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- ✓ Upcoming field day
- ✓ General Notes
- ✓ Jan 30 - Feb 1, 2022. 60th National Sweet Potato Convention at the Bellagio Hotel in Las Vegas. More info forthcoming.

Special Note:

Recent testing by Dr. Antoon Ploeg at UCR shows our current varieties are still resistant to the Peach Root Knot Nematode *Meloidogyne floridensis*,

Scott Stoddard,
Farm Advisor



FIELD MEETING APRIL 27, 2021, WITH LSU PLANT BREEDER DR. DON LaBONTE

Please join me on Tuesday, April 27 for a brief field day to discuss Southern Blight management in hotbeds and a quick summary of 2020 research projects. Don LaBonte will also be there to talk about ‘Vermillion’ (L-13-81) and other varieties of interest. Updates from Sean Runyan, Merced County Assistant Agriculture Commissioner on fumigants, and Caddie Bergren with the CDFA Climate Smart program. Other topics of interest: heavy metals in baby food made with sweetpotatoes and possible new regulations, NCPN Clean Seed Survey.

Sweetpotato Spring Hotbed Field Day

Tuesday, April 27, 9:00 - 11:00 am

Field location: Bob Weimer hotbeds. NW corner of Cressey Way and Westside Blvd.

coffee and donuts

Special Guest: Dr. Don LaBonte, LSU

General Notes:

2022 Convention. After the disastrous and forgettable COVID year that saw the annual convention cancelled in 2021, the Sweetpotato Council of California is the next host state and has started making plans for 2022. The annual sweetpotato convention will be held at the Bellagio Hotel in Las Vegas, January 30-Feb 1, 2022. Registration and reservation information will be at the U.S. Sweet Potato Council website at <https://sweetpotatousa.org/convention/>. Expect registration fees to be around \$490, and room prices to be \$180+.

Heavy metals update. Congressional staff report from the Subcommittee on Economic and Consumer Policy, Committee on Oversight and Reform, U.S. House of Representatives titled “Baby Foods Are Tainted with Dangerous Levels of Arsenic, Lead, Cadmium, and Mercury”. The report featured the logos of the following baby food companies on the title page: Organics Happy Baby, Beech Nut, Gerber, Earth’s Best Organic, Plum Organics, Parent’s Choice, and Sprout Organic Foods. As an ingredient in many of the bottles, sweetpotatoes were mentioned 19 times in connection with levels of arsenic and lead relative to

April, 2021

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The CleanSEED Project. Win a \$500, \$300, or \$200 Visa gift card from Helena Agri-Enterprises, LLC by taking the survey below!

Do you use virus-tested seed? If so, do you know the generation (the age) of your various seed lots? The CleanSEED Project is conducting a survey to learn more about sweetpotato industry challenges, barriers, and strategies to improve virus-tested seed roots and plants for farming operations. The project is headed by Dr. Mark Shankle at Mississippi State University, but involves producers from all states. Feedback from the survey will be used to guide a multi-state workshop for creating a research action plan that will best meet the needs of the sweetpotato industry.

In general, virus-tested seed has been shown to increase yield and improve shape and skin color. But there are other reasons to use virus-tested seed. The purpose of the survey is to determine these reasons, as well as determine the adoption rate by growers around the country. This information will in turn be used to develop a USDA research proposal on a meeting that is being planned for July 21 - 22 in Mississippi.

You can access the survey here: [2021 Sweet Potato CleanSEED Survey](#)

Production. USDA revised estimate for **sweetpotato harvested acreage** is listed below. Acreage for both Louisiana and Arkansas were not reported in 2020, and are my estimates.

	acres, 2018	acres, 2019	acres, 2020
California	21,000	21,500	22,000
North Carolina	78,500	97,700	105,300
Mississippi	26,000	27,500	29,500
Louisiana	9500	8300	7800*
Arkansas	4800	5000	5000*
TOTAL	139800	160000	169,600

USDA estimated total 2020 production for California at 792 million pounds, or 36.0 bins/A, and total value of ~ \$229 million (includes processing), which if correct, works out to be about \$11.56 per box (grower receipts). In 2019, production was reported at 817 million pounds. Considering how short the crop was last summer, I think their guess was way off the mark. I estimated 2019 production at 688 million pounds in January of last year.

Variety Trial Results

Results of the Collaborators Trial in Livingston are shown in the graph below. L-13-81, the new double-skin red from LSU, has been named ‘**Vermillion**’ and has received patent protection. Based on 13 trial-year locations since 2016, the average yield potential is about 85% of Diane. Note that this line does not have root knot nematode resistance and will perform much better on fumigated soil. Vermillion stores much better than Diane, but has much darker, purple-red skin. It also shows scratches less, and has lower plant production in the hotbeds. My advice is to grow both Diane and Vermillion on fumigated ground. Sell Diane early and Vermillion late.



Also note the impact of old seed in the graph below: 6 year old Beauregard had half the yield of new Covington (I did not have new Beauregard seed in this trial in 2020). As part of the clean seed project, I am making a new versus old seed comparison for Covington and Beauregard in 2021.

