

NATIONAL SWEET POTATO NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2007

The President's Message

by George Wooten, NC

Greetings from North Carolina! We started our planting in the state in late April and early May and we have had to deal with very difficult weather ranging from dry to windy, but God is good. From what I have heard, from different areas of the country, it seems like planting is under way and on schedule.

I officially started at Wayne E. Bailey Produce Company in 1977, which gives me some tenure, but not as much as some of my colleagues. The way I see it, we are in some of the most exciting sweet potato times in history. We have all
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2008 US Sweet Potato Council Annual Meeting January 20-22, 2008

The Grove Park Inn Resort & Spa, Asheville, NC

by Sue Johnson-Langdon

Executive Director, NC SweetPotato Commission



How do you build a sweet potato mountain that rises above all other vegetable mountains?

By climbing many, many small and often times large, seemingly insurmountable hills, of course. But once we have deposited the last bucket of promotion, education, research and legislation on our mountain, the view from the top is breathtaking!

North Carolina has made lots of preparations for you to enjoy not only all the latest from the world of sweet potatoes but also the scenic Great Smoky Mountains. The tentative program and registration
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Council's Distinguished Service Award Goes to Norman Brown



Charles Walker (left), Executive Secretary of THE UNITED STATES SWEET POTATO COUNCIL, presents the Council's Distinguished Service Award to Norman Brown of Bruce Foods. The ceremony took place at the annual Convention back in January in San Francisco, CA.

THE UNITED STATES SWEET POTATO COUNCIL presented its 2007 Distinguished Service Award to Norman Brown, General Manager of the Wilson, NC division of Bruce Foods. According to Charles Walker, Executive Secretary of the Council, and who presented award to Norman, "Norman Brown is 'sweet potatoes'".

Norm has had a long association with our Council, and currently serves as Processor Member on the Board of Directors of the Council and also serves on the Board of Direc-
(continued on Page 2)

Mid-Year Board Meeting in Washington, DC

The 2007 mid-year Board Meeting of THE UNITED STATES SWEET POTATO COUNCIL will be held in Washington, DC, at the following time and location: 2:00 PM to 4:00 PM; 6/25/07; Main Conference Room of the Law Firm of O'Connor & Hannan, 1666 K Street, NW, Suite 500 (Fifth Floor), Washington, DC 20006; (202) 887-1461.

Meetings with USDA are already scheduled and plans are underway to schedule meetings with selected offices of elected officials on Capitol
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The 2009 Convention

Although a date has not been set, Council Vice President, Mark Fields, has announced that the 2009 Convention will be held at the Hilton Capital Center Hotel in Baton Rouge, LA.

Table 1. USDA Sweet Potato Purchases, by type, by year¹, FY 1997–2006 & FY2007 to date.

Type	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007 ²
P O U N D S											
Canned	7,420,394	7,469,922	6,765,820	5,712,620	12,345,784	13,282,047	1,652,400	5,987,839	19,119,354	20,240,935	1,508,811
Frozen	871,300		633,598	356,400	237,600	712,800		316,800	831,600	554,400	
Fresh						6,164,000			3,682,200	320,000	160,000
Total	8,291,694	7,496,922	7,399,418	6,069,020	12,583,384	20,158,847	1,652,400	6,304,639	23,633,154	21,115,335	1,668,811
D O L L A R S											
Canned	3,120,645	3,357,840	3,131,046	2,875,587	7,266,110	8,014,950	1,117,114	2,483,054	11,509,681	12,161,616	823,932
Frozen	417,292		323,835	186,674	113,348	409,516		183,625	549,440	328,826	
Fresh						1,898,426			1,156,755	75,400	41,120
Total	3,537,937	3,357,840	3,454,881	3,062,261	7,379,458	10,322,892	1,117,144	2,666,679	13,215,876	12,565,842	865,052

¹ Government fiscal year, 10/1 through 9/30. ² As of March 6, 2007. Source: Economic Analysis and Program Planning Branch, FV, AMS, USDA.

Leading California Sweet Potato Grower Testifies Before Congress

Mr. Manuel E. Vieira of A.V. THOMAS PRODUCE of Livingston, CA, testified before the Horticulture and Organic Agriculture Subcommittee of the House Agriculture Committee in Washington on April 18, 2007. The Subcommittee contains 11 different members of the House Ag Committee, and is chaired by Representative Dennis Cardoza of California's 18th District.

According to Mr. Vieira's testimony, his company has been in business since 1960 and it grows over 1500 acres of organic yams and sweet potatoes. They "are now dual certified organic by the California Organic Farmer's Association (COFA) and Organic Crop Improvement Association (OCIA)." The year 2007 will be A.V. THOMAS' first year of being 100 percent organic and they now have their own seed program "dedicated to the continuation of providing healthy organic food."

Mr. Vieira reminded the Subcommittee of some of the challenges that an organic farmer faces in California. He talked about the high cost of land, that most of the land in California is rented, and that frequently, organic farmers

only get to use the land one or two years after the three-year conversion period into organic.

Additionally, he talked about the high costs of organically approved fertilizers, nutrients and other import inputs, saying that they "are substantially more than their conventional counterparts."

Near the end of his remarks before the Subcommittee, Mr. Vieira pointed out the tremendous need for organic research with sweet potato varieties. However, he did give the California Sweet Potato Council and the University of California at Davis credit for working together to provide minimal research and plant stock on conventional Sweet Potatoes.

He wanted "to see more money devoted to research in creating virus-free and pest-resistant varieties of sweet potatoes for organic farmers in California." This would, according to Mr. Vieira, "allow us not to be at the mercy of pest damage. It would also save money in planting costs and labor costs associated with pest management and losses associated with sweet potatoes that cannot be marketed due to pest damage."

Source: <http://agriculture.house.gov/testimony/110/h70418/Vieira.doc>

Distinguished Service Award (from Page 1)

tors of the N.C. Sweet Potato Commission.

Norman is a founding member of Bruce Foods Corporation, and his energy and leadership has enabled Bruce Foods to grow from a local manufacturer to a multinational corporation that currently has offices on four continents, factories on two continents and sales in more than 110 different countries.

Norman, himself, has supervised the building of seven different factories and at Bruce Foods, he has served as Secretary, Vice President and President, and currently serves as Chairman of the Board. Additionally, he has been directly involved in the development of many new sweet potatoes prod-

ucts designed to build upon the strength of this nutritious vegetable and to create and add value for both U.S. and International markets.

Norman and his wife, Josephine, have five children and nine grand children and make their home in Wilson, NC. Norman also has an intense love of flying and received his first pilot's license at the age of 17. He's been flying ever since. After graduation from Tulane University in New Orleans, he served as a pilot and First Lieutenant in the U.S. Air Force.

In a more recent achievement, Norman received his jet pilot's license after successfully completing an intense seven-day program that has a wash-out rate of 80 percent. •

Listing of Various Sweet Potato Organizations in the U.S.

THE SWEET POTATO COUNCIL of CALIFORNIA

P.O. Box 366, Livingston, CA 95344

President: Bob Weimer

(209) 358-1685

Website: www.cayam.com

Requested assessment: \$5 per acre per grower

Annual budget: \$10,000 to \$15,000 per year

Purpose: To put together policies and programs that enhance the state's Sweet Potato Industry. Funds the clean seed program through Foundation Plant Materials at UC Davis. This includes both maintenance and virus-testing of new hills/cultivars. Five different varieties are available as virus tested plants to members.

LOUISIANA SWEET POTATO ASSOCIATION

P.O. Box 120, Chase, Louisiana 51324

Chairman: Mark Fields

Secretary: Tara Smith

(318) 435-2155

E-mail: tsmith@agctr.lsu.edu

Purpose: Develops policy, handle issues and Research & Development for the state's Yam Industry.

LOUISIANA SWEET POTATO COMMISSION

P.O. Box 2550, Baton Rouge, LA 70821-2550

Chairman: Mark Fields

Executive Director: Bryce Malone

(225) 922-1277

www.sweetpotato.org

Purpose: Advertising and promoting the state's Yam Industry.

THE MISSISSIPPI SWEET POTATO COUNCIL

P.O. Box 5207, Mississippi State, MS 39762

President: John Edmondson

Secretary/Treasurer: Benny Graves

(662) 325-7773

www.MSsweetpotato.org

Purpose: Promote the state's sweet potatoes and fund a limited amount of research.

NORTH CAROLINA SWEET POTATO COMMISSION, INC.

1327 N. Brightleaf Blvd., Suite H, Smithfield, NC 27577

President: David Godwin

Executive Director: Sue Johnson-Langdon

(919) 989-7323

ncsweetsue@aol.com

www.ncsweetpotatoes.com

Annual budget: \$500,000

Purpose: To promote sweet potato consumption, production and sales in both domestic and foreign markets. The Commission also undertakes various grower management issues which affect the sweet potato industry, including supporting or opposing current legislation/regulation.

NORTH CAROLINA SWEET POTATO COMMISSION FOUNDATION

Director: John W. Kimber

1609 Keenland Dr., Raleigh, NC 27613

(919) 845-0969

johnkimber@aol.com

Budget: Since 2001, the organization has received \$1.3 million in grant monies.

Purpose: Founded in 2001 by the N.C. Sweet Potato Commission, Inc. as a 501(c)3 organization. It's an educational and research entity to receive and utilize grant funding for the purpose of developing a comprehensive understanding of the market place opportunities for value added sweet potato products with and from NC sweet potatoes.

THE UNITED STATES SWEET POTATO COUNCIL

12 Nicklaus Lane, Suite 101, Columbia, SC 29229

President: George Wooten

(910) 654-5163

Executive Secretary: Charles Walker

(803) 788-7101

CharlesWalker@worldnet.att.net

www.SweetPotatoUSA.org

President's Message

(from Page 1)

of the different segments of sweet potato production being touched, like processing, exporting, retail, and foodservice. Plus, all of the media and press we are getting sure does help.

I will be bringing an idea to the mid-year Board Meeting for a promotional opportunity. The local strawberry festival here in Chadbourn, North Carolina has been bringing in lots of hot-air balloons for the festival. My idea is to sponsor a hot-air balloon that will travel all across the United States and promote the sweet potato in all its diversity. This will bring us together into a unified promotional event.

I hope everyone is aware that the 2008 National Sweet Potato Convention will held in North Carolina. It is at the Grove Park Inn in Asheville from January 20 - 22, 2008. We hope everyone will attend and we look forward to seeing you there!

Don't forget to bring your boots so we can climb *dem dar* hills and build *dem dar* mountains!

Convention

(from Page 1)

form are shown below. A complete listing of the agenda, registration, sponsorship and exhibitor opportunities can be found on the NC SweetPotato Commission website:

www.ncsweetpotatoes.com

Mid-Year Meeting (from Page 1)

Hill.

The major item of business on the Board's agenda during the Board Meeting is the approval of the revised by-laws. Sweet potato growers from any of the various states are invited to contact any of the Board Members or the Executive Secretary if there is an issue they care to place on the Board's

agenda.

Issues to be discussed with elected officials are: (1) Immigration reform/H-2A reform/Guest Worker Program; (2) Special Grant; (3) Increased appropriations for RAMP (Risk Avoidance and Mitigation Program); (4) Discussion and funding for production of ethanol from sweet potatoes. •

Annual Meeting of THE UNITED STATES SWEET POTATO COUNCIL

January 20-22, 2008 ~~~~ The Grove Park Inn Resort & Spa, Asheville, NC

~ TENTATIVE CONFERENCE AGENDA ~

Saturday, January 19, 2008

08:00 am - 05:00 pm Sweet Potato Collaborators Meeting
03:00 pm - 07:00 pm Hospitality Suite

Sunday, January 20, 2008

08:00 am - 12:00 Noon Sweet Potato Collaborators Meeting
01:00 pm - 07:00 pm Conference Registration
01:00 pm - 05:30 pm Exhibition
01:00 pm - 05:30 pm 1st Silent Auction Open
02:00 pm - 04:00 pm Board of Directors Meeting
03:00 pm - 05:30 pm Hospitality Suite
06:00 pm - 07:00 pm Reception - Cash Bar
07:00 pm - 10:00 pm Opening Banquet

Entertainment:

Comedian Jerry Carroll, The Willow Springs Wildman

Monday, January 21, 2008

07:30 am - 09:00 am Buffet Breakfast
08:15 am Welcome/ Presentation of Colors & Flags
07:30 am - 12:00 Noon Registration
09:00 am - 12:00 Noon Ladies Depart for Biltmore Estate
09:00 am - 12:00 Noon Exhibition Open
09:00 am - 12:00 Noon Educational Seminars

Moderator: Jonathan Schultheis, NC State Univ.

12:00 Noon Depart from Resort to Biltmore Estate
12:00 Noon - 12:30 pm Lunch Deerpark Restaurant Biltmore Estate
03:45 pm Depart for Winery Tour at Biltmore Estate
05:30 pm - 07:00 pm Board of Directors Meeting
05:30 pm - 08:00 pm Hospitality Suite
Evening FREE

Tuesday, January 22, 2008

07:30 am - 09:00 am Buffet Breakfast
08:15 am *Speaker: Harold Myers, AgPlus*
09:00 am Ladies Depart for Funky Junque Shopping Excursion
09:00 am - 12:00 Noon Exhibition Open
09:00 am - 12:00 Noon Educational Seminars
Moderator: Gerald Holmes, NC State University
12:00 Noon Lunch
Afternoon FREE

07:00 pm - 10:00 pm Closing Banquet
Distinguished Service Award
2nd Silent Auction Winner
Speaker: Steve Troxler, NC Commissioner of Agriculture
Entertainment: Steve Hardy, DJ



©2008 US Sweet Potato Council Convention

REGISTRATION FORM

**Annual Meeting & Convention of
The UNITED STATES SWEET POTATO COUNCIL**
January 20-22, 2008 ♦ The Grove Park Inn Resort & Spa, Asheville, NC



Please print information for each person attending the convention:

\$250/person postmarked by 12/21/2007

(Adults & Children)

Company Name _____

Mailing Address _____

City _____

State _____

Zip Code _____

Telephone _____

Fax _____

Email _____

\$300/person late registration

All Persons Registering Under Same Business Name & Address

(M) Male (F) Female (C) Child (Age of Child please)
Spouse (S), Sponsor, Exhibitor, Speaker

FULL NAME _____

Total Number Registered: _____

Registration Rate

\$250.00

=

Total Amount: _____

***Spouse Tour: Number Attending _____

Make check payable to: *North Carolina SweetPotato Commission*, then send check and registration form to:

**North Carolina SweetPotato Commission
PO Box 575, Selma, NC 27576**

ncsweetsue@aol.com / 919-989-7323 Phone / 919-989-3015 Fax

Compared to Louisiana, North Carolina, and many areas of the country, California weather is not that variable, especially for the coast and inland valleys. On most summer days in Merced, for example, it is likely to be hot and sunny. No thunderstorms, no hurricanes, no cold fronts. And most winter days will be cool with fog/overcast. Maybe a little rain, but we receive only about 11" per year. But while the day-to-day change in weather is not that extreme, the year-to-year change can be tremendous.

Last year, Merced received a lot of rain. This year, we have had almost none. Last summer was so hot even well irrigated cotton withered in the fields; this winter we had some of the coldest nights in 20+ years.

Sweetpotatoes are very heat tolerant — in fact, according to the book "Vegetable Production" (J.H. Macgillivray, 1953), no other common crop in the United States will stand more heat. So it is not surprising that even though last summer was undeniably the hottest on re-

California Sweet Potato Update

by Scott Stoddard

Farm Advisor, UC Cooperative Extension, Merced, CA

cord, sweetpotato yields were mostly in-line with expectations or even better than average. Production for 2006 was estimated to be 14% above the 2005 crop.

In January, Merced and many areas of California experienced some of the coldest nights in a long, long time. Temperatures dropped below 20° F for many hours on multiple nights. The effects on the citrus industry were well publicized. Normally, such cold temperatures would not significantly impact agriculture in Merced, but oddly enough sweetpotato growers were affected as storage sheds were heated to prevent chilling injury on the stored crop.

Spring weather has been very warm and dry this year, which has made for an excellent hotbed and planting season to date. Transplanters were rolling for many growers by the first of April. Technically, California is having a drought year.

Rangeland conditions are so poor that cattle producers have requested a disaster declaration from the state. But while drought years are bad for some, they are good for others: some of our most productive years for irrigated agriculture occur during a drought. This is largely due to excellent planting conditions and good early season growth that occur in years with little rain.

According to USDA, California is now the second largest producer of sweetpotatoes, behind North Carolina. This is based on a 2006 crop area of 12.5 thousand acres. I do not know what planting intentions are for this year, but each season tends to add a few hundred acres. However, growers have had difficulty finding land that can also be fumigated with *Telone* this year, which may result in a reduction of planted acreage.

Fumigation and variety development remain important issues

for California sweetpotato growers. Hotbeds are currently fumigated with methyl bromide + chloropicrin (under tarp) to provide a weed and disease-free area for the hotbeds. This is allowed through a Critical Use Exemption from the U.S. EPA that the California Sweetpotato Council has successfully sought for the past three years. However, each year the process become more arduous, and it is likely that methyl bromide will no longer be available in the near future.

Unfortunately, the regulatory outlook for almost all currently registered fumigants is dim. As a result, I plan to conduct a large field-scale hotbed fumigation trial this year to test the effectiveness of various alternatives. Solarization will be one of the treatments, as well as *Vapam*, *Telone*, and herbicide plus fungicide combinations. Weeds, nematodes, disease, and plant production will all be measured. The overall objective of the project is to find an alternative that is not only effective, but meets regulatory acceptance. •

Sweetpotato Collaborators Group Annual Meeting Recap

by Scott Stoddard, *Outgoing Chair*

The National Sweetpotato Collaborators Group (NSPCG) met in conjunction with the Southern Region of the American Society for Horticultural Science and the Southern Association of Agricultural Scientists in Mobile, AL, on February 3-4, 2007. The meetings were held downtown in the Riverview Plaza Hotel.

The Riverview Hotel was under extensive renovation and change of ownership, which lead to many difficulties starting with room registration and continuing with inconveniences associated with construction and noise. It is unlikely that anyone who attended would be in favor of going back to Mobile any time soon. One bright spot was that we were able to attend the Mobile Mardi Gras parades right outside the hotel. Mobile claims to be the site of the original *Mardi Gras*.

Like most years, the members in NSPCG presented results of various research trials through presentations and post-

ers. Over 20 presentations were made, covering a diverse array of topics related to sweetpotato production including marketing, pest management, breeding, and production. A special session was conducted this year which focused on intellectual property rights of clonally propagated plants. Plant patents are becoming the norm for breeders, and this impacts growers and scientists alike.

We also had the opportunity to sample various sweetpotato dishes that were snuck into the meeting room. A big hit was the LSU-colored (purple and orange) sweetpotato casserole clandestinely brought to the meeting by Dr. Author Villordan. Dr. Jack Osman also provided several unique foods made with sweetpotatoes, including a purple sweetpotato and blueberry pie. About 50 scientists with research interests in sweetpotatoes and industry members from around the country attended the conference.

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North Carolina Sweet Potato Update

by Billy Little

Commercial Horticulture Agent

NC Cooperative Extension, Wilson County Center

The North Carolina sweetpotato industry is looking forward to the 2007 sweetpotato crop. Along with the optimism of the 2007 crop prospects, there are several unknown factors even at this time which loom on the horizon, with fuel costs and labor being the main two.

In writing this update the first week of May 2007, a small number of acres have been planted with transplants coming from greenhouse sources. The sweetpotato beds in greenhouses are in excellent shape with good stands and plants ready to go to the fields for early plantings. The field sweetpotato beds also look good this year and are right on time for our typical planting times of late May through June.

The weather has been very unusual this spring with dry conditions and prolonged cool temperatures. This is a huge contrast from the mild winter and the above normal

March temperatures which allowed field preparation and sweetpotato bed growth.

Our growers will be planting mainly two varieties, Covington and Beauregard, with Covington expected to be the largest percentage of acres. Our intended acreage looks to be similar to last year.

The movement of sweetpotatoes has been steady this entire season which is good due to 2006 being a very productive year.

A new insect management control program developed by Dr. George Kennedy and Mark Abney along with input from the NCSU Sweetpotato Research Team provides optimism for growers to produce more quality sweetpotatoes resulting in economic gain for the industry. The two main insect problems our growers typically face year in and year out, flea beetle and wireworm, will be addressed in product select-

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Louisiana Sweet Potato Update: Summer 2007

by Tara Smith

Extension Specialist, LSU AgCenter, Chase, LA

Producers in Louisiana are gearing up for another year. The above average yields and the torrential rain experienced during the 2006 harvest are now only memories. The industry gladly welcomes another year like 2006 where yields are concerned, but we can definitely do without a harvest flood.

Louisiana acreage in 2007 is expected to be decreased from that planted last year. Several factors including adverse weather conditions and labor issues are cited for the reduction. However, a few producers across the state have plans to increase their acreage in 2007 and several are making improvements to packinglines and storage facilities.

Seed potatoes were bedded in late February and early March and planting was initiated in mid-May. Weather conditions have been favorable, except for one cool snap which came Easter weekend (low 38°F). Most producers had not removed the plastic from their beds at this time, but where plants were exposed, we did see some minor injury. Visual inspections conducted across the state in early May, indicated that the beds had recuperated and that plant production was uniform and sound. We received approximately 7 inches of rain during April and early May at the LSU AgCenter Sweet Potato Research Station and rainfall amounts were similar across the state during this period. The rise in temperature in early May in conjunction with the moisture should provide good planting conditions for the early portion of the crop.

Producers in Louisiana have high expectations for the 2007 production season. Ken Thornhill of Thornhill Farms, in Franklin Parish, LA, is very encouraged about this year and is planning a moderate increase in acreage. He mirrors others in the state, in his feelings that Louisiana can definitely support an acreage increase, and that an increase is

necessary and important for Louisiana to remain a leader in the industry. Mr. Thornhill also indicated that he was excited about the current price he is receiving for the 2006 crop.

An anonymous producer in West Carroll Parish, LA was also excited and optimistic about this year. "All I want is for everyone to make a good crop and get rich, is that too much to ask for?" A little humor goes a long way but there is truth in his statement. Louisiana producers have a tremendous amount riding on the 2007 crop.

There are a few new things on the horizon for the Louisiana sweet potato industry in 2007. The LSU AgCenter recently released a new sweet potato variety, "Evangeline." Production characteristics of the *Evangeline* and *Beauregard* varieties are similar. The *Beauregard* variety was released by the LSU AgCenter in 1987 and has remained a viable and dominant cultivar throughout Louisiana and the United States. *Evangeline* has an excellent quality as a baked and canned product. The variety is noticeably sweeter than *Beauregard* coming out of the ground, due to differences in the concentration of individual sugars. Several Louisiana producers will have an opportunity to produce a small quantity of *Evangeline* in 2007 and by 2008, the variety should be up and running on a limited commercial scale.

Also beginning in 2007 is a research verification program for sweet potato production in Louisiana. Verification programs aim to inform producers about research based recommendations with an overall goal of maximizing yield and increasing profit. The LSU AgCenter has a dedicated research team working on various aspects of sweet potato production, including, breeding, cultural practice research, insect, disease and weed management and post harvest physiology. All of these disciplines will work into the veri-

fication fields, which will be monitored and managed according to current recommendations. An economic analysis will then be conducted for those fields.

Louisiana sweet potato producers are resilient and hard working. Producers across the state are optimistic and hopeful that 2007 will be "the" year that everything works in their favor and proves to be a profitable production year for the industry. •



Sweet potato producer Ted McDermott inspects his plant beds at the McDermott Farms in West Carroll parish, Louisiana.

Alabama Sweet Potato Crop Update

by Arnold Caylor
Superintendent

N. Alabama Horticulture
Research Center, Cullman, AL

The sweetpotato production areas are in the southern and northern part of the state. Our production is around 2,000 acres. The production is about equally divided between the south and north and has remained pretty constant.

The growers in the southern part of the state have planted about 50% of their acreage and report that the potatoes look good so far. Rainfall has been spotty with some growers being dry. Most of last years crop has been sold.

The northern part of the state has about a 9" rainfall deficit at this time. We are currently getting scattered showers that help. The ground moisture is adequate at this time. We managed to escape the late freeze that caused so much damage back in April. Most of the growers are just starting to plant their crop. Everyone's plant beds look good at this time. Most of our growers have sold last year's crop.

Last year was a disaster for the northern part of the state. We were in a drought the entire season and had poor yields. The southern part of the state fared better than the north. They received some timely rains that helped their crop. We hope that everyone has a good season this year. •

Mississippi Sweet Potato Crop Update

by Benny Graves
Executive Director

MS Sweet Potato Council

Mississippi sweet potato planting intentions for 2007 are up slightly to 18,000 acres, maybe more. Of course weather, plant bed production and financing will determine final planted acres.

Plant beds were put in during March under unusually warm and dry conditions. April was dry and cold. An Easter freeze really slowed plant growth down. During late April and early May growers had to water plant beds continuously. However, the dry spring did allow growers to complete field preparation ahead of schedule.

Finally a good general rainfall arrived across the state May 10. This moisture along with warm night time temperatures made plant bed growth jump. Also this provided the moisture needed to kick off field transplanting. By late May transplanting will be in full swing.

In Mississippi June is a critical month. The bulk of our crop is transplanted into the field during this month and weather plays an important role in how the 2007 crop performs. Sweet potato growers will push hard to get their crop planted on time and off to a good start.

WAYNE E. BAILEY PRODUCE Participates in the Winter Jam

The *Winter Jam Tour* is a Christian Music Tour and in 2007, it took place in more than 30 cities from as far South as Florida and as far North as Michigan. The “Jams” consist of a variety of performers from musicians to comedians to speakers. George Wooten, along with some of his family members and his company, Wayne E. Bailey Produce, participated in this year’s Tour.

It also provided the Company the opportunity to promote sweet potatoes to the crowds in the various cities. Promotional activities allowed Spencer, mascot for the N.C. Sweet Potato Commission, to mingle among the crowds. A table containing sweet potato recipes and sweet potato informational leaflets were also available to attendees. As part of the “pre-show,” attendees also got to view a one-minute video, that discussed sweet potato nutrition and versatility.



The above photo was taken backstage during the first concert of the 2007 Winter Jam Tour in Johnson City, TN on January 12, 2007. Pictured, from left to right, are: George Wooten, President/CEO of Wayne E. Bailey Produce, Chadbourn, NC; Spencer, mascot for the N.C. Sweet Potato Commission; George’s son, Adam Wooten; and Megan Wooten, Adam’s wife.

Sweetpotato Collaborators Group *(from Page 4)*

Next year the NSPCG will meet in conjunction with the U.S. Sweet Potato Convention in North Carolina, January 19 – 20, 2008. This is a departure from our normal practice of meeting with the Southern Association of Agricultural Scientists. The purpose for this is to allow growers, packers, and allied industry attend our meeting and hear about current sweetpotato research projects, while also giving the scientists the opportunity to interact with the industry and discuss issues and current topics affecting the industry.

The Chair for the NSPCG in

2008 is Dr. Zvesdana Pesic-VanEsbroeck, professor of plant pathology at NCSU. Chair-elect is Dr. Jack Osman, from Towson University in Maryland. The program and abstracts can be found on-line at www.sweetpotatoes.org. Information about the 2008 meeting will be posted there starting in the fall.

The NSPCG is a network of sweetpotato scientists working to improve sweetpotato production and its associated products. We are pleased that we can hold our meeting in conjunction with the U.S. Convention, and hope all of you can participate.

Table 2. Sweet Potatoes Actual Plantings, 2005-2006 and Planting Intentions, 2007

State	2005	2006	2007	2007/2006
AL	2.7	2.4	2.5	104
CA	11.7	12.5	13.3	106
LA	18.0	18.0	16.0	89
MS	17.4	18.0	17.0	94
NJ	1.2	1.2	1.2	100
NC	36.0	40.0	40.0	100
SC	0.9	0.8	0.6	75
TX	2.7	2.2	1.8	82
VA	0.4	0.5	0.5	100
U.S.	91.0	95.6	92.9	97

Source: NASS, as of March 2007.

North Carolina

(from Page 4)

ion and timing of application techniques in the 2007 crop year.

The unknowns we face consist of weather; will it be a wet year, a dry year or just right? Some of the other unknowns, fuel cost, we know that will be high, but how high? The labor issue of course affects all aspects of agriculture especially the sweetpotato production and harvest. We start the year with the belief labor will be short but should be enough to get the job done. That is with the understanding that legislative and world events could impact this greatly as time goes on.

In the typical NC sweetpotato production fashion, the growers, packers, research and Extension team look forward to the 2007 sweetpotato crop.

For more information about the National Sweet Potato Newsletter or THE UNITED STATES SWEET POTATO COUNCIL, contact:
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