

§ 106-1068. Powers of Commissioner to regulate and promote North Carolina sweetpotatoes.

(a) The Commissioner of Agriculture may take all actions necessary and appropriate to create, register, license, promote, and protect a trademark for use on or in connection with the sale or promotion of North Carolina sweetpotatoes and products containing North Carolina sweetpotatoes. Participation in the branding program authorized by this section shall be voluntary. The Commissioner may impose and collect a reasonable royalty or license fee per hundredweight of sweetpotatoes for the use of such trademark on products containing North Carolina sweetpotatoes or the packaging containing such sweetpotato products. The Commissioner shall determine the fee in consultation with the North Carolina Sweetpotato Commission. The Commissioner shall remit all royalties and license fees received from this Article, less any costs associated with monitoring the use of the trademark, prohibiting the unlawful or unauthorized use of the trademark, and enforcing rights in the trademark, to the North Carolina Sweetpotato Commission for the promotion of North Carolina sweetpotatoes.

(b) The Board of Agriculture shall, in consultation with the North Carolina Sweetpotato Commission, adopt rules that may include, but are not limited to, quality standards, grades, packing, handling, labeling, and marketing practices for the marketing of sweetpotatoes in this State using the trademark created for the voluntary branding program established by subsection (a) of this section, and such other rules as are necessary to administer this Article. The Board of Agriculture shall, in consultation with the North Carolina Sweetpotato Commission, also adopt rules establishing a registration, inspection, and verification program for the production and marketing of North Carolina sweetpotatoes in this State using the trademark created for the voluntary branding program established by subsection (a) of this section. All North Carolina sweetpotatoes sold in connection with the voluntary branding program shall conform to the prescribed standards and grades and shall be labeled accordingly.

(c) The Commissioner and the Commissioner's agents and employees may enter any premises or other property where sweetpotatoes marketed or labeled, or intended to be marketed or labeled, using the trademark created for the voluntary branding program established by subsection (a) of this section are produced, stored, sold, offered for sale, packaged for sale, transported, or delivered to inspect the sweetpotatoes for the purpose of enforcing the provisions of this Article and the rules adopted under this Article.

(d) The North Carolina Sweetpotato Commission shall render advice regarding the exercise of the Commissioner's authority pursuant to this section. The North Carolina Sweetpotato Commission shall also provide advice and recommendations to the Commissioner on plant pest regulatory issues affecting sweetpotatoes, over which the Commissioner has regulatory jurisdiction. (2020-18, s. 6; 2024-32, s. 2(a).)