



June/July 2010

Vol. 5, No. 2

In This Issue:

- **Sweet Potato Crop Update**
- **Variety Update**
- **Market Outlook**
- **USDA: SCRI Project in Full Swing**
- **Industry News**
- **Featured Recipe**
- **Contact Information**

Sweet Potato Crop Update

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

The 2010 production season is off to a good start. Planting intentions are similar to 2009 and as of June 15th planting was over 80% complete across the state. Plant beds performed well across the state, especially considering the quality of seed that was bedded in many cases. Most producers harvested a percentage of their seed crop in 2009, but supplies were reduced and of lower quality across the state because of adverse weather conditions experienced during the harvest season.

Disease incidence has not been a widespread problem in the plant beds. Beauregard seed performed on par in most cases, though a few producers did indicate more rot and breakdown in the beds than normal this year. A couple of producers experienced increased incidence of bacterial soft rot in the plant beds this year.

Evangeline seed beds also did well this year. Producers that pre-sprouted their seed and delayed bedding operations until soil temperatures warmed experienced positive results. Very few produces have reported any incidence of Sclerotial blight this year, however, research on

Sclerotial blight in Evangeline is ongoing.

Dry conditions have plagued a few producers and field operations and plantings are delayed as a result. Most producers, however, have been able to stay on or ahead of schedule and are pleased with the planting season thus far. Soil moisture was ideal for the majority of the planted crop and as a result, producers are reporting a good stand over most of their crop thus far this year.

Kelsey McKoin, a producer in Morehouse Parish indicated that “the planting season is going pretty smooth this year. We have an excellent stand, probably as good as you can ask for. We are about 85% planted and should finish up around the 25th of June.” Mr. McKoin added that he planted his entire farm in the Evangeline variety this year. “Our plant beds were excellent and the plants are surviving well under the hot conditions we have experienced the last couple of weeks.”

The sentiments were similar in other areas of the state. Todd Cullen, a producer in Avoyelles Parish completed planting in early June. “We planted all Beauregard this year and we have a good stand on most of our acreage.” We have a total of 165 acres this year and only a couple of

our first plantings suffered from some dry conditions.”

Blaine Joubert, located in Churchpoint, Louisiana is also experiencing a good start to the 2010 crop. “We finished planting on June 14th and our stand looks good. We are ready to cultivate.” About 15% of Mr. Joubert’s acreage is devoted to Evangeline this year with the rest planted to Beauregard.

Temperatures have climbed in recent weeks and rainfall has been spotty at best. Many producers have reported a delay in their second cutting and are waiting on plants to finish planting their crop or they are obtaining plants from those producers who have completed planting.

It is estimated that Louisiana producers will plant approximately 14,000 acres of sweet potato in 2010. Beauregard remains the predominate variety planted in Louisiana but producers are expected to increase the acreage planted to the Evangeline this year.

As you move forward into the field season, remain diligent in managing insects and weeds. Detailed insect and weed management guides are available to assist you in making pest management decisions. Please contact me or your respective county agent for more information. Please visit the LSU AgCenter Sweet Potato Research Station web site for a detailed listing of available publications.

http://www.lsuagcenter.com/en/our_offices/research_stations/Sweetpotato

Variety Update *Dr. Don Labonte*

We have several lines coming through the program that are looking promising. **05-111** is an advanced selection we are testing widely this year. Yield has been strong throughout the state, and combined with a very consistent shape, this may translate into more fresh market quality roots per acre. Plants beds of this variety performed very well this year. A high number of plants were produced even from roots coming from hurricane impacted fields. Eating quality is comparable to Beauregard. A decision on release of this variety will be made at the earliest time possible after the harvest season is complete. Another line we are evaluating extensively is 07-146. It demonstrated strong flooding tolerance last year. Yield was high in 2010 and plant bed production this year was excellent.

Evangeline will be planted on approximately 1,500 acres this year in Louisiana. Demand for seed was healthy in 2010. Again, plant bed management is critical. Reports this year indicated good plant production when roots were presprouted and not bedded early.

We appreciate your support and understanding of technology fees on foundation seed and royalty fees on private seed sales. Only through generating revenue, particularly from out-of-state producers, can we maintain a strong breeding program in this era of tight financial support for the LSU AgCenter.

We have several breeding trials out around the state and will provide updates on the

performance of different lines in future editions of the newsletter and at the winter production and advisory meetings.

Market Outlook *Tara Smith*

Louisiana producers are waiting on the 2010 crop to arrive. The 2009 crop packed out earlier than usual due to crop losses experienced last year. Producers are hoping that the early 2010 crop will bring a strong price. There is still residual supply in other production states at this time, so the price at harvest will partially depend on the remaining cured product in those areas.

USDA: SCRI Project in full swing *Tara Smith*

The United States Sweetpotato Industry is at a tipping point. Discovery of sweetpotato by new processing industries and health-conscious consumers is markedly increasing domestic and international demand. Yet erratic yields and escalating costs of production have left many producers on the edge of profitability and vulnerable to any adversity such as drought or hurricanes. Unfortunately, producers must contend with huge variations in storage root yield, quality, disease, and storability in fields planted just days apart and separated by short distances.

A recently funded USDA: Specialty Crop Research Initiative Project (2009-2012) is aiming to improve sweet potato production efficiency and quality in Louisiana and throughout the United States.

The project is a multidisciplinary, multi-state effort that is being coordinated and led by the LSU AgCenter, with collaboration from Mississippi State University, North Carolina State University and University of California at Davis. The project is unique in that it is melding research and extension efforts into one project to address the most pressing needs of the United States Sweet Potato Industry, as identified by our producers. *The long term goal of this project is to improve sweetpotato production efficiency through a comprehensive research and extension effort that focuses on three major themes: i) overcoming production limitations that reduce yield, (ii) improving root quality and addressing food safety, and (iii) addressing emerging disease threats to productivity.*

A key focus of this effort will be to build on new understanding of storage root initiation. A prototype model for describing the relationship between yield and agroclimatic variables known to influence storage root initiation has attracted producers' interest and will be expanded and refined through research on additional variables. Our approach places strong emphasis on developing a participatory (stakeholder driven) decision support system (DSS) which uses data and observations from field and laboratory experiments to provide growers with a tool to help optimize management decisions under different agroclimatic scenarios. An easily updateable DSS will incorporate new knowledge from producer experience and research, helping to ensure

coordination and continuity of the project. Reducing yield variability and improving production efficiencies will ensure our producers are able to capitalize on expanding opportunities and remain profitable. Stakeholders will be actively involved in the development and execution of many research and all outreach activities.

On-farm validation of a model-based decision support system developed through a participatory, interdisciplinary approach will assist growers in making optimum decisions in response to different biological and agroclimatic conditions. The underlying model will provide some degree of predictability and help identify and reduce the extreme variability in yield. A second theme is to lay the foundation for mechanical harvesting by developing breeding lines that are more tolerant of skinning/bruising damage. The third main theme of this proposal is to develop safe, effective controls for postharvest disease problems and ensure food safety and quality by improving postharvest disease management with reduced reliance on fungicides, and developing a needs assessment that identifies food safety hazards and sets priorities to address potential food safety concerns in sweetpotato. The final, cross-cutting theme of this project is to conduct economic assessments and engage stakeholders in a participatory manner to help ensure that learning, action, and enhanced productivity goals are achieved as it relates to all objectives.

We would like to extend special thanks to all producers who are participating in the on-farm validation studies for this project.

Industry News

LSU AgCenter Sweet Potato Research Station to Hold Field Day: August 24, 2010

The LSU AgCenter Sweet Potato Research Station Field Day will be held Tuesday, August 24, 2010 at the research station in Chase, La. The field day will feature updates on several aspects of sweet potato research and development, including: improving production efficiency, breeding, virus and disease research, insect and nematode management, weed management and intellectual property. The field day will start at 8 A.M. with registration and refreshments. The program will begin at 8:30 A.M. and will conclude with lunch. Please make plans to attend. We look forward to seeing you there. Please contact Tara Smith (318-435-2155) if you have any questions regarding the field day.

Louisiana Sweet Potato Commission and Louisiana Sweet Potato Association Board Meetings to be held June 29, 2010

The summer board meetings of the LA Sweet Potato Commission and Association will be held Tuesday, June 29, 2010 at the LSU AgCenter extension office in Avoyelles Parish. The commission meeting will begin at 10 A.M. and will be followed by the association meeting.

LA Farm Bureau Annual Convention to be held June 24-27, 2010

The Louisiana Farm Bureau Federation will hold its annual convention in New Orleans, at the Marriott Hotel. The Sweet Potato commodity conference will be held Saturday, June 26th beginning at 1:00 p.m. Please make plans to attend as your schedules allow.

Alabama to host National Sweet Potato Convention in Orange Beach.



The Alabama Sweet Potato Association will host the 49th Annual United States Sweet Potato Convention on January 23–25, 2011. The meeting will be held in Orange Beach, Alabama at the Perdido Beach Resort. *Make your hotel reservations now by calling: 1-800-634-8001*

Please visit the United States Sweet Potato Council web site www.sweetpotatousa.org to view/download the invitation letter and registration form. For more information about the 2011 Sweet Potato Convention, please contact Arnold Caylor by e-mail (cayloaw@auburn.edu) or at (256) 734-5820.

LSU AgCenter Sweet Potato Research Station Web Site has new look

The LSU AgCenter Sweet Potato Research Station Web Site (<http://www.lsuagcenter.com/e>

[n/our_offices/research_stations/Sweetpotato](#)) has a new design. AgCenter communications has done an excellent job in designing a user friendly site that is easy to navigate. Just a few items you can view on the web site include: The sweet truth about sweet potato production (a video describing sweet potato production), information relating to the foundation seed program, publications on various aspects of production and pest management, and a recently added profile of the research station. Please take time to peruse the site if you have not had an opportunity to do so recently.

Featured Recipe

Tropical Sweet Potato Salad

A great choice instead of the traditional potato salad. The spices, pineapple and toasted pecans provide the perfect complement to the naturally sweet yams.

Ingredients:

2 lbs. sweet potatoes (yams), peeled and cubed
2 tbsp. lemon juice
1 cup chopped celery
1 bunch green onions, sliced
1 (20-ounce) can pineapple chunks, drained
1/4 cup chopped pecans, toasted
1/3 cup light mayonnaise
1 tsp. grated orange rind
2 tbsp. orange juice
1 tbsp. honey
1/4 tsp. ground ginger
1/8 tsp. ground nutmeg
Salt to taste

Instructions:

In a saucepan, cook sweet potatoes for 8 to 10 minutes in boiling water just until tender. Do not overcook. Drain and toss with lemon juice; set

aside. Add the celery, green onions, pineapple chunks, and pecans. In a small bowl, combine mayonnaise, orange rind, orange juice, honey, ginger, and salt. Mix the mayonnaise dressing with the sweet potato mixture, tossing gently. Serve immediately or cover and chill. Makes 8 to 10 servings.

Nutrition:

Per serving: CAL 140 (18% from fat); FAT 3g; PROTEIN 1.8g; CARB 28.8g; CHOL 1mg; SODIUM 42mg
Recipe Credits: Created by Louisiana Sweet Potato Commission spokesperson, Holly Clegg

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.

Sweet Potato Specialist Tara Smith

318-435-2155
tsmith@agctr.lsu.edu
318-557-9501 (cell)

Sweet Potato County Agents

Morehouse Parish
West Carroll Parish
Myrl Sistrunk
318-428-3571
msistrunk@agctr.lsu.edu

Evangeline Parish
Acadia Parish
Vince Deshotel
337-948-0561
vdeshotel@agctr.lsu.edu

Avoyelles Parish
St. Landry Parish
Rob Ferguson
318-964-2249
referguson@agcenter.lsu.edu

Franklin Parish
Carol Pinnell-Alison
318-435-7551
CPinnell-alison@agctr.lsu.edu