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**Consistency is key for Vick Family Farms sweetpotato success**

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By

Keith Loria

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[Vick Family Farms](#) has been growing sweetpotatoes since the early '80s and its Carolina Gold brand has been on the shelves since 1996.

“Our focus has always been and continues to be our quality, sustainability, and the customer service we provide,” said Charlotte Vick, partner/sales and marketing manager for the Wilson, NC-based company. “In an ever-changing world we live in today, that is still our main focus along with how we can be sustainable and provide an affordable supply of sweetpotatoes to the consumer. It’s a constant challenge and one we try and educate ourselves on and develop plans for each season.”

Vick Family Farms began with a small acreage and has grown to more than 8,000 cultivated acres.

“Not all of these are sweetpotatoes, but all of these acres play an important role in sweetpotato production on our farm as they allow us to be able to rotate our sweetpotato crop every three to four years and consistently improve our quality and yields which helps with our sustainability,” Vick said.

The secret, she noted, is consistency.

“I recently heard a speaker that said that is what it takes to be successful in a commodity or enterprise and I thought, ‘that’s it!’ that is what our parents who began our business have been teaching us all these years.”

Another belief that the family has passed down through the years is to always be 5 percent better than peers in production, marketing and operational efficiency.

It’s been some strange times for the sweetpotato industry overall since the pandemic, as new challenges hit the segment.

“During the pandemic, movement was very good — almost more than our facilities could handle mainly due to labor and transportation issues,” Vick said. “Then in 2022 came new challenges. We were still facing issues of a decrease in labor availability but also work ethics. Also, in 2022 we faced very high input costs and there was much pressure on price reduction with sales that in many cases it’s a break even or losing money proposition. Our mindset had to change very fast because you can’t hang on to a crop too long and therefore we had to figure other creative ways to try and at least break even and sell our crops.”

Thankfully, Vick Family Farms’ yields were very good and that helped sustain the company over the past year.

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“We keep our sweetpotatoes in cold storage for a year so we are still working with the 2022 crop,” Vick said. “We had good holiday movement and exports have improved over the last few weeks. We’re packing hard and continuing to work through this crop.”

It’s a primary goal for the company to provide high quality in all of its sweetpotato offerings.

“All of our practices help ensure this,” Vick said. “Of course, with changes in climate it’s a work in progress every single year. You can do everything right and still have issues. We work closely with NCSU to help us solve our problems and lean on their expertise. We try and stay up to date with technology and new efforts to improve quality and yields.”

Being members of NCSPC, the ASPMI and on the NC AG Foundation has helped the company collaborate with others in the industry to keep the category strong.

“We collaborate within these groups as together we are a much stronger industry than working against one another,” Vick said. “We all have similar challenges.”

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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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