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Sweet Potato Crop Update

Tara Smith, Assistant Professor and Sweet Potato Specialist, LSU AgCenter

The 2007 Louisiana sweet potato harvest season is complete and the majority of reports across the state indicate that producers are pleased with the outcome. Louisiana producers planted approximately 15,000 acres in 2007.

The harvest season got off to a slow start, but unlike the late season problems experienced in 2006, this year's crop was harvested under good conditions. Reports across the state indicated that the crop was slow to size and harvest operations were delayed a couple of weeks in many instances.

In addition, several early plantings in Avoyelles, St. Landry and Evangeline parishes were hit hard with white grub insect damage and a couple of producers in North Louisiana dealt with a significant amount of cucumber beetle damage on some acreage.

Yields have been average this year, (300-400) total bushels / acre in most production areas. In addition, the quality of the crop is good. The yields and quality in conjunction with the current prices should help to compensate for the reduction in acreage this year.

James Deshotel, a producer in Avoyelles parish indicated that the harvest season got off to a slow start. "We got off to a slow start but 60-70% of our crop is very good and we have a lot of good quality potatoes in storage."

Ted McDermott of McDermott Farms in West Carroll Parish was upbeat about the 2007 season. "Yields and quality have been average, and we had a good growing season for the crop." "We are paying attention to fertilization and plant quality and are utilizing our irrigation capabilities. All of these things have made positive differences on our farm."

Larry Fontenot with E&L produce in Evangeline parish expressed several concerns about the 2007

crop. "We had a lot of insect pressure in early plantings, particularly with white grubs." Mr. Fontenot added that they did realize a small yield increase on the last 1/3 of their acreage.

Venoy Kinnaird, a producer in Morehouse parish said that "the season started off good, but that yields were a little lower than usual." Mr. Kinnaird indicated that overall, he was pleased with the quality and current price of the crop."

The 2007 sweet potato harvest is complete but sweet potato producers have very little "down time." Packing and shipping will take over through the winter months and before we realize it, it will be time to prepare seed beds for the 2008 crop.

I have enjoyed working with all of you during the 2007 season. I would like to thank all those who assisted with on farm research trials and demonstrations during 2007. I wish all of you a Happy Holiday Season and Best Wishes for the New Year.

Foundation Seed Update *Tara Smith*

With harvest season behind us, it is not too early to begin planning for the 2008 production year. The LSU AgCenter Sweet Potato Research Station's Foundation Seed production in 2007 went well.

Producers and county agents should have received correspondence in the recent past on changes to the price structure and distribution procedures for foundation seed.

Foundation seed availability of Beauregard will be similar to past years. We have approximately 4200 boxes (220 bins) of B63, and 3500 boxes (185 bins) of B14 available this year.

In addition we have approximately 180 bins of Evangeline seed this year. Producers are excited about the potential of this new variety. We would like to see Evangeline distributed to as many in state growers as possible so that they may have a limited commercial scale look at the variety in 2008.

We also have limited seed quantities of several other varieties available this year. Allocations will proceed as they have in the past. We ask that all producers and county agents submit your orders by January 15, 2008 so that we may process the orders and distribute seed in an efficient manner. If you have any questions concerning the foundation seed program, please contact the Sweet Potato Research Station at: 318-435-2155.

Photos from the 2007 Season



Nelson Bordelon during harvest



Lee Jones and Myrl Sistrunk during harvest



Blaine Joubert during harvest



Evangeline production field



Ted McDermott and Myrl Sistrunk during harvest



James and Shirley Deshotel



Earl, Larry, and Lonnie Fontenot



Ken Thornhill, 2007 Harvest

Market Outlook

Tara Smith

The market has been steady and prices remained stable through the Thanksgiving movement. The Thanksgiving movement was in line with previous years as the average crop volume was moved in the weeks preceding the holiday. Wayne Garber, a producer and broker with Garber Farms in Iota, LA indicated that "Louisiana moved less Jumbos over the holiday pack due partially to the price differential of this grade in other sweet potato producing states." Ryan

Quebedeaux of Harold Quebedeaux Produce said that, "The Thanksgiving movement was very good and we are already transitioning into the Christmas orders. It has not really slowed down."

Mr. Garber added "That it is difficult to predict what prices will do after the first of the year." Ryan Quebedeaux mirrored that sentiment. "The long term forecast for price will depend on the holiday movement in Louisiana and the supply and movement in other producing states as well."

Industry News

Crop Insurance Meeting December 11

A meeting is being held December 11, 2007 to discuss potential changes and amendments to the current crop insurance program. Mr. Rob Cerda of Crop Insurance Systems and Mr. Brian Breaux of LA Farm Bureau will be on hand to present and discuss this information. The meeting will be at the Mansura Fire Station, 1832 Leglise Street, Mansura, LA, and will begin around 1:30 P.M.

Generic Bifenthrin products receive labels

Sniper® (UAP) and Bifenture® (UPI) insecticides have received a label for use on sweet potato. These products in addition to Capture® and Brigade® (FMC) contain bifenthrin as the active ingredient. These products can be used preplant and foliar to control several sweet potato insect pests. Please refer to the individual product labels for detailed information on insect pests controlled, rates, and maximum allowable use per acre per season.

Louisiana Sweet Potato Association/Commission Meeting: January 11-12, 2008, Avoyelles Parish

The Louisiana Sweet Potato Association will hold its annual meeting January 11 and 12th 2008. The meeting is being hosted by Avoyelles Parish this year and plans are underway for an informative and exciting meeting. We are changing things up a bit this year with a goal of boosting grower attendance. The meeting will take place on a Friday and Saturday. The commission and LSPA board meetings will begin at 1:00 on Friday afternoon at the Mansura Fire Station, 1832 Leglise Street, Mansura, LA. The state

meeting on Saturday will be held at the Cochon de Lait Center in Mansura.

Registration will begin at 7:00 A.M. with the meeting starting at 8:00 A.M. A block of rooms is being reserved at the Paragon Casino and Resort in Marksville, LA. Room reservations can be made by calling:

1-800-946-1946.

We hope that all producers and interested industry personnel will plan on attending this year.

2008 National Sweet Potato Convention

The 2008 meeting of the National Sweet Potato Council will be held in Asheville, NC at the Grove Park Inn. Dates for the meeting are January 20-22, 2008. Registration of \$250.00 must be submitted by December 21, 2007 to avoid a late fee. Hotel reservations at the Grove Park Inn can be made by calling: 1-800-438-5800. Additional information for this year's meeting can be accessed via:

www.ncsweetpotatoes.org.

Recipe of the Day

Yam Pecan Biscuits

1 medium sweet potato (yam)
or
1 15-oz. can sweet potatoes, drained and mashed
3 cups all-purpose baking mix
2 tbsps. sugar
1/2 tsp. ground cinnamon
1/2 tsp. ground nutmeg
1/3 cup chopped pecans
3/4 cup skim milk
1 tsp. vanilla

Place fresh* sweet potato and water (enough to cover tops of sweet potatoes) in microwave-safe dish; cover and microwave about 3 to 4 minutes until done; drain, peel and mash. Preheat oven to 450 degrees. In large bowl, combine baking mix, sugar, cinnamon, nutmeg and pecans. Add yams, milk and vanilla, mixing until well combined. Roll on floured surface to 1-in. thick. Cut with 2-in. cutter or glass and place on baking sheet. Bake 10 to 12 minutes or until golden. Makes 1 1/2 dozen biscuits.

*Canned sweet potatoes are precooked.

For another way to enjoy these biscuits, cut yam pecan biscuits in half, spread with honey-mustard sauce and place sliced ham inside. Accessed from the LA Sweet Potato Commission Web Site.

(www.sweetpotato.org)

LSU AgCenter Extension personnel are available to assist you with all of your crop needs. Please call on us if we can be of assistance.

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