

I am proud that North Carolina farmers feed people locally, nationally and internationally. Ag exports are significant to the state's \$92.9 billion ag economy, with the state producing around \$3 billion in ag exports annually.

We continue to work to open new markets for North Carolina products through established trade offices, trade shows and trade missions. With more than 95 percent of the world's 7.7 billion population living outside the United States, the global marketplace represents tremendous opportunity for North Carolina.

Based on our latest numbers from 2021, our top trade countries are China at \$566 million, Canada at \$396 million, Mexico at \$260 million, South Korea at \$187 million, Vietnam at \$148 million, and Taiwan and the Netherlands at \$106 million each.

Meat and meat products accounted for 29 percent of total ag exports at \$842 million. Miscellaneous value-added products such as Campbell canned soup and some BBQ sauces came in second in leading ag products at 16 percent or \$470 million in exports. Just behind that is tobacco at \$403 million or 14 percent. Lumber products also are a significant export at \$311 million or 11 percent of total exports.

We also export \$171 million in vegetables including sweet potatoes, which account for nearly 90 percent of our vegetable exports and are popular exports to Canada, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands.

Muscadine grapes are another crop that we are hoping to make progress with in China and South Korea, where the grapes have been well received because of the fruit's health benefits and taste.

I am optimistic about the future of North Carolina ag exports as the world population continues to grow. The positive business relationships we build today help reinforce our state's reputation for providing top quality products whether that's fresh fruits and vegetables, quality protein products, beverages, seafood, timber or value-added processed foods.

Growers or agribusiness owners interested in learning more about international markets and opportunities that may be available should contact the International Marketing Section at 919-707-3153.

Our International team, led by Cathy Ma, assistant director of International Marketing, has the expertise and experience to help businesses navigate the rules and

requirements to sell products overseas. The idea of finding an overseas market for products and the regulations involved in export may seem daunting, but our International team can help walk producers through the steps needed to determine if exports makes sense for your business.

In other news, I want to extend my congratulations to Russell Hedrick of Catawba County for topping the 400 bushel yield for acre for corn in the 2022 North Carolina Corn Growers Association yield contest

I have always said that I would present \$100 to the first farmer that topped the 400 bushels per acre yield mark and I am pleased to stand by that promise. Well done, Russell!