

## Commissioner's column

North Carolina farmers ensure a brighter Christmas for many through their hard work. I cannot imagine the holidays or the holiday table without North Carolina coming to mind.

As the top producer of sweet potatoes, the second largest producer of hogs, turkeys and Christmas trees, you can bet many folks enjoy the fruits of our farmers labor at the holidays.

In fact, it is not hard to round out the whole meal with local greens, potatoes, corn, pecans and eggs, just to name a few other top commodities. I hope you will consider serving fresh North Carolina meats and vegetables this holiday season. It's not only a great way to serve your guests the freshest foods available, but it is also a great way to support North Carolina farmers.

So is buying a fresh, live Christmas tree this year. The latest reports on North Carolina Christmas trees point to an excellent growing season and the trees are green and extra fragrant this year.

Altogether, North Carolina Christmas tree growers are expected to harvest 4 million trees this year, with 1 million being sold in North Carolina alone. With the close proximity to local suppliers, no area of the state should see any shortage of trees.

It is estimated that one out of every four trees purchased will be a Frazer fir. Other North Carolina varieties include the Virginia pine, white pine and Norway Spruce.

In 2018, Christmas tree growers saw over \$86 million in sales. This year, sales are expected to be in the \$90 million range.

Finally, if you are looking for a unique gift for that person who is hard to buy for, consider specialty food products from North Carolina. North Carolina entrepreneurs are producing an incredible array of special sauces, dry rubs, jerky made from mushrooms, butter mints, crackers, cheeses, peanuts and snacks, craft beer, wine and spirits, and more.

You can find these and many more online at [www.gottobenc.com](http://www.gottobenc.com).

I invited you to join me in celebrating North Carolina's agricultural bounty this holiday season. Remember, when you want the very best, it's Got to Be NC!