
SWEETPOTATO  
INDUSTRY

ISSUE 02 | JUNE 2020

## SWEET RESULTS IN A CHALLENGING TIME

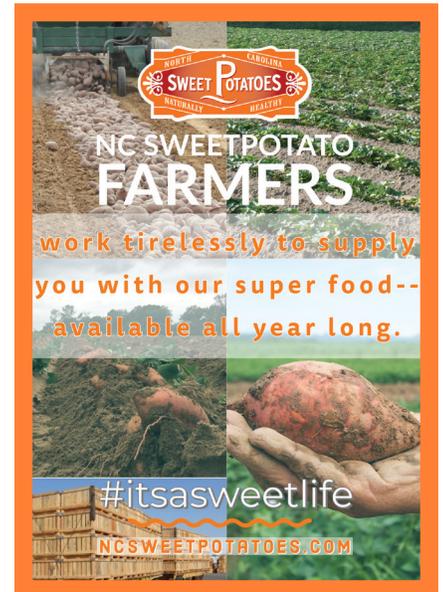


Sweet" Commodity Challenge. North Carolina students were asked to select their favorite sweetpotato recipe, put their own twist on the original and make it their own. Students were also asked to creatively "plate" their dish, photograph and post to our Facebook using the hashtags #StudentCookSweet #NCSPC #GottobeNC and #CTEforNC. The post receiving the most engagement (likes, shares, etc.) won an Amazon gift card. Students, parents and teachers, alike, enjoyed the contest. Our winner, from Manteo High School, emailed thanking NCSPC for the opportunity to have something creative to do while stuck at home; even if it was for school.

While most of the world recently went into seclusion as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, your NCSPC staff remained busy sharing our sweet message. With the mandated stay-at-home orders, we saw an opportunity to educate consumers about all things sweetpotato. Anticipating that more individuals would be accessing digital media during their time at home, we began a heavy social media push on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

To help those new to sweetpotatoes, an emphasis on proper storage and the ABCs of cooking sweetpotatoes was highlighted. Our digital channels were also utilized to offer several 'how to' and cooking videos, links to our recently updated curriculum for teachers and students learning from home, and a very special shout out to all of you who continued farming to feed our nation. Noticing increased traffic of on our social channels, we hosted a Facebook live featuring Registered Dietician, Sarah Schlichter, who showed viewers how to prepare sweetpotato meatballs.

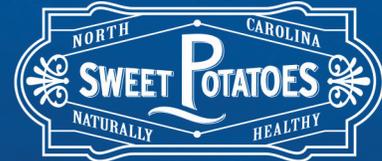
To keep this digital momentum going, we partnered with NC Department of Public Instruction to host a "Students Cook



Overall, during this stay-at-home period, we reached over 1,550,000 views on our social channels, over and above the campaigns conducted by our domestic and international marketing firms.

Stay tuned, sweet things are coming!

*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.*



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

In the past several months, the new coronavirus, COVID-19, has changed the lives of every American and more than 200 countries across the globe. Institutional supply chains have been disrupted as schools and other facilities closed, while consumer supply chains have been strained as the demand for groceries and food for individual families has increased greatly. Connect C has worked with state agencies and legislators to protect the sweet potato industry in every way possible, including working to protect the H2A program and the supply chains.

The General Assembly came back to Raleigh on April 28 for the short



session, but in the first week of the session they only considered bills related to COVID-19. The General Assembly passed two bills, one dealing with funding and one with policy. North Carolina is expected to receive approximately \$4 billion in federal dollars from the CARES Act passed by Congress. The funding legislation appropriated around \$1.5 billion of this federal money. These federal dollars went to small businesses, hospitals, local governments, and state agencies. Funding was also directed to COVID-19 research and testing and the stockpiling

of personal protective equipment. The policy bill addressed a wide variety of issues related to COVID-19, but its main purpose was to provide temporary regulatory flexibility by allowing agencies to extend deadlines and offer forgiveness for late payments or submission of documents. Both bills in this recovery package passed with unanimous support.

After passing these measures, the legislature returned home for two weeks to work on the rest of the COVID-19 relief package and other pending items. They returned the week of May 18 for the rest of the short session. During this time, the Farm Bill was up for discussion. The Farm Bill was introduced during the last long session, but a final vote has not been taken. We expect the portion of the bill related to branding of sweetpotatoes to remain intact. However, other parts of the bill, especially the provisions related to regulating hemp, will be debated before the final vote. At this time, the legislature is also deciding how to appropriate the rest of the federal dollars from the CARES Act and making additional policy changes related to COVID-19. The House and Senate are also working on a state budget. The state is potentially facing a \$4 billion dollar shortfall due to the virus outbreak, so the General Assembly has decided to abandon all attempts to override the veto on the last budget and instead come up with a new budget to address our new financial outlook.

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

Since early March, Congress, like the rest of the country has been facing the pandemic crisis and trying to address the many issues facing America since the stay at home orders were instituted.

Congress has passed major pieces of legislation, "3.5 stimulus," addressing some of the most pressing needs facing America that have included unemployment benefits, funding for small businesses, agriculture, hospitals, and states. As several states begin the phase in of re-opening, Congress is planning on another stimulus, "4.0," to address the ongoing impact of the pandemic crisis; the exact timing of the next stimulus is unknown, but likely prior to end of May.

In this proposed Stimulus, it's possible additional monies would be provided to several of the programs already funded, the SBA PPP program,



Agriculture and states and hospitals. Congress will possibly attempt to include further stimulus related funds; this depends on where the economy is at the time, they negotiate the next round of stimulus funding.

Senator Thom Tillis and his staff recently held a conference call with NC Sweet Potato Commission board members to discuss the impact of the pandemic on the industry and what he is working on to help the North Carolina sweet potato industry and agriculture.

**Continued on page 3**

## Continued from page 2

Administration officials have indicated they will begin trade talks with United Kingdom shortly, since they were postponed in March due to the pandemic.

Congress is likely to begin the FY (Fiscal Year) 2021 appropriations process in June and also address some National Security related issues.

The teams at Connect C and Jenkins Hill Consulting are proud to partner with the North Carolina SweetPotato 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.

# FULL SPECTRUM CROP NUTRITION SINCE 1925

Rainbow Plant Food is an ammoniated fertilizer. Precise amounts of primary, secondary and micronutrients are combined into every single granule. With Rainbow, your sweet potatoes get the balanced nutrition they need to provide maximum quality and weight, while achieving stronger yields.



Discover what a full spectrum of nutrients can do for your sweet potatoes.

[RainbowPlantFoodProducts.com](http://RainbowPlantFoodProducts.com)



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**Nutrien**



We would like to remind you to make sure we have your email address; many have been sent regarding assistance during this time of COVID-19 and we want to ensure you are getting information from us in a timely fashion. To be added to our e-mail lists, please call the office, (919) 894-1067 or email [coco@ncsweetpotatoes.com](mailto:coco@ncsweetpotatoes.com).

By now, some of you are finding email from NCSPC either in your junk mail or spam; and for that we apologize!

We have determined the cause, but are not sure of the remedy yet. During this time of COVID-19, we are sending out mass update emails; at the beginning, nearly daily. This has caused many internet providers to look at any email with the extension [@ncsweetpotatoes.com](mailto:@ncsweetpotatoes.com) as suspicious in nature and automatically moving them to junk/spam folders. We ask you all to continue to check your spam/junk folders and move the content to your inboxes. Hopefully this will alert future emails from us to be delivered direct to your inbox. In the interim, please check your alternate folders.



The search for a new Executive Director is underway. We have hired an outside facilitator to assist us with this search. A search committee is in place, ads have been posted in the trades and resumes are coming in. We are seeing several promising applicants thus far. Over the next few months, screenings and interviews will take place. We are working our way through this process diligently, to obtain the perfect fit to lead our industry into the next chapter.

During this time, your staff at the Commission office is continuing to work on your behalf and is there to serve you. Should you have questions, need assistance or information, please call the office. We are here for you!

# INTERNATIONAL MARKETING



## 2020 INTERNATIONAL SWEET POTATO WEEK

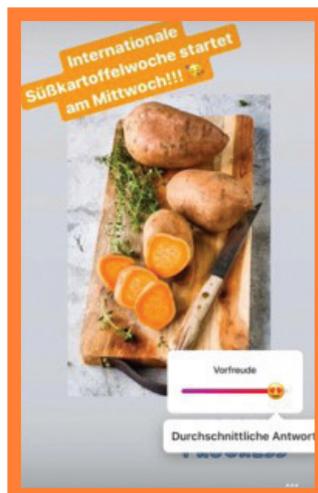
was an incredible success! In the retail trade sector mk<sup>2</sup> managed to arrange major cooperation with the two leading discounters in the European market – ALDI and LIDL.

Due to the realization of contactless distribution of information material in ALDI and LIDL Poland mk<sup>2</sup> developed a solution that did not involve promotions with personal contact, but still generated strong impact and reach.

In Germany, the ISPW 2020 took place in more than 1,900 stores of Germany's #1 Discounter, ALDI. mk<sup>2</sup> was able to place NCSP branded flyer and recipe cards directly inside the sweetpotato boxes during the Sweet Potato Week starting April 1<sup>st</sup>. In total, the material was added to the remarkable number of 33,800 boxes of NC sweetpotatoes that were sold during the ISPW. That means mk<sup>2</sup> moved 202.8 tons featuring information about the NCSP heritage, quality, health benefits and creative recipe ideas. That provided for impulse purchases and gave the ISPW a huge additional impact. In Poland, we started a partnership with the top competitor of Aldi and second strongest European discounter, Lidl. For this promotion, flyer and recipe cards were translated into Polish and placed directly inside the sweet potato boxes. Materials were added to 9,700 boxes of NC sweetpotatoes that were sold resulting in the movement of another 58.2 tons of sweetpotatoes.

Luckily we were able to arrange tastings in Scandinavia. In Finland, we cooperated with the leading retailer Kesko, appearing in over 1,800 stores in Northern Europe. Samplings and tastings took place in stores located in the larger cities. By choosing highly frequented flagship markets in these urban areas, North Carolina sweetpotatoes gained high visibility and increased consumer attention. On average, more than 120 direct contacts per day were made and additional 40 lbs of NC sweetpotatoes were sold daily, throughout the week. Sales showed that also in the weeks following the promotion, sales volume remained higher than average. This promotion was cut short due to the virus outbreak with all stores providing assurances that the tastings will be made up as soon as the situation has calmed down.

The whole ISPW was advertised and pushed by a widespread social media campaign to generate additional reach and inform potential customers about the upcoming event. Entertaining and informative postings and stories on Instagram and Facebook featured the ISPW for the followers and provided information about North Carolina Sweet Potatoes and its advantages. An additional raffle on both channels created a high impact on the NCSP followers and fans.



In advance of the ISPW 2020 a trade press release generated editorial coverage. The publications on trade media websites totaled over 120,000 unique users. Since these were editorials, the articles have higher credibility. We also received a tweet from FAS Europe featuring ISPW!



# DOMESTIC MARKETING

## SAFE AT HOME WITH THE NORTH CAROLINA SWEETPOTATO COMMISSION AND FRENCHWESTVAUGHAN

Over the past few months, the FWV team has been working hard to promote North Carolina sweetpotatoes as the perfect superfood for stay-at-home menus. The media relations team worked with local North Carolina chefs and influencers from previous engagements to develop the “NCSPC’s Guide to Successful #StayHome Snacking,” which highlights tips, tricks and recipes for cooking delicious sweetpotato treats from the comfort of your home, and they have been sharing it with national consumer media outlets.

The team proactively developed talking points for NCSPC members to utilize when posed questions surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic. This information is located in your Member Portal under documents, Crisis - Talking Points and Guidance. FWV also hosted a Virtual Crisis Communications Training workshop, teaching NCSPC members how to successfully interact with media and other stakeholders in the event of a crisis.



On the creative front, FWV wrapped up work editing photo and video content featuring Chef Mary Jayne Wilson of Amélie’s French Bakery & Café in Charlotte. Check out the NCSPC’s Instagram and Facebook pages to see content from the shoot, or head to the NCSPC website to try your hand at her Savory Sweetpotato Bacon Galette, Sweetpotato Pecan Pie or Sweetpotato Lentil & Kale Salad recipes. The creative team

also kicked off development of ads for the upcoming digital advertising campaign, which will reach users searching for similar content wherever they’re browsing on-line. The ads will show off the traits of sweetpotatoes that make them the perfect ingredient to liven up at-home cooking. Keep an eye out - you may just see one of the ads pop up when you’re surfing the web! Finally, the team continues to update and optimize the website to ensure a positive user experience, including the addition of a search function to the Industry pages and a downloadable recipe book featuring healthy sweetpotato recipes.



In social media news, FWV wrapped up the NCSPC’s spring influencer campaign highlighting light and easy sweetpotato recipes for warm spring days, resulting in more than 13K impressions. FWV also kicked off the NCSPC’s summer influencer campaign, which will showcase all the reasons sweetpotatoes are the “orange superfood.” Finally, the NCSPC’s spring Pinterest campaign concluded, featuring delicious North Carolina sweetpotato recipes perfect for spring and summer. The campaign performed exceptionally well, resulting in nearly 3M impressions! Looking ahead, the social media team is cooking up an exciting new influencer campaign focusing on the cooking-at-home trend with Fit Foodie Finds.

While it certainly wasn’t the spring we expected, we are proud of our efforts highlighting the versatility of everyone’s favorite vegetable, and the NCSPC and FWV are ready to watch our marketing results heat up this summer!



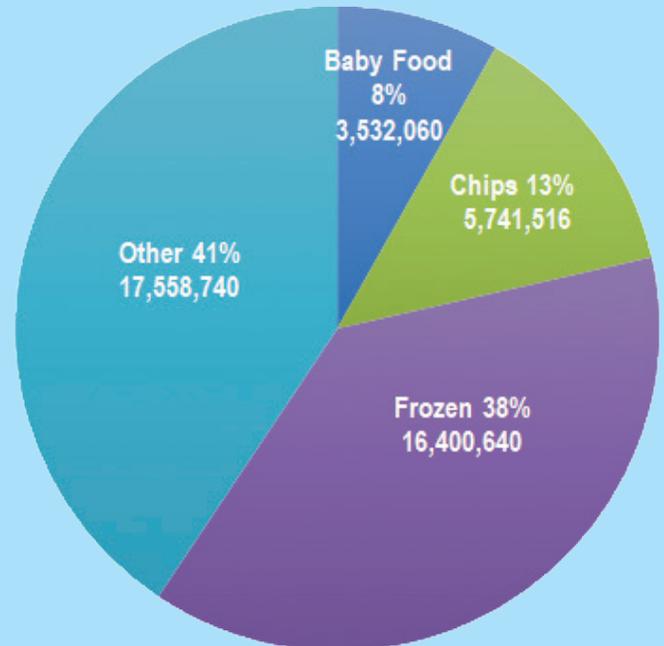
# NC MARKETING REPORT

February 09, 2020 - May 02, 2020

During the listed time frame 3,338,125 **40 pound cartons** of fresh market sweetpotatoes were shipped.



During that same time period there was an additional 43,232,956 **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>\$14.00-\$17.00</b>
<b>US # 2</b>	<b>\$8.00-\$13.00</b>
<b>Jumbos</b>	<b>\$9.00-\$12.00</b>
<b>US # 1 Petites</b>	<b>\$10.00-\$15.00</b>

The 2019 crop season total to date (August 11, 2019 - May 02, 2020) is: 9,316,179 (40-pound cartons fresh market sweetpotatoes). This compares to 9,596,987 (40-pound cartons fresh market sweetpotatoes) for the **total to date last season of the 2018 crop.** **Our 2019 crop started strong - only you can keep it that way!**

\*Source: NCDA&CS **Market News**

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

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bbproduce@hotmail.com

**Barfoots of Botley**

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www.barfoots.com

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www.bbt.com

**Benchmark Buildings & Irrigation, Inc.**

252-398-3116  
www.bbandi.com

**Bennett International Transport**

252-206-5444  
www.bennettig.com

**Brandt**

910-990-2011  
www.brandt.com

**Carolina Eastern - Benson**

919-894-2922  
www.carolina-eastern.com

**Carolina Innovative Food Ingredients**

252-462-1551  
www.cifi1.com

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

910-592-4188  
www.clintontt.com

**Courtier Nordany Broker, Inc.**

506-473-9492  
www.nordany.com

**Dunbar Foods Corporation**

910-892-3175  
www.moodydunbar.com

**Farm Credit Associations of NC**

704-761-2897  
www.farmcreditofnc.com

**Farm Fresh Produce**

800-606-9267  
www.farm-fresh-produce.com

**Farm Pak Products, Inc.**

252-459-3101  
www.farmpak.com

**Frost PLLC**

919-782-8410  
www.frostpllc.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**

919-396-5617  
www.LancasterFarmsNC.com

**Manry Rawls**

757-562-6131  
www.manryrawls.com

**Marrone Bio Innovations, Inc.**

904-570-0041  
www.marronebio.com

**Mcall Farms/Bruce's Yams**

843-662-2223  
www.yamright.com

**Nash Produce**

252-443-6011  
www.nashproduce.com

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

910-594-0096  
www.nwfarms.net

**Pierce Soil & Crop Consulting**

919-920-0238  
dpierceriver@gmail.com

**Pratt Industries**

704-878-6615  
www.prattindustries.com

**Roberson Produce Co.**

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**Robinson Fresh**

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

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**Snow Tractor**

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**Spraying Systems Co.**

800-95-SPRAY  
www.spray.com

**Spring Acres Sales**

252-478-5127  
www.springacres.com

**Steele Plant Company LLC**

731-648-5476  
www.sweetpotatoplants.com

**Strickland Bros. Enterprises**

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www.stricklandbros.com

**Triangle Risk Advisors**

919-496-2239  
www.triangleinsurance.com

**TriEst Ag Group /TriEst Irrigation**

843-944-0596  
www.triestirrigation.com

**Trinity Frozen Foods**

855-543-7437  
www.trinityfrozenfoods.com

**TRP CPAs, PLLC**

910-891-1100  
www.trpcpa.com

**UFP Industries**

704-855-1600  
www.ufpi.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.**

919-580-8642  
www.weaverfertilizer.com

**Wilco Transportation Services, Inc.**

919-689-2500  
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[www.ncsweetpotatoes.com](http://www.ncsweetpotatoes.com)

A graphic featuring the word "UPCOMING" in large, white, bold, sans-serif capital letters. The text is centered and overlaid on a background of various blue squares and rectangles of different sizes and shades, creating a modern, abstract design.

# UPCOMING

- |                  |                                    |
|------------------|------------------------------------|
| <b>June 9</b>    | Board of Directors Meeting 6:00 PM |
| <b>July 4</b>    | Independence Day - Office Closed   |
| <b>July 29</b>   | Promotions Meeting 2:00 PM         |
| <b>August 11</b> | Board of Directors Meeting 6:00 PM |