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## Meeting Notice

February 9, 2011

1.0 continuing education credits requested

Happy New Year

# 46<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL SWEETPOTATO MEETING

Wednesday, February 9, 2011  
12:30 - 2:00 pm  
UCCE Classroom  
2145 Wardrobe Ave, Merced

***Please note that the winter meeting this year will take place after the Merced County Agriculture Commissioner's metam fumigation regulation update and stewardship class. We will start with lunch and continue with research reports and general business.***

- 9:00 am CAC metam fumigation meeting
- 11:30 am registration for sweetpotato meeting;
- 12:00 noon Lunch, courtesy Lonnie Slayton, Simplot
- 12:30 pm Scott Stoddard. Update on 2010 research: methyl bromide alternatives for the hotbeds, nematicide efficacy trial for buffer zones, Dual Magnum herbicide trial, irrigation trial, Collaborators & ALT variety summary
- 1:30 pm Brian Hegland, Dow AgroScience. Telone use and monitoring project update. Discussion on future use for hotbeds.
- 1:45 pm Sue Sim, Foundation Plant Services. Clean seed program.
- 2:00 pm Sweetpotato Council of California business meeting.

Scott Stoddard, Farm Advisor

## Production Notes

The USDA NASS crop report was released January 12. Total U.S. production of sweetpotatoes in 2010 is 2.38 billion pounds, compared to 1.95 billion in 2009. Every state except Texas had an increase in production in 2010.

Overall, U.S. total production increased about 22 percent.

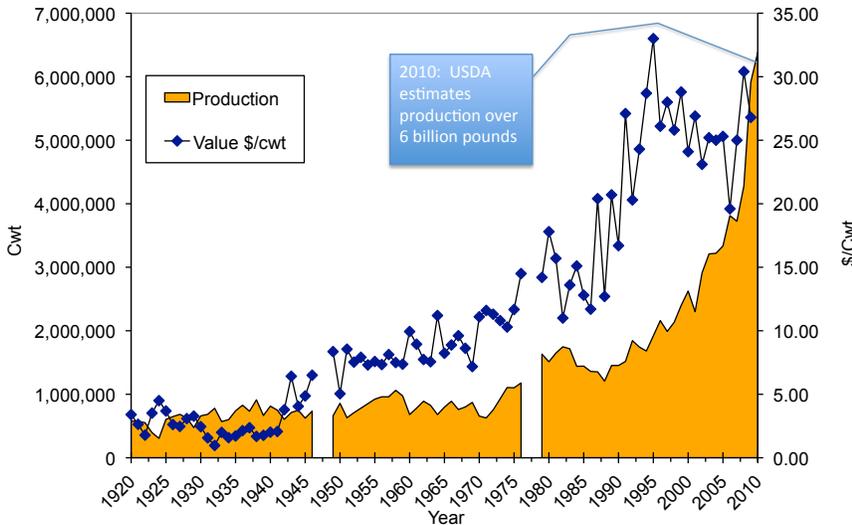
What's interesting is the rate of increase for CA compared to the other states. Based on the last 60 years, we are averaging about 5 Cwt (500 lbs) increase in yield per year. At that rate, we will be at 350 Cwt, or 875 boxes per acre, in 2016. But

looking at the data since 1988, we are increasing at 7.5 Cwt per year, so we'll hit 400 Cwt (1000 boxes/A) by 2016. See chart below. My bet is on the latter -- 40 bins per acre (40,000 lbs) is pretty common anymore. I suspect 50-ton fields (100,000 lbs per acre, or about 105 bins/A, are not far off.

Also in the last 22 years we've increased our acreage about 500 acres per year, from 7100 to 18,500. Whether this will continue is harder to predict. For example, I would be very surprised if we increase acres in 2011, based on the current market. Nonetheless,

we could add 3000 acres by 2016. So with 21,500 acres at 400 Cwt, = 860 million lbs. Assuming these trends continue, by 2020

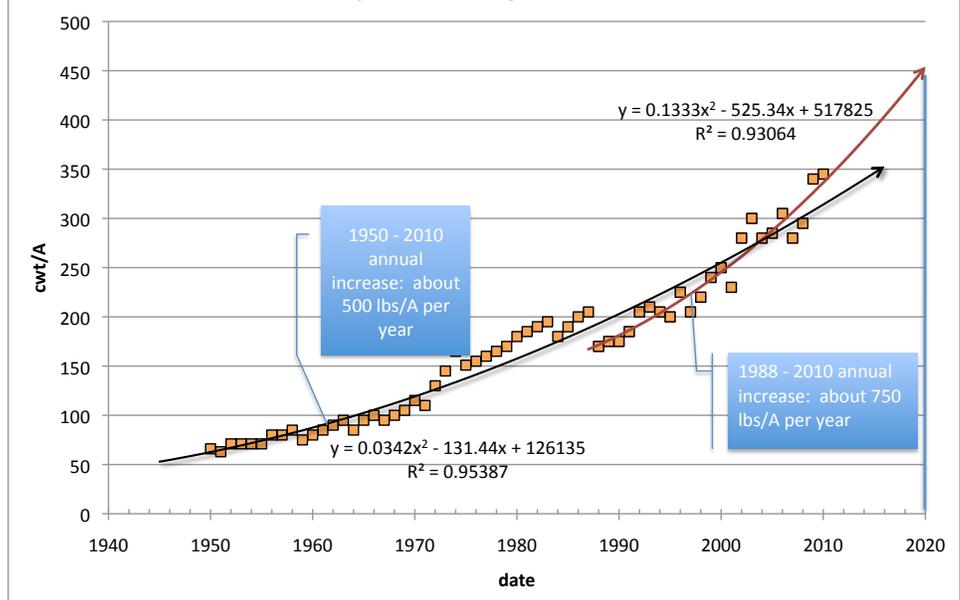
California Sweetpotatoes 1920 - 2010



In my last newsletter, I estimated that California's sweetpotato production would be about 576 million pounds, based on average yields of 800 boxes per acre. But the USDA reported we achieved 639 million pounds, compared to 592 million in 2009. North Carolina produced 972 million pounds compared to 920 million in 2009.

Production in LA and MS, after a disastrous 2009, made a comeback. In 2009, these two states combined produced 288,500,000 pounds; In 2010, these two states combined produced 607,000,000 pounds, for a 110 percent increase.

Cal Sweetpotato Yield Regression 1950 - 2010



California could be producing over a billion pounds.

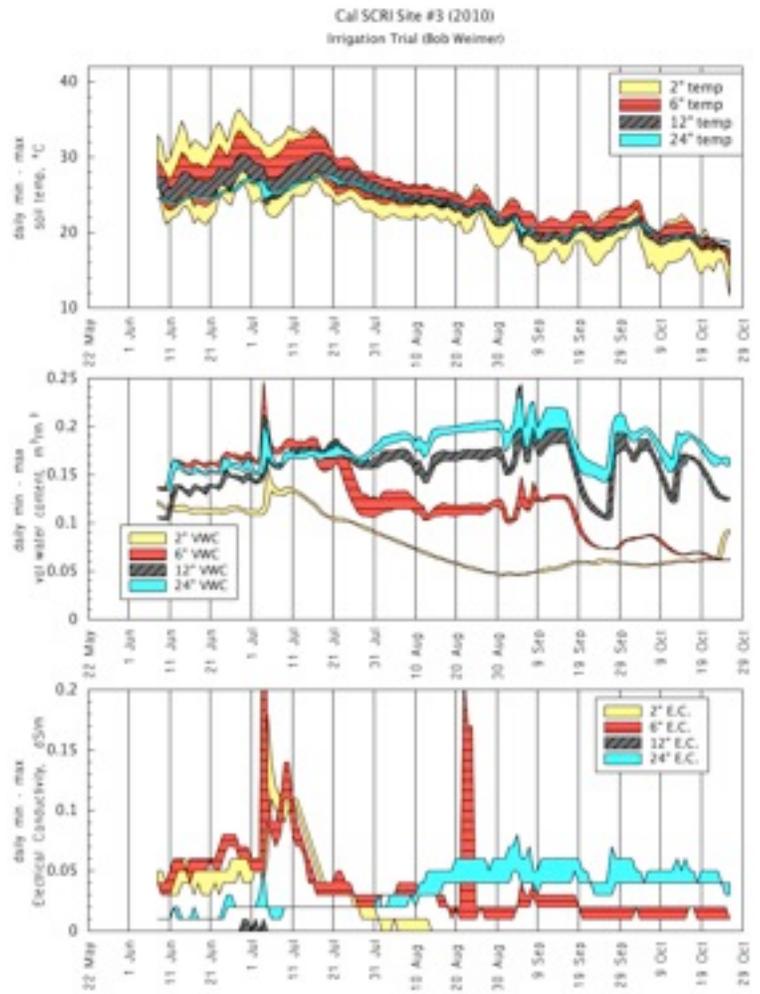
Remember when the almond industry was worried about a billion-pound crop? Soon we could be facing similar marketing challenges. As long as there is a processing outlet, we should be able to sell this crop. But note that we will also need to increase storage capacity by 50%.

North Carolina had yields of about 200 Cwt this year, as compared to 120 in 1989. So their increase is about 3.6 Cwt per year. Like CA, they've also been growing, about 700 acres per year, so in 2016 they could have 54,500 acres @ 225 Cwt = 1.23 billion lbs.

But the big question is why are California's yields increasing twice that of everybody else? I don't have an answer for that. Variety development, clean seed, drip irrigation, and soil fumigation are no doubt important factors.

## SCRI Project Generates Lots of Data!

This past year I monitored three sites for soil temperature, moisture, and EC at 3 depths, plus collected air temp and relative humidity data, as part of the Specialty Crops Research Initiative (SCRI) project with USDA and LSU. The purpose is to determine the importance of these environmental variables on potential sweetpotato yields. One thing that has already been learned from the project is the importance of good temperature and soil moisture for setting storage roots. Storage root initiation occurs in the first 2 - 3 weeks after transplanting. Dry conditions after transplanting keep the roots from forming cells that eventually become the storage roots you want to harvest, instead leaving you with far more feeder roots.



Soil temperature (top), moisture (middle) and E.C. at the irrigation trial, one of the SCRI trial

## Upcoming Events

- National Sweetpotato Collaborators Group annual meeting, Jan 22 - 23, 2011, Orange Beach. This year the Collaborators Group is meeting with the convention to give growers the opportunity to participate.
- National Sweet Potato Convention, Perdido Beach Resort, Orange Beach, Alabama. Jan 23 - 25, 2011.
- Annual winter sweetpotato meeting, Feb 9, 2010.
- Sweetpotato fumigation field day to view methyl bromide alternatives, late April.
- 50<sup>th</sup> National Sweet Potato Convention, St. Regis Hotel, Dana Point, California. Make plans now to attend the convention next year in So Cal.