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VEGETABLE CROP PRODUCTION IN EAST TEXAS

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The southernpea is the leading acreage vegetable crop grown in East Texas. Over 12,000 acres are grown annually, with about two-thirds of the crop harvested as green-shelled peas and the remainder as dry peas. They are consumed as green-snap peas, green-shelled peas, and dry peas. Many tons are processed each year as canned, frozen and dry peas by processors in East Texas. Texas is the leading processor of imbibed "dry" peas in the United States, while Georgia is the leading processor of fresh peas. Accurate production statistics are not available, but the sum of the best obtainable estimates by state indicated that about 200,000 acres of cowpeas are grown in this country each year. Southernpeas are high in protein and the plant is capable of fixing atmospheric nitrogen through bacterial symbiosis. These two attributes are important as the world shortage of protein and nitrogen fertilizer becomes more critical.

Sweet potatoes have tremendous potential for feeding people; they are relatively resistant to attack by pests and they produce dependable, high yields with minimum applications of fertilizer and pesticides. More people can be fed from an acre of sweet potatoes than from an acre of cereal grains with less energy input. Approximately 7,000 acres of sweet potatoes are raised in Texas with an annual value of more than 13 million dollars. Texas is usually the 3rd or 4th largest sweet potato producing state in the U.S. and receives the highest weighted average price per box of marketable roots. The United States produces more than 200 thousand of the world-wide production of nearly 40 million acres. About 25 percent of the Texas sweet potato crop is marketed soon after harvest and another 25 percent is processed, primarily canned. The remaining 50 percent is stored for marketing during the winter and spring or as seed to produce next year's crop.

This vegetable crop produces more food value per acre than any other cultivated crop. An 8-ounce sweet potato which provides 225

calories, about the same as a packaged diet breakfast, also furnishes nearly one-fifth of an adult's minimum protein requirement. This same 8-ounce sweet potato supplied four times the daily vitamin A requirement and twice the daily vitamin C requirement. In addition to this, there is enough iron for a woman's 2½ day requirement. The sweet potato also contains most of the essential amino acids. Of special interest to nutritionists is the fact that sweet potatoes do not increase blood glucose as do white potatoes, whole wheat or white bread.

East Texas grows 27% of the fresh market tomato crop in the state, with a value of about 4.2 million dollars. This same area produces 11% of the watermelons in Texas with a 3.7-million dollar value.

A limited acreage of sweet corn, peppers, cabbage, cantaloupe, pinto beans, Irish potatoes, onions and cucumbers are utilized locally or at the Dallas and Ft. Worth markets. A considerable tonnage of produce moves through roadside stands throughout the area.

The buying public is interested in good nutrition. Roughly one-third of American consumers are eating more fresh produce now than they were one year ago. Older consumers, those with large families, and those representing upper income households have more diet concerns that other groups. In return, all consumers need information to guide them in their purchases. They want produce departments to be clean and well laid out and their produce to be fresh and clean, value priced and well presented. Vegetable growers must maintain better quality and produce maximum yields to take advantage of this increased interest in the current American "lifestyle".