

# Catfish Farming Is An Emerging Industry

Believe it or not, catfish farming is booming! And Robert Bey of Lake Waccamaw, North Carolina is excited about that. Robert and Neil Allen own Buck Trail Aquafarm. Kent Allen is farm manager. Together they sold in excess of 8,000 pounds of farm-raised catfish in 1981.

"We aim to sell a premium quality product," Bey states. "Quantity is less important to us." Surprisingly, when people try farm-raised catfish they are almost always pleased.

Some people around here have negative ideas about eating catfish. But, at a catfish farm, highly developed pelleted feed eliminates any muddy or "off flavor." Ponds are carefully managed to produce consistently high-quality fish. Each batch is taste-tested at harvest. If an off flavor is present, the fish are not harvested.

Buck Trail Aquafarm has just added four new ponds to give them a total of twelve ponds, 40 feet wide and 300 feet long. "We use well water, constant aeration, and can now produce our own fingerlings in our new hatchery," Bey says.

He is understandably enthusiastic. Catfish farming is an emerging industry.

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Economics and Statistics Service, 76,680,000 pounds of cultured catfish were sold in 1980 for a value of \$53,572,000. The average weight per fish was just over one pound and the average price to the farmers was 70 cents per

pound. About 3,000 pounds per acre of pond is the average yield. Somewhere between 1.5 and 2 pounds of feed are required to produce a pound of fish.



By Johnny Foster  
UNC Sea Grant

The undisputed catfish farming capital of the world is Mississippi. Almost 25,000 acres of ponds were in production in 1979. That was a ten-fold increase in the last 15 years. The average farm is 160 acres and most ponds are about 20 acres each.

The industry in Mississippi is experiencing an explosive growth with

## UNC Students Recognized

CHAPEL HILL—Minority students at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill were recognized for outstanding academic achievement here Thursday, March 25, by the UNC-CH chapter of the Pre-Professional Health Society.

The society, an undergraduate organization for students pursuing degrees in health-related fields, honored 118 black and American Indian undergraduate students who have maintained a "B" average or better.

Brenda McClain, a UNC-CH medical student, was the featured speaker.

Students honored include: Sherrod Banks, freshman, of Edenton; Mitchell Vann, junior, of Gates; and Anthony Baker, freshman, of Elizabeth City.

## Weather Service

Continued From Page 7-B

The service has been used by many radio stations from across the state with many more planning to come on board as the season warms up. These radio stations do recorded or live reports over their local airways with the assistance of the Chamber staff. Television stations and printed news medias have also taken advantage of the service in the past and are expected to do so again now that the number has been reinstated.

new markets being established by producers and processors. During the past 15 months, catfish pond acreage has increased 25 per cent. The projected growth by 1985 is 43,000 to 45,000 acres.

Alabama also has a large catfish farming industry. They are third behind Mississippi and Arkansas. But, in Alabama the ponds are much smaller, seldom larger than 2 to 5 acres. The average catfish farm is 30 acres, and nearly all of the

producers are "part-timers." They either farm other crops or have other occupations. Nevertheless, 8,500,000 pounds of catfish were grown in Alabama in 1980.

Most cultured catfish is sold to restaurants. That is precisely where Buck Trail Aquafarm plans to market

their production. "We sell most of our product to restaurants in Raleigh," Bey emphasizes, "much of it alive." North Carolina growers will have higher production costs than growers in Mississippi and Alabama, so they must get a higher price for their fish. Buck Trail and the other commercial catfish farms in North Carolina do get a much higher price.

Future columns will deal with catfish growing techniques and the importance of marketing. Meanwhile, readers should look for a chance to try farm-raised catfish. You're in for a treat if you do.



The real title of Whistler's portrait of his mother is "Arrangement in Gray and Black."

# Regulations Are Designed For Sweet Potatoes

RALEIGH — Growers, packers, and processors especially the sweet potato weevil.

"Under the Vegetable Plant Regulations, any sweet potato plant material for the purpose of growing a crop must be certified in the state of origin to meet North Carolina's requirements," said state Agriculture Commissioner Jim Graham.

There are, however, certain areas from which movement into North Carolina of sweet potato

material for any purpose (planting, bedding, packing, processing) is prohibited due to the danger of introducing the sweet potato weevil.

Most states are only partially infested so they are only partially quarantined. The entire state of Florida is under quarantine.

According to the

regulations, sweet potato roots can be moved from a quarantine area only if they are for packing or processing, and have been fumigated and specially handled to prevent infestation. In this case, the Plant Industry Division must be notified at the time of shipment.

Graham stressed that if

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