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It's a family affair at Vick Family Farms

By

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Officials at [Vick Family Farms](#) use the Southeast Produce Council's Southern Exposure to make sure existing and new customers remember what the business offers and how well they do their jobs.

In fact, they say that Southern Exposure stands out in a crowd among shows at the Wilson, NC-based operation. "It is one of our favorite shows," said Charlotte Vick, the company's chief financial officer and sales director. "Attendance is always good and the timing is perfect for sweet potatoes. We are typically mid-season with sales so we get a chance to visit with customers and review performance and sales.

"It is always a good opportunity to engage with potential new customers and showcase what our operation offers," Vick continued. "This year we will continue to promote our sweet potatoes, value-added packs and new ideas for the coming season as well as our sweet corn operation which will begin planting in early spring. We strive to hit a mid-June harvest with bi-color sweet corn."

Vick, who started with the company in 1991 by working the fields and learning how to manage crop rotation, growing crops, dealing with payroll and getting involved with sales, added that "consistency is important and making sure Vicks is always in attendance so our customers know we are there to service their needs and listen to them."

Vick Family Farms will celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2025. Jerome Vick, Charlotte's father, who died in July 2023, and her mother, Diane Vick, worked hard as founders of the business and over the years grew what started as a 25-acre farm to more than 9,000 acres. Their two children, now partners Charlotte Vick and Linwood Vick, who is now the farm manager, have taken very active roles. Diane Vick manages the labor and day to day operations.

"Our parents instilled a love for agriculture in their children and the value of hard work and determination to be successful," Charlotte Vick noted, adding that the family tradition is continuing as her four children now work for the company. "The operation now runs two packingsheds and grows, packs and ships more than 1.5 million bushels of sweet potatoes annually plus we added sweet corn to its list of produce about four years ago. We supply retail, wholesale and foodservice companies across the world, exporting about 30 percent of the crop each year."

Charlotte Vick said that the company was actively taking on new retail accounts as of the end of 2023 and everyone at the company is optimistic about the opportunity for growth in the coming year.

"We feel very good about our position in the industry and appreciate the partnerships we have," she said. "Our team has proven through the busy holiday period that our goals can always be met in packing and shipping the best quality produce in the industry."

Charlotte Vick added that Vick Family Farms is adding a couple of new packing options this year that will be on display at the show. “We have worked diligently with our suppliers of materials to develop new innovative ideas and are looking forward to showcasing those in a few weeks,” she noted.

But, there are always challenges to be wary of. “Labor continues to be the big monster in the room,” she said. “We have been exploring how we can be more efficient using less labor in order to remain profitable. The only way we see is continuing to automate as much as possible which is also expensive.

“We hope that some of our growing costs will continue to come down even as labor expenses rise,” Vick continued. “But, our customers know the value in having U.S.-grown produce and will continue to support us. We have been very fortunate that we have had a solid foundation to build upon and our goal is to continue to be sustainable for generations to come. We know with these goals we will have to be willing to accept change in the future and will always have to be focused on how we can improve our efficiency.”

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