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**Louisiana Sweet Potato Commission marks 70 years of excellence**

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By

Keith Loria

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The people at the [Louisiana Sweet Potato Commission](#) are always hard at work promoting the growers and produce professionals who provide people with delicious and nutritious sweet potatoes. But 2022 is a particularly special year for the commission as it is celebrating its 70th anniversary.

“We’ve had a good year, we’ve promoted that, and we’ve done some new ads that really feature our farmers,” said René Simon, director of the Louisiana Sweet Potato Commission.

Of all the commission’s many important accomplishments throughout the decades, Simon said he is especially delighted by its work related to research, noting that 45 percent of the funds the commission collects goes to the LSU AgCenter, an agriculture research center that is associated with the Louisiana State University System.

“I’m very proud the work that LSU does to keep the industry, not just Louisiana, but the whole industry across the United States, up to date with the latest research,” he said. “The research that LSU does is used across the country and even across the world, so it’s very important to the sweet potato industry.”

He also takes pride in the commission itself and the work it has done over the last 70 years.

“That says a lot, and it says that some foresight went into this a long time ago,” Simon said. “The founders of this industry, the founders of this commission, realized that to really move the sweet potato forward, we need to promote and advertise. And that’s what we do—we promote and advertise and try to get the good word out about sweet potatoes.”

And the commission is as important in 2022 as it was in 1952, as today’s farmers benefit from the support the commission provides as they face numerous challenges, and Simon said that this year, weather is one of the biggest of those challenges.

“For farmers, and not just sweet potato farmers, but row crop farmers, it’s just been so wet,” Simon said. “They’ve just been worried about having a crop, and with the high input costs that we have now, they need a good crop to be able to pay all the bills and make a little money. So the immediate concern has been weather, there’s just too much rain.”

That is an immediate concern, and growers are also dealing with the ongoing issues of labor and supply chain issues.

“That puts some pressure on downward pressure on the price,” Simon said. “So that’s been a concern not just for Louisiana farmers, but for farmers across the country.”

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As the Louisiana Sweet Potato Commission celebrates 70 years, Simon said it's been his honor to serve as its director, a role he has held since 2008.

"To have been associated with a group and an industry, not just in Louisiana but across the country, has been a great privilege," he said. "To be able to work with an industry that's been around for a long time is a privilege and it's something that makes me really want to go to work every day and work with the Louisiana industry and the industry across the country."

And you can be certain that Simon and the entire commission will be doing just that for many years to come.

[Keith Loria](#)

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## About Keith Loria |

A graduate of the University of Miami, Keith Loria is a D.C.-based award-winning journalist who has been writing for major publications for close to 20 years on topics as diverse as real estate, food and sports. He started his career with the Associated Press and has held high editorial positions at magazines aimed at healthcare, sports and technology. When not busy writing, he can be found enjoying time with his wife, Patricia, and two daughters, Jordan and Cassidy.

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