

NATIONAL SWEET POTATO NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2008

The President's Message

by Mark Fields, LA

Bonjour Y'all! The new crop year seems to always bring a sense of optimistic anticipation. I hope all is positive and going well for you as we have begun this new crop. Seed is bedded, plants are up and transplants are going to the field. As I have talked to our production areas around the country, seems all have gotten started relatively well.

We are seeing an ever-expanding line of products made from sweet potatoes. The fresh, canned and frozen products we grow and process provide the consumer with quality choices to enjoy. That's good. With these choices, consumption of our most nutritious vegetable is on the rise. That's very good! You can pat yourselves on the back for providing a quality product that has unlimited possibilities.

The Council Board's mid-year meeting in Washington, D.C., will be held on June 23rd and 24th. Issues that will be discussed with our elected officials are:

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The 2007 Crop: Largest in 49 Years

Total production of U.S. sweet potatoes in 2007 at 1.8452 billion pounds is the largest since 1959, when 1.8865 billion pounds were produced. U.S. sweet potato production for the last six years is given in *Table 1*.

Table 1. Total U.S. sweet potato production, by year, 2002–2007, in billion pounds (as reported by NASS)

Year	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Quantity	1.2799	1.5891	1.6112	1.5730	1.6248	1.8452

Council's Distinguished Service Award Goes to Kendall Hill

George Wooten (right), 2007 President of The United States Sweet Potato Council, presents the Council's Distinguished Service Award to Kendall Hill, sweet potato grower/packer of Kinston, NC. The presentation was made during the Council's convention this past January in Asheville, NC.



2009 US Sweet Potato Council Annual Convention January 25-27, 2009

Hilton Baton Rouge Capital Center, Baton Rouge, LA

by Tara Smith (LSU AgCenter)
 and Mark Fields (Council President, Louisiana Sweet Potato Association and Louisiana Sweet Potato Commission)



Come one, come all for an event we hope you won't soon forget. Plan to *Rendezvous on the Bayou* in Baton Rouge, LA at the **2009 National Sweet Potato Council Convention**.

Mid-Year USSPC Board Meeting on June 23 in Washington, DC

The Board Meeting of THE UNITED STATES SWEET POTATO COUNCIL will take place in Washington, DC on Monday, June 23, 2008. It will start at 5:00 PM in the MARS ROOM on the first floor (lobby level) of the Holiday Inn Capitol, 550 C Street, SW, Washington, DC 20024; (202) 479-4000.

In addition to the usual items on the Board' Agenda, the Board will also receive a 2009 Convention update, select the Council's *Distinguished Service Award* recipient, and approve the printing of new recipes for distribution by the Council.

The Council will also use Monday, June 23, and the morning of June 24 to meet with elected officials from

(continued on Page 2)

Just like our famous cuisine, Louisiana has a rich and colorful cultural and political history that is firmly "rooted" in our capital city. The meeting will be held in the newly restored Hilton Capital Center Hotel located adjacent to the Mississippi River, in thriving downtown Baton Rouge, LA. The Hilton Capital Center offers guests an opportunity to experience the history and ele-

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2008 Sweet Potato Statistical Yearbook Now Available

The new **Sweet Potato Statistical Yearbook** is now available and ready for shipment to all parties that want to learn more about U.S. and World Sweet Potato Production, Trade and Consumption. The **YEAR-BOOK** presents 20 years of statistical data in a way that

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The prevalence of celiac disease (CD), an intolerance of gluten, has been reported to be as high as 1 in 200 of the world population. In some people the disease is “silent” and latent, and it may or may not be diagnosed. Nevertheless, CD is a serious health issue and a challenge for food scientists, because it can only be treated by strict adherence to a gluten-free diet. Developing gluten-free foods, as required and regulated to have a gluten level not exceeding 200 ppm, is difficult because gluten is very common in food sources. Furthermore, attempts to remove the gluten ingredients in foods may result in the loss of nutritional balance of the products.

Sweet Potato in Gluten-Free Pancakes

by Dr. Fred Shih

Research Chemist, USDA, ARS, SRRC
New Orleans, LA

Sweet potato is naturally gluten-free and particularly rich in beta-carotene (pro-vitamin A), potassium, dietary fiber and many other healthy ingredients. It can be processed into flour, flakes, purees, canned products, beverages and various snack foods. Rice is also gluten-free and contains proteins that are known to be nutritious and hypoallergenic. Both sweet potato and rice flours are ideal ingredients for developing gluten-free bakery products, which are traditionally made with wheat flour. Pancakes are a popular wheat-

based product. There have been efforts to formulate and market pancakes partially substituted with sweet potato or rice flour, but none being totally non-wheat or gluten-free or comparable in quality to the traditional wheat pancakes.

In our study, we prepared pancakes, totally gluten-free, using different ratios of sweet potato and rice flours. The products were analyzed for their rheological, nutritional and textural properties. The results indicate that the new pancakes, at 20-40% sweet potato flour, showed an overall

improvement in textural properties including hardness, chewiness, and cohesiveness, which were comparable to those of the traditional wheat pancake. These new pancakes had nutritional attributes such as protein content, dietary fiber, total carbohydrate, and calories, also comparable to those of the wheat counterpart. However, they had substantially higher contents in the nutrient beta-carotene. The development promotes the use of sweet potato and rice and creates healthy food products that meet the need of people who are sensitive to gluten. •

Board Meeting

(from Page 1)

sweet potato producing states and will also have a joint meeting with the Agricultural Marketing Service and the Food & Nutrition Service of USDA. At the time of this writing (5/17/08), appointments are already scheduled with AL Representative Jo Bonner and NC Representative Mike McIntyre.

Issues to be discussed with elected officials are: Immigration/H-2A reform/farm labor shortage; need for increased personnel and infrastructure at ICE to facilitate increases in H-2A applicants; funding for research into efficient/effective means of irrigation for sweet potatoes; funding for research in, and production of, alternative crops for fuel/energy, including sweet potatoes; funding for a Sweet Potato IPM Special Research and Extension Grants Program. •

The Emergency Agriculture Relief Act: Passed, Then Stripped From The Iraq War Funding Bill

by Charles Walker, Executive Director

Comprehensive Immigration Reform, which contained the AgJobs proposal, failed twice to pass the Senate in 2007. Afterward, California Senator Dianne Feinstein considered attaching it to the new Farm Bill, but this action never happened. Later, she considered introducing it as a stand alone bill. This never happened, either.

Then, in a release from Sen. Feinstein’s Office dated 5/15/08, it states that “The Senate Appropriations Committee today on a bipartisan basis approved legislation sponsored by U.S. Senators Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif) and Larry Craig (R-Idaho) that would provide

emergency relief to the nation’s current agriculture labor shortage.” This legislation was referred to as the Emergency Agriculture Relief Act.

The “Act” was introduced as a 101-page amendment to the War Funding Bill. With its passage, it stirred up immigration emotions again in the Congress and the President promised to veto it since it contained domestic spending.

According to an article in *Congress Daily* by Chris Strohm, “The prospect of a prolonged floor fight appeared to have led Senate Majority Leader Reid to abruptly strip out the most controversial immigration provisions dealing with farm workers. •

Regulatory Approach to H-2A

Late last summer, the Bush Administration stated that it wanted to help farmers with their labor problems and recommended that regulatory changes be made in the H-2A program to make it easier for growers to use.

The administration proposed a list of such changes and they were published in the Federal Register with an invitation for comments from interested parties. The comment period has passed, and now the regulatory authorities are evaluating the comments it received in response to its invitation. The next step is to issue a final rule. •

Table 2. USDA Sweet Potato Purchases, by type, by year¹, FY 1997–2007 & FY2008 to date.

Type	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
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	4,933,279	2,093,128
Frozen	871,300		633,598	356,400	237,600	712,800		316,800	831,600	554,400	316,800	79,200
Fresh						6,164,000			3,682,200	320,000	200,000	520,000 ²
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	5,450,079	2,692,328
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	2,650,200	1,170,909
Frozen	417,292		323,835	186,674	113,348	409,516		183,625	549,440	328,826	180,761	43,639
Fresh						1,898,426			1,156,755	75,400	52,400	62,400 ²
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	2,883,361	1,276,948

¹ Government fiscal year, 10/1 through 9/30. ² Fresh sweet potatoes, bulk. Source: Economic Analysis and Program Planning Branch, FV, AMS, USDA.

gance of Louisiana, while also enjoying several popular local attractions. The hotel offers a phenomenal view of the Mississippi River and is just minutes away from several area attractions, including: the Shaw Center for the Arts, the Louisiana Museum, the Louisiana Capitol, Louisiana State University, casinos and numerous restaurants. In addition, Baton Rouge is only a short

2009 Convention (from Page 1)

drive from St. Francisville, LA, home to several historical homes and antique shops.

Louisiana is gearing up for an entertaining and informative meeting and we hope that all of you will be able to join us. We are developing a great educational program that will appeal to all those associated with the industry. Horticultural research

updates, policy and labor information and a presentation by a producer, featuring a Louisiana sweet potato operation, are just a few topics currently on the agenda.

The tentative program and agenda are shown below. More complete information on registration, sponsorship, program and agenda updates and exhibi-

tor opportunities can be found on the Louisiana Sweet Potato Commission website (www.sweetpotato.org) in the near future.

If you have any questions concerning the 2009 convention, please contact Mark Fields, president of the 2009 convention (mfields@allencanning.com) or Tara Smith (tsmith@agctr.lsu.edu) with the LSU AgCenter. •

President's Message (from Page 1)

- (1) USDA purchases of fresh, canned and frozen sweet potatoes;
- (2) H2A labor program issues;
- (3) Research and Development funding

As always, please contact your congressman and senator from your state and let him/her know how important these and other related issues are to our industry.

The Louisiana delegation is very excited and working at a fever pitch putting together plans for the 2009 convention at the Hilton Capital Center in Baton Rouge. The dates are January 25, 26 and 27. We promise to inform, entertain and feed you well. Be sure to make plans to "Come pass a good time with us" as we "Rendezvous on the Bayou"! •

Annual Meeting & Convention of THE UNITED STATES SWEET POTATO COUNCIL

January 25–27, 2009
Hilton Baton Rouge Capital Center Hotel, 201 Lafayette Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70801
~ TENTATIVE CONFERENCE AGENDA ~

<p>Saturday, January 24, 2009 03:00 pm - 07:00 pm Registration; Hospitality Suite</p> <p>Sunday, January 25, 2009 01:00 pm - 07:00 pm Conference Registration 01:00 pm - 05:30 pm Exhibits Open 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 <i>Musical Entertainment:</i></p> <p>Monday, January 26, 2009 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 Tour 09:00 am - 12:00 Noon Exhibits Open 09:00 am - 12:00 Noon Educational Seminars</p>	<p>12:00 Noon Depart for lunch and tour of Louisiana Museum FREE</p> <p><i>Afternoon</i></p> <p>05:30 pm - 07:00 pm Board of Directors Meeting FREE</p> <p><i>Evening</i></p> <p>Tuesday, January 27, 2009 07:30 am - 09:00 am Buffet Breakfast 08:15 am <i>Morning Speaker:</i> 09:00 am Ladies Depart for St. Francisville Tour 09:00 am - 12:00 Noon Exhibits Open 09:00 am - 12:00 Noon Educational Seminars 12:00 Noon Lunch <i>Afternoon</i> FREE</p> <p>07:00 pm - 10:00 pm Closing Banquet <i>Distinguished Service Award</i> Silent Auction Winners <i>Musical Entertainment</i></p>
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Sweetpotato Collaborators Group: New Incoming Chair

Dr. Jack Osman, Professor in the Health Science Department at Towson University in Towson, MD was named the incoming Chair of the National SweetPotato Collaborators Group (NSCG) during the group's last Conference in Asheville, NC back in January. Dr. Mike Jackson, new Chief of the USDA-ARS Sweet Potato Breeding Program, was named Chair elect of the Group for 2010.

As the new Chairman, Dr. Osman will be responsible for coordinating the Group's 2009 Conference. This Conference will be held on January 31 and February 1, 2009 in conjunction with the SAAS/SR-ASHS conference that will be held

February 1-3, 2009. The venue for the 2009 NSCG Conference will be the The Westin Peachtree Plaza, 210 Peachtree St., NW, Atlanta, GA. Dr. Osman is encouraging all interested parties to make plans now to attend the 2009 Conference. Prospective attendees can call now for reservations at (404) 659-1400. Be sure to ask for the SAAS/SR-ASHS rate of \$144.00 per night.

Plans are also underway for a pre-conference field trip on Friday, January 30, 2009. Please refer to the Group's website at

www.sweetpotatoes.org for the most up-to-date developments. •

Farm Bill Passes, Then Hits Snags

The Farm Bill just passed. In a release posted on the Senate Ag Committee's website (www.agriculture.senate.gov), Chairman Senator Tom Harkin of IA announced that "the Senate-House Conference Committee on the farm bill with a vote of 81-19... had overwhelmingly approved the *Food, Conservation and Energy Act of 2008*..."

The bill was then sent to the White House and the President vetoed it. Then, as the House prepared to vote to override the veto, "Republicans pointed out that the version of the bill that the President objected to was not the same as the one passed in Congress." Congress will have to correct its error so that the House, the Senate and the President are all looking at the same bill. As this newsletter goes to press, there is specula-

tion that it may be June before the Farm Bill is finalized.

For the first time ever, fruit, vegetable and nut growers are recognized in a Farm Bill as some \$3 billion out of a total of \$300 billion will be spent for the benefit of these growers over the next five years. The bill provides dollars for: (1) Fresh fruits and vegetables; (2) Research, including "over \$400 million over the next 10 years for a new program to improve our pest and disease detection capabilities"; (3) Rural Development; (4) Nutrition; (5) Expansion of the Farmers' Market Promotion Program; (6) Conversation; and (7) Energy. The bill also provides \$365 million in mandatory funding for Specialty Crop Block Grants and it also establishes a new disaster assistance program.

Source: www.agriculture.senate.gov

California has had another dry winter, and a record dry spring. Snowpack is about 60 – 70% of normal, which in itself is not that bad, but when added to the dismal snowpack last year, puts our state in dire need for water. Most irrigation districts have implemented water restrictions as a result. The Merced Irrigation District will limit water use to only 2.5 acre-feet this season, and the Turlock Irrigation District (the other irrigation district with significant acreage of sweetpotatoes) is only slightly better at 3.5 feet. In the sandy soils where sweetpotatoes are grown, 2.5 acre-feet is not enough, and additional water will be needed from wells or by fallowing other areas.

Despite the tight water situation, sweetpotato acreage and production in California continues to increase. According to recent USDA surveys, growers intend to plant 7% more acres this year, or over 14,000 acres. If realized, this will be the highest acreage ever for this crop in the state. Most of these acres will be in Merced County, but because of fumigation restrictions, tight water supplies and available land, the overall percentage in

California Sweet Potato Update

by Scott Stoddard

Farm Advisor, UC Cooperative Extension, Merced, CA

Merced may be reduced as compared to recent years. Regardless of where this acreage increase occurs, it nonetheless represents a 40% increase in acres and, assuming an average yield of 700 boxes per acre, a 70% increase in production since 2001. California may produce close to 400 million pounds of sweetpotatoes in 2008, or almost the production of Louisiana and Mississippi combined.

Of course, many things have happened since that survey was taken that may dramatically change this prognosis. In addition to limited water availability, costs for basic inputs such as fuel, fertilizer, rent, and labor have soared this season. California is not alone in this phenomenon, of course, as input prices have gone up nationwide. But for various reasons, we always seem to have the highest input prices regardless of the year. Our total cost of production will probably exceed \$6000 per acre this year. Input costs like that tend to put a damper on planting intentions. Let's all

hope the box price stays above \$20 this year.

Where is all this increased production going? I do not study the markets as I do the production of sweetpotatoes, but growers and packing sheds have noted that movement has been good most of the year. Some of the increased production in this state reflects decreased production in many other states; some may be attributable to increased fresh market sales from both a growing population and increased per capita consumption; and much has occurred because of sales to processors for fries and chips.

For California, the mere fact we have any significant acreage going to processing is an amazing change. Five years ago, approximately 5% of all production was sold for processing. Now, that figure is considerably more. The increased interest in processing

has in turn resulted in increased interest in improving storability and evaluating varieties for their long-term storage characteristics. My studies have shown *Covington* to store very well here, losing significantly less weight than some of the other orange-flesh types such as *Diane*.

California's variety portfolio continues to change rapidly. By some estimates, *Covington* will be planted on 3000 acres this year, which represents a 10-fold increase over last season. *O'Henry* has completely displaced *Hanna* and is chipping away at *Golden Sweet* for dominance in this market segment. Acreage in *Murasaki-29* will likely be similar to last year, only a few hundred acres, as growers cautiously evaluate whether this variety really has the yield potential to be competitive with *Kotobuki*. The yield and size impacts of the sweetpotato feathery mottle virus (SPFMV) on this variety will be evaluated in the Collaborators Trial this year. •

Sweet Potato Nutrition

☑ The sweet potato is **fat-** and **cholesterol-free**.

☑ Raw sweet potato contains: Beta carotene (a phytonutrient that breaks down into Vitamin A), Folate, Fiber, Potassium, Vitamin A, Vitamin B₆, Vitamin C, Vitamin E and Vitamin K.

(Source: www.nal.usda.gov/fnic)

☑ It contains **more** beta carotene than apples, avocados, bananas, broccoli, carrots, collard greens, oranges, strawberries, tomatoes and watermelons.

☑ It contains **more** fiber than apples, bananas, broccoli, carrots, collard greens, oranges, strawberries, tomatoes and watermelons.

☑ It contains **more** folate than apples, carrots, tomatoes

and watermelons.

☑ It contains almost as much potassium (94 percent) as a banana, and contains **more** potassium than apples, broccoli, carrots, collard greens, oranges, strawberries and tomatoes.

☑ It contains **more** Vitamin A than apples, avocados, bananas, broccoli, collard greens, oranges, strawberries, tomatoes and watermelons.

☑ It contains **more** Vitamin B₆ than apples, broccoli, carrots, collard greens, oranges, strawberries, tomatoes and watermelons.

☑ It contains **more** Vitamin E than apples, bananas, oranges and watermelons.

(Source: <http://fnic.nal.usda.gov>) •

NC's YamCo Starts Producing Sweet Potato Puree

by Rosalie Marion Bliss
USDA-ARS

Batches of a nutritious, shelf-stable sweet potato puree to be used as a food ingredient were rolled out starting March 26, 2008 at a new sweet potato processing facility owned by Yamco LLC in Snow Hill, NC. The premium food ingredient is now commercially available to manufacturers for use in a variety of finished products such as baked goods, soups, baby foods, beverages and nutraceuticals.

This new, high-quality food ingredient is made possible by a unique, rapid-microwave-heating process. The process was developed, tested and jointly patented by collaborators with North Carolina State University (NC State) in Raleigh, the Agricultural Research Service (ARS) on be-

half of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), and Industrial Microwave Systems, L.L.C. (IMS), Morrisville, NC.

Food scientist Van-Den Truong, with the Raleigh-based ARS Food Science Research Unit, and his collaborators tested the product extensively at an NC State pilot plant. The collaborators include NC State food engineers Josip Simunovic, Kenneth Swartzel, K. P. Sandeep and Gary Cartwright and graduate student Pablo Coronel.

Their testing ensured that the puree exhibits ideal nutrient and color retention with little flavor loss under sterile processing conditions. The result is a value-added food ingredient that is shelf-stable at room temperature.

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Louisiana Sweet Potato Update

by Tara Smith

Extension Specialist, LSU AgCenter, Chase, LA

The 2008 Louisiana sweet potato field season began in March with the bedding of seed potatoes. Weather conditions have been favorable for the bedding and early planting seasons. Planting will begin in early May and will extend into July in some areas. Acreage in 2008 is expected to be similar to that of 2007, at approximately 15,000 acres. Producers have been busy in recent months, packing and shipping the 2007 crop and are looking forward to what will hopefully be another "good" year for Louisiana sweet potatoes.

As a whole, 2007 was con-

Alabama Sweet Potato Crop Update

by Arnold Caylor
Superintendent

N. Alabama Horticulture
Research Center, Cullman, AL

We don't have a lot of potatoes left in storage. Some of our growers have all ready run out of potatoes. The quality is pretty good.

The southern part of the state is almost finished with their planting. It has been dry and they could use some rain. They are planting *Beauregard* and *Covington*. There are quite a few acres devoted to *Covington*.

We are just starting to plant up in the northern part of the state. They are cutting potatoes that were grown in green houses or hot beds at this time. The field beds are not quite ready to cut yet. We have been blessed with plenty of rain so far. Nothing like what we were facing last year with the exceptional drought. Most of the growers plant *Beauregard* and some *Covington*.

The Tennessee folks have not started planting yet. Their potato beds are looking good. They are about 2-3 weeks away from planting. •

sidered a good year for Louisiana producers. Average total yield for the state exceeded 380 bushels per acre which was a 15% increase from 2006. Luck was in our corner where weather was concerned. We did experience typical dry periods both early and preceding harvest and also dealt with excess rainfall in July. Some producers also dealt with significant insect damage on a percentage of their crop. The majority of that damage being attributed to white grubs, cucumber beetles and isolated sugarcane beetle damage. Movement of the crop late last year was on par with previous years, but has slowed significantly in recent months. According to producers, the Easter movement was not as strong as they were expecting and the price received for the crop has also decreased recently.

Despite the slight decrease in acreage experienced in 2007, the farm gate value of the Louisiana crop exceeded \$65 million, surpassing that of 2006. The value-added worth of the crop after packing and processing exceeded \$110 million in 2007. Cost of production (per acre) is variable between sweet potato operations in Louisiana and ranges from \$1,500-\$3,000. Similar to other agriculture arenas,

sweet potato producers face challenges around every corner. With fertilizer and fuel costs being higher than they have been in recent years, the profit margin is definitely dependent on higher yields and superior quality. With that said, I still see the future of sweet potatoes as promising. Current and ongoing research is narrowing the knowledge gap on various production issues. In addition, marketing opportunities, particularly for potatoes used for processing are increasing and offer producers several alternative options in moving their crop.

A new sweet potato variety "Evangeline" was released by the LSU AgCenter in 2007 and will be grown by several producers on a limited commercial scale in 2008. Production characteristics of the *Evangeline* and *Beauregard* varieties are similar. *Evangeline* will be monitored closely across Louisiana this year on several producers' farms.

The 2009 National Sweet Potato Council Convention will be held in Baton Rouge, LA, January 25-27, 2009. The Louisiana Sweet Potato Association and Commission are gearing up for an enjoyable and informative meeting and hope that all of you will be able to join us for a *Rendezvous on the Bayou*. •

Sweet Potato Puree Facility (from Page 4)

The patented process was licensed in 2007 to Yamco LLC for exclusive commercial production of sweet potato puree.

For farmers, the new process provides a new market for less-than-perfect sizes or shapes of sweet potatoes that might ordinarily be discarded. That's because all sweet potato sizes and shapes can be used to make the new, shelf-stable puree. North Carolina farmers

produce more sweet potatoes than growers in any other state, accounting for 43 percent of the annual \$290 million U.S. sweet potato crop in 2006.

Sweet potatoes are often called a "nutritional powerhouse" because they are very high in beta carotene. They also contain phenolic compounds, vitamin C, vitamin B6, dietary fiber and potassium, among other nutrients. •

Mississippi Sweet Potato Crop Update

by Benny Graves
Executive Director
MS Sweet Potato Council

Increased fuel and fertilizer costs for 2008 production are on the minds of all Mississippi sweet potato growers. In fact almost all production costs for sweet potatoes are likely to increase this year adding pressure to the need to harvest a high yielding quality crop.

With this extreme economic backdrop, Mississippi sweet potato growers kicked off the 2008 season in March by bedding ample seed potatoes to plant up to 20,000 acres. This acreage would be close to the acreage planted in 2007. High corn and soybean prices have limited new first time growers from venturing into sweet potato production. Mississippi will have close to 90 growers in 2008.

As of this writing plant beds are in good shape with the plastic pulled off and plants growing. Plant growth has been slowed somewhat by cool temperatures. Transplanting to the fields should start the last week of May.

All 2007 crop potatoes are now in the coolers. Cured potatoes should be available into October from Mississippi. •

Sweet Potatoes Loaded

According to Ms. Colleen Doyle, MS, RD, and director of nutrition and physical activity at the American Cancer Society, sweet potatoes "just happen to be loaded with cancer-fighting beta carotene, phytochemicals and fiber." Ms. Doyle goes on to say that "sweet potatoes are just **loaded, loaded, loaded** with beta carotene and phytochemicals."

(Source: www.cancer.org)



The Board of Directors of The U.S. Sweet Potato Council were introduced to convention attendees during banquet ceremonies at the Grove Park Inn in Asheville, NC back in January. From left to right (photo above), board members and officers are: Benny Patten, NJ; Terris Matthews, AR; George Wooten, outgoing President, NC; Bill Penry, AL; Howard Fisackerly, MS; Don Kerr, TN; Mark Fields, incoming President, LA; and Randle Wright, MS. Board members not in photo are: Bob Weimer, CA; Jerry Gallop, SC; Preston Davis, VA.

Former President of the Council Wins Award

by Charles Walker, Executive Director

Stephen and Kisha Bailey of Vardaman, MS, are one of 4 couples chosen as 2008 Outstanding Young Farmers winners this year at the 52nd annual National Outstanding Young Farmers Awards Congress held in Madison, WI, this past January 30–February 3.

This event is sponsored by John Deere, supported by the Outstanding Farmers of America Fraternity and the National Association of County Agriculture Agents,

and administered by The United States Junior Chamber. [Source: Lori Burrows, OYF Coordinator. Lori can be reached at (503) 538-1752.]

Stephen and Kisha are sweet potato growers from MS, and Stephen served as President of THE UNITED STATES SWEET POTATO COUNCIL in 2004. I know the entire Board of Directors will join me in congratulating Stephen and Kisha on this amazing accomplishment!

Table 3. Sweet Potatoes: Area Planted by State and the U.S., 2005-2008 (1,000 acres)

State	2005	2006	2007	2008 ¹	2008/2007 (percent)
AL	2.7	2.4	2.5	2.7	108
CA	11.7	12.2	13.5	14.5	107
LA	17.0	18.0	16.0	16.0	100
MS	18.0	18.0	20.5	20.0	98
NJ	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	100
NC	40.0	40.0	44.0	47.0	107
SC	1.0	0.7	0.6	0.6	100
TX	3.4	2.2	1.9	1.5	79
VA	0.4	0.5	0.4	0.3	75
U.S.	94.9	95.2	100.6	103.8	103

¹ Intended plantings in 2008 as indicated by reports from farmers. Source: USDA, NASS

Statistics Yearbook

(from Page 1)

facilitates detection of trends. The data is presented in both Tabular and Chart form. For the readers convenience, the YEARBOOK is divided into two sections: "U.S. Statistics" and "World Statistics".

In the U.S. Statistics section, it contains U.S. total production; production by state; U.S. total acreage; acreage by state; U.S. yield per acre; yield per acre by state; shipments by week; weekly FOB prices; supply and utilization and many other statistics. Similarly, in the World Statistics section, it contains a summary of world sweet potato production and trade; production by the top 25 countries; world exports and imports, value of world exports and imports, and many other statistics.

To receive your copy of the 2008 Sweet Potato Statistical Yearbook, make a check for \$15.00 made payable to: THE UNITED STATES SWEET POTATO COUNCIL, INC., and mail to: THE UNITED STATES SWEET POTATO COUNCIL, 12 Nicklaus Lane, Suite 101, Columbia, SC 29229.

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