



- Advertisement -

NCDA expects rising demand of yellow potatoes in 2024

By

Keith Loria

May 27, 2024

North Carolina produces reds, yellow flesh and round white potato varieties that are known for their versatility, as they can be baked, broiled, fried or mashed.

“Our potatoes are known as ‘new’ potatoes and have bright skins that consumers love,” said Matt Luks, marketing specialist with the North Carolina Department of Agriculture, who serves as advisor to the North Carolina Potato Association. “Approximately 70 percent are grown for potato chip markets for the Eastern U.S. and Eastern Canada and approximately 30 percent for table/fresh market for grocery chains.”

North Carolina potatoes will harvest at a great time in the market this year, according to Hunter Gibbs, owner of Pamlico Shores Produce and president of the North Carolina Potato Association, noting it will come just in time for the Fourth of July with chip potatoes and fresh market red, yellows and whites for the summer.

“I think there is more demand for yellow potatoes this year and growers are planting more acreage of them,” he said. “North Carolina grows in the summer and does not store potatoes. Our temperatures are in the 80s and low 90s compared to the north which are in the 60s and 70s.”

Luks noted the state’s potato growers have a unique and niche market opportunity when storage potatoes from the major fall production areas are becoming depleted or may be having quality issues due to storage.

“The North Carolina potato crop is shipped fresh, after proper cooling and can be in your supermarkets within 48 hours of harvest,” he said. “We are located within 12 hours shipping of 65 percent of the U.S. population.”

Weather and labor remain challenges for North Carolina growers, as the region is hot and rainy in the Eastern part of the state where the majority of the production is done, and less and less people are looking for jobs in the agriculture sector.

“The year started off in the El Nino pattern, which made it pretty wet and cold, but as summer has come on, the weather is looking favorable for a good season,” Gibbs said. “We have optimism for a good season. You won’t find anybody more optimistic than a farmer. If he

wasn't he wouldn't plant each year, as there are too many things that could go wrong that is out of their control."

North Carolina potato growers are constantly on the lookout for new varieties to grow and that's true for the upcoming season.

"For instance, Mark Clough works with Irish potatoes under the direction of Dr. Craig Yencho at the North Carolina State Potato Breeding Program, focusing his annual trials with new varieties to see if they work in our climate to increase production, reliability or stability of improved varieties of potatoes," Gibbs said.

The NCDA reports that current consumer trends are around sustainability as a new eco-conscious consumer is emerging steering agricultural practices in all crop areas.

"Other associations and agricultural commodity groups are focused on reducing the environmental impact of farming, implementing no-till practices to encourage healthier soils, incorporating buffer strips of native plants to reduce erosion and promote a healthier ecosystem around and in the crop fields and improving stormwater mitigation techniques that allow farmers to use excess rainfall to their advantage, while reducing the amount of runoff into nearby water sources," Luks said.

The potato industry is no stranger to these ideals and practices and North Carolina potato growers look to promote these ecologically-focused farming practices as well.

"We follow guidelines set by state and federal governing bodies to ensure that our industry remains at the forefront of agricultural relevance to consumer market changes," Luks said. "The biggest strength of the North Carolina potato market is that our season fills the gap other markets need to have a year-round supply of potatoes. It's unique that we have a season that other don't."

[Keith Loria](#)

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.

[Print](#)