

LOUISIANA SWEET POTATO NEWS

Summer 2022

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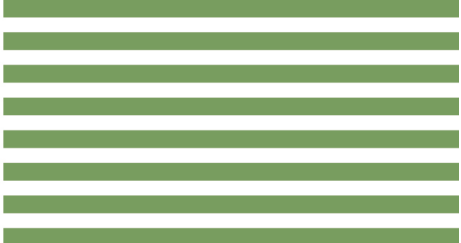
Visit our web site: https://www.lsuagcenter.com/portals/our_offices/research_stations/sweetpotato

Update on Sweetpotato Advanced Line Trials

Dr. Don LaBonte, Professor and Sweet Potato Breeder LSU AgCenter School of Plant, Environmental and Soil Sciences

I did a short road trip the past few days to look over my south Louisiana plots in Ville Platte at Larry Fontenot's farm, Iota – Garber Farms, and Mansura – James Deshotel. The good news is weed control was excellent, but no doubt the dry weather helped a lot. Dry conditions for sure at Fontenot's and Garber's. My plot at Deshotel's looked like it was catching just the right amount of rain; the canopy was filled out and actually seeing some cracks in the row 60 days after planting. Having plots in many locations and out of state helps catch a lot of weather – good and bad. I am able to get essentially several years' worth of data in one season and this helps pick out the ones that deliver when conditions are just right and when everything goes wrong. Some change ups this year. We included several lines with guava root-knot nematode resistance in our farm plots. These were from 2021 selections and normally they would not venture off station, but we really want to see if we have any lines which are economically competitive. The best way to do that is on the farm. A couple of advanced lines are in farm plots – namely 18-100 and 19-13. I really like 18-100 as it has a really attractive, consistent shape, looks like an Orleans or Beauregard, and up until now has shown very solid yield. I expanded testing this year so should have a good read on its potential going forward. 19-13 is another competitive line – showed very little insect damage in 2021, and it is being trialed again in 2022. Seemed to show less skinning too – a very difficult trait to quantify. I have these two lines and others in a demonstration plot at the station for the field day so excited to see how well they do.





WORKING FOR YOU – US Sweet Potato Council,

Dr. Kay Rentzel, Executive Director U.S. Sweet Potato Council

The US Sweet Potato Council Board of Directors convened for their mid-year board meeting in Washington D.C., the first time back to the nation's capital since 2019 and it was nice to be back in person. The board addressed issues impacting the industry including toxic elements, labor supply, USDA commodity procurement Section 32 Bonus Buy, global supply line status, and proposed tax regulations. Additionally, the board met with USDA Agricultural Marketing Service/Food & Nutrition Service/Specialty Crop Representatives, representatives at the Food and Drug Administration, and Members of Congress. Read below for more information.

Toxic Elements (Heavy Metals) and the Closer 2 Zero

The Council has been monitoring the Toxic Elements issue and implications to the nation's sweet potato industry since being brought to light in February 2021. Monitoring includes not only the industry wide testing of sweet potatoes through an approved lab, public engagement of the issue, as well as the work of the Food & Drug Administration (FDA) on determining appropriate levels of the elements through food consumed at crucial developmental stages in their "Closer 2 Zero" (C2Z) action plan. To demonstrate our pro-active commitment of continuing to provide safe sweet potatoes for consumption, the Council has established a working relationship with FDA. Members of the Board traveled to the FDA office to hear first-hand the progress being made at FDA on the C2Z and to personally share our commitment to addressing the issue. At this time, FDA is using science and the "total diet" impact in determining exposure levels. Of the four elements, arsenic, cadmium, lead and mercury, lead has been given priority because more is currently known of its impact to humans. However, as the research continues the role of elements singularly and in combination with one another will be considered in determining the final action levels.

As additional information is approved for publishing, we will share with the industry. Please feel free to reach out to us at any time with questions or if you are in need of additional information.

USDA – Section 32 Bonus Buy of Fresh Sweet Potatoes - \$40 million allocation; Industry Training in the Near Future

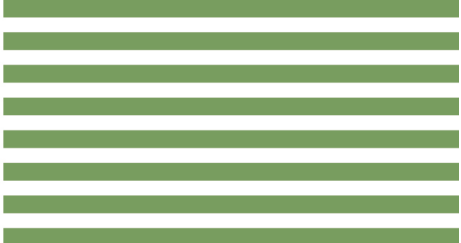


It all started months ago when it became apparent that the sweet potato market was facing sluggish conditions and an over-supply of fresh potatoes. This was due in part to the challenging supply line crisis making it significantly more difficult to sell US Sweet Potatoes to our established export markets. On May 16, USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) announced plans to purchase \$40 million of fresh and processed sweet potatoes for distribution to various food nutrition assistance programs.

The first round of fresh sweet potato purchases has been awarded. USDA is committed to stabilizing the market and provide training for industry members to become approved suppliers for future USDA purchases. *Additional information on an upcoming webinar on how you can become a future supplier to take advantage of valuable opportunities is coming soon!*

Congressional Visits Provide Coverage of Issues Facing the Sweet Potato Industry

Numerous board members participated in congressional office visits to share with members and staff the key issues facing the industry. Key topics covered in the meetings were labor availability, rising input crop and energy costs, taxes, supply lines and the 2023 Farm Bill. While these brief 15-minute visits many not seem like much, it provides the US Council with additional opportunities to follow-up and engage members on key industry issues.



LOUISIANA SWEET POTATO CROP UPDATE

Dr. Tara Smith, Professor and Regional Director-Central Region, Coordinator of Sweet Potato Research Station and Mr. Myrl Sistrunk, Extension Associate, LSU AgCenter

The 2022 Louisiana sweet potato crop was planted timely and under mostly good conditions. 2022 acreage in Louisiana, is estimated to be around 6,800, which is a slight decrease from previous years. Sweet potatoes are the largest vegetable crop grown in Louisiana, with the highest economic value of vegetable crops produced. Total economic value of the crop in 2021 is estimated at \$85 million. Sweet potatoes are recognized as the official state vegetable of Louisiana. The crop first produced commercially in 1910, in Sunset, Louisiana in St. Landry Parish. Presently, the major sweet potato producing parishes are Franklin, West Carroll, Morehouse, Evangeline, St. Landry, Acadia and Avoyelles.

The LSU AgCenter Sweet Potato Research Station is the only research station in the United States, devoted solely to sweet potato research and development. Varieties developed through the sweet potato breeding program, including, Beauregard, Evangeline, Bayou Belle, and Orleans are some of the most popular in the world. Most of the acreage in Louisiana is planted to the Orleans variety, followed by Beauregard. The major market for Louisiana sweet potatoes is the sweet potato frozen processing sector, for sweet potato fries. Approximately 55% of the acreage is directed to this market and the remainder of the crop is sold into the fresh market.

As with any crop, challenges present throughout the season. During bedding some producers dealt with wet conditions. Wildlife issues were a concern for some areas in plant beds as well. Conditions at transplanting varied throughout the production regions, however, most of the crop was planted under ideal conditions this year. A significant amount of the crop was planted in May and all planting was completed by late June. Conditions in late June had become extremely hot and any rainfall during this period was greatly appreciated and needed. Producers in Louisiana are very optimistic about the potential of the 2022 sweet potato crop.

Louisiana Sweet Potato Commission Announcement

Rene Simon-Director, Louisiana Sweet Potato Commission

The 70th Anniversary celebration of the founding of the Louisiana Sweet Potato Advertising and Development Commission is in full swing! The new advertising campaign, featuring many of the state's Sweet Potato farmers has been a big hit. Also, the five TV segments that appeared on *This Week In Louisiana Agriculture* have been viewed by a weekly statewide tv audience of 180,000 and another 28,000 on Facebook and YouTube. Many thanks to Avery Davidson and Karl Wiggers of the Louisiana Farm Bureau's Communication Department for the insightful segments of the different aspects of the industry. The ones featuring the industry's farmers are the most powerful. If you have not seen them, please go to the TWILATV.org to view them. Several more activities are still planned for this year's Anniversary including having the industry recognized by state and local officials for its significance to the historical, cultural, and economic well-being of the Bayou State. More information on these will be forthcoming.

With harvest season set to begin in a month or so, the Commission wishes the best of luck to all the growers that make this industry the best in the country.



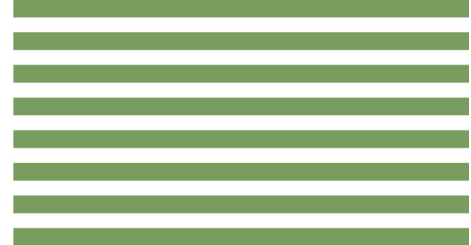
Dr. Chris Clark Leaves an Indelible Mark on Sweet Potato World NCPN Network News

To say that Dr. Chris Clark has had a successful career is an understatement. For over 45 years, Chris has made contributions to the sweet potato industry both nationally and internationally. As an exceptional scholar, researcher, extension professional, mentor and teacher, he has played a pivotal role in the advancement of virus-tested clean seed programs and served as Chair of the NCPN Sweet Potato Tier 2 group since its inception. In 1999, Dr. Clark spearheaded the decision to transition the foundation seed program at the Louisiana State University AgCenter Sweet Potato Research Station (one of seven National Clean Plant Centers for Sweet Potato) to a virus tested foundation seed program. The program has since processed over 80 different sweet potato cultivars and breeding lines through meristem-tip culture and virus indexing and has also maintained by nodal propagation in tissue culture, virus-tested plantlets of each cultivar. Dr. Clark has published over 100 refereed publications, compendiums, and book chapters. He has contributed to the training of graduate students, many of which remain involved with sweet potatoes today. Dr. Clark's soft-spoken humility belies the expanse of accolades he has garnered throughout his career. He has been recognized with numerous national awards from his peers, including the National Sweet Potato Collaborators Group National Impact Award and the Outstanding Plant Pathologist by the American Phytopathological Society. He was selected as Mr. Yam by the Louisiana Sweet Potato Industry in 1990 and received the Distinguished Service Award from the Louisiana Sweet Potato Association in 1997. It takes unique talent and a special personality to successfully bridge the scientific and academic world and the real world of production agriculture. Dr. Clark has done just that. As a go-to resource for both scientists and growers, Chris' legacy as an authority on sweet potato diseases will follow him well beyond his retirement in August 2022. With heartfelt gratitude for all you have done, The National Clean Plant Network family salutes you Mr. Yam, and wishes you all the best in the next evolution of your life!



Upcoming Events,

- The 61st Annual National Sweet Potato Convention will be held in Wilmington, North Carolina. The dates for the National Convention are January 22-24, 2023. Information regarding the meeting can be found via this link: <https://sweetpotatousa.org/convention/>



LSU AgCenter Sweet Potato Research Station **2022 Field Day** **August 18**

**Sweet Potato Research Station
Chase, LA 71324**

Registration: 8:30 a.m.

Field Tours: 9 a.m.

Sponsored lunch provided



Contact AgCenter research coordinator Sweet Potato Research Station Tara Smith, tsmith@agcenter.lsu.edu (318-557-9501) or AgCenter Extension Associate Myrl Sistrunk, msistrunk@agcenter.lsu.edu (318-267-6712) for information or if ADA accommodations are required.

Featured topics:

- Advanced sweet potato breeding lines for the industry
- Validation of nutrient and soil moisture management best practices
- Nematode Management Strategies
- Insect Management Update
- Weed Management Update
- CleanSEED and disease research update
- Industry Updates

The LSU AgCenter and LSU provide equal opportunities in programs and employment.



For more information, contact the LSU AgCenter Sweet Potato Research Station
P.O. Box 120 | Chase, LA 71324 | Phone: 318-435-2155 | Myrl Sistrunk 318-267-6712, Dr. Tara Smith 318-557-9501
Office Hours: Monday – Friday 7:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

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For more information, visit the [LSU AgCenter website](#).