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## IN THIS ISSUE:

- ✓ February 7, 2017 meeting agenda
- ✓ DPR units requested: 0.5 hours L&R and 2.5 "other". 3.5 CCA units.
- ✓ Production notes.

### Special Note:

*Nimitz is a new nematicide that has Federal but not CDPR registration in sweetpotatoes. This may change later this year, or a 24-C special registration may be sought.*

*There will be a Metam stewardship class from 1:30 - 3:30 pm on Tuesday, Feb 7 (class required by CAC for growers using metam products)*

## 52<sup>nd</sup> Annual

# SWEETPOTATO MEETING

Tuesday, February 7, 2017

8:00 am - noon

UCCE Classroom

2145 Wardrobe Ave., Merced

- |         |   |
|---------|---|
| 7:30 am | Signing in, coffee, and Jantz Sweetpotato muffins<br><i>Courtesy of Yosemite Farm Credit</i>  |
| 8:15    | Scott Stoddard, Farm Advisor. Summary of 2016 variety and pest management trials: Nimitz nematicide, Dual Magnum herbicide, and IR4 herbicide trials. |
| 9:10    | Issa Qandah, Adama Registration status of Nemitz.   |
| 9:15    | Sean Runyon, Deputy Merced County Agriculture Commissioner. New Telone caps and regulations, and the school pesticide buffer zone update.             |
| 10:10   | Lonnie Slaton, PCA, Simplot. Telone availability update.  |
| 10:15   | Coffee break  |
| 10:35   | Jason Tucker. The Sweet Potato Council of California marketing update and 2017 U.S. Convention summary.   |
| 11:00   | Sue Sim, Foundation Plant Service, UC Davis.  |
| 11:45   | Scott Dias, Waterford Irrigation introduction.  |
| 11:50   | Hicham Etal, MID update.  |
| Noon    | Lunch (pork loin & sweetpotatoes by Arnold's Catering)<br><i>Courtesy of Lonnie Slaton with Simplot</i>   |
| 1:30 pm | Sweet Potato Council business meeting.  |

January, 2017

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## PRODUCTION NOTES

Remember the water situation in 2015? Following the abysmal 5.2 inches of precipitation in 2013/14, then 7.2 inches in 2014/15, there was no water behind Exchequer Dam, and so for the first time since its inception, MID did not have an irrigation season.

In 2015/16, precipitation for the Merced area was around 16". Lake McClure went from a historic low of 63,500 acre-ft on Dec 20, 2015, to 615,500 acre-ft on June 20, 2016, about 65% of capacity. Water was not as much of an issue during the production season as a result, but there were plenty of other things to occupy the minds of all growers. 2016 was not a good year for any farmers in California regarding regulations. New overtime rules, minimum wage increases, new groundwater laws (SGMA), nitrogen management plans, quarter-mile buffer zones around schools, and new Telone regulations all came to be. At the end of 2016, the state water board decided to go forward with a proposal to double the amount of water that will be required to be released from Lake McClure for environmental purposes (namely salmon). Thus water was abruptly brought to the forefront again.

The California sweetpotato industry was still working through high inventory levels from the 2014 and '15 seasons, and so acreage did not increase in 2016. But production was very good across most varieties. The Covington crop was especially good in 2016, and even early season reds had high yields. Bellevue surprised most by producing very well in the beds, then finished very strong with good yields and quality in most fields where it was planted. In 2015, USDA

**Table 1. USDA-NASS acreage estimates for 2014 - 2015, and my estimated 2016 area based on state reports at the U.S. Convention.**

	2014	2015	2016
<b>California</b>	19,000	18,500	18,500
<b>North Carolina</b>	72,000	86,000	95,000
<b>Mississippi</b>	21,500	26,000	23,000
<b>Louisiana</b>	8,800	9,000	7,900
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>121,300</b>	<b>139,500</b>	<b>144,400</b>

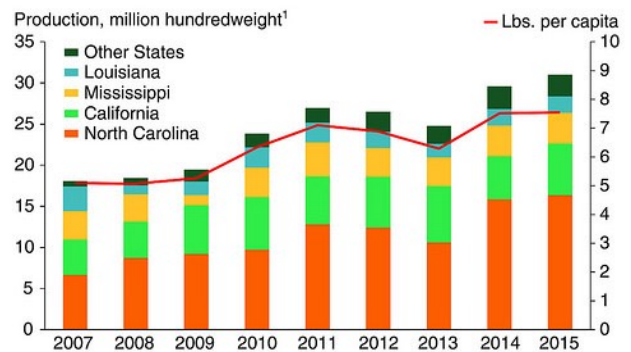
estimated yield for California at 34 bins/A and total production of about 630 million pounds. My estimate for the 2016 crop is 36 bins per acre and total production closer to 680 million pounds.

U.S. sweetpotato consumption is up, and North Carolina is aggressively pursuing export opportunities to northern Europe. Unfortunately, they are also expanding acreage at a greater rate than can be exported. Growers in North Carolina have increased production 60%, from 1.06 to 1.63 billion pounds, while exports have only increased 30%, to about 300 million lbs. Some of this excess is being used by higher per capita consumption in the U.S., mostly through fries and chips (see chart below). The use of sweetpotatoes in pet food is also increasing (as a dehydrated product such as flour or flakes), but those demands are being offset by imports from a variety of countries, including China and Honduras. So unfortunately for the industry, east coast inventories are very high, and price is soft.

Will high inventory levels reduce planted acreage in 2017? Maybe a little, but not much. Low commodity prices for corn, cotton, peanuts, tobacco, and soybean are to blame.

To find out more, follow [market analysis and outlook](#) on vegetables and other commodities on the ERS website.

**U.S. sweet potato production and per capita availability on the rise**



<sup>1</sup>Hundredweight is equal to 100 pounds.

Sources: USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service QuickStats database and USDA, Economic Research Service calculations.

Scott Stoddard, Farm Advisor