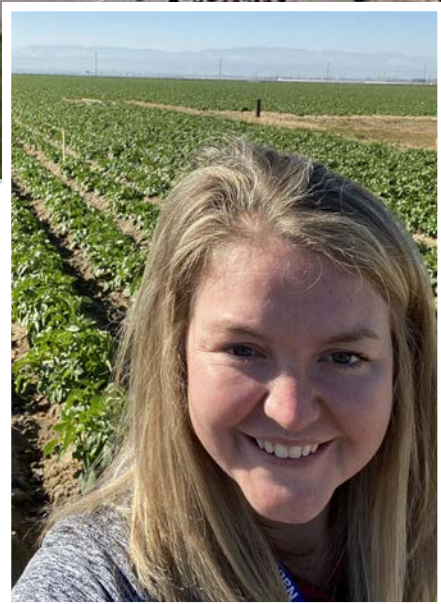


INTERVIEW

MORGAN FORBUSH,

field manager, McCain Foods

By Joe Kertzman, managing editor, *Badger Common Tater*



NAME: Morgan Forbush

TITLE: Field manager

COMPANY: McCain Foods

LOCATION: Plover, WI

HOMETOWN: Stevens Point, WI

TIME IN PRESENT POSITION: 8 months

PREVIOUS EMPLOYMENT: Started as a field representative with McCain Foods in 2017

SCHOOLING: Michigan State University

ACTIVITIES/ORGANIZATIONS:

Associate Division Board member of the Wisconsin Potato & Vegetable Growers Association (WPVGA)

FAMILY: Fiancé, Hunter Smolarek, getting married in December

HOBBIES: Spending time with family, traveling and being outdoors

Famous for French fries, appetizers, frozen and chilled prepared potato products, desserts, and more, McCain Foods “celebrates real connections through delicious planet-friendly foods.”

Servicing the retail and foodservice industries, the food processor became known for its French fries more than 60 years ago and is still making them today.

Potato or sweet potato French fries come in straight, crinkled, and thin- or thick-cut and skin-on or skin-off varieties, and are either fried, oven baked or microwaved.

In addition, the processor transforms the versatile potato into such creations as “jacket potatoes,” wedges, roast potatoes, croquettes, mashed potatoes, lattice fries, spirals, potato pancakes, hash browns, potato smiles, potato patties, “Tasti Taters” and potato bites, to name a few.

The Plover, Wisconsin, production facility sources potatoes and vegetables, the latter for appetizers, from many contract growers and Wisconsin Potato & Vegetable Growers Association (WPVGA) members in the Central Sands and

throughout the state.

McCain Foods Field Manager Morgan Forbush sits on the WPVGA Associate Division Board of Directors and has forged her own career path, starting as a field representative with the company, in 2017, and becoming field manager with the retirement of long-time field department manager, Kerry Larson.

How long has McCain Foods had a processing plant in Plover, and can you give me a brief paragraph-or-two history of the processing plant in Wisconsin?

McCain is a privately owned, Canadian-based family company. McCain purchased the old Ore-Ida plant, in 1997, and through

Above: McCain Foods purchased the old Ore-Ida plant of Plover, Wisconsin, in 1997, and through the years has added increased production capacity. Morgan Forbush, shown in a California potato field during a Potato Industry Leadership Institute (PILI) trip, is the field manager for the McCain fry facility in Plover.



the years added increased production capacity.

Today, the plant operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The product mix is one of the most complex in the network. This “flex” facility has the capability of producing potato-based products that are conventional, and battered, fried and non-fried specialties.

How many other processing plants does McCain have in the United States and worldwide?

McCain has nine plants across the U.S. and over 4,000 employees. Globally, we have 49 production facilities on six continents and nearly 22,000 employees.

How many full- and part-time workers does McCain employ in Wisconsin?

McCain has over 1,400 employees in Wisconsin.

Does the plant in Wisconsin specialize in foodstuffs or operations that your other plants don't? If so, explain.

The Plover fry plant has three specialty lines and one mashed potato line other than the two conventional lines. On the specialty lines, the plant makes Smiles/Emojis/ Formed Hash Brown Patties and Tots.

You must be proud of your own history with the company, Morgan. How has your career progressed?

I started with McCain Foods in 2017 as a field representative working with the growers here in Wisconsin.

I transitioned into the field manager roll in January of 2022 and have enjoyed the new position. I really enjoy working alongside the growers and collaborating on ways that we can ensure the Plover fry plant has the correct potatoes that we need to be able to make the finished product—French fries!

I believe your dad worked or works for McCain Foods, is that correct?

Left: On Mortenson Bros. Farms of Plainfield, Wisconsin, an early potato crop goes through a Spudnik Air Separator to make sure the spuds are clean for the McCain fry plant in Plover, Wisconsin.

Right: McCain Foods has test fields where the production facility grows around 30 species of potatoes.

And in what position? My dad does not work for McCain, but he does work in the potato industry. Working with my dad while in high school and college allowed me to

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Interview . . .

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be involved in the potato industry and I quickly caught the bug/passion that all potato growers and industry members have around the world.

McCain Foods recently expanded its appetizer plant operations in Plover. Can you give me a few details?

McCain is building a new processing line to support our cheese-based appetizers business. This expansion will create over 100 new jobs for the local region.

This is our bagging/packaging issue. What types of bagging/packaging machines does McCain Foods utilize?

McCain mainly uses high-speed vertical bagging machines that allow for many different types of bags.

Has technology advanced in this area, and if so, how? Yes, the technology used has greatly increased the speed that our facility



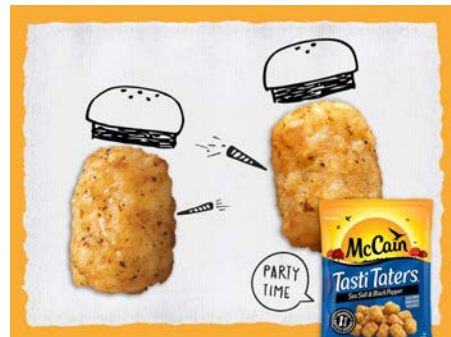
Led by Morgan Forbush, the McCain Foods field department at the Plover fry facility includes, from left to right, Mac Bean, Howie Marceau, Mike Johnson, Alex Chisholm, Morgan, Rodney Stott, Samantha Thompson, and Cody Johnson.

can run, as well as decreased the manual labor done within the plant on the processing and packaging sides of the business.

Is there a large push from customers to go toward biodegradable and

compostable bags? We have made a large push to have more environmentally friendly packaging.

Who are your main customers—wholesales, retailers, other? The Plover fry plant makes a lot of retail



Among McCain Foods' many potato and appetizer offerings are Seasoned Curly Fries; Tasti Taters tater tots; Craft Beer Battered Onion Rings and Thin Cut and Waffle Cut Potatoes/ fries; Smiles; Shredded Hash Browns; and Seasoned Waffle Fries.





McCain Foods is supporting farmers and families by donating 200 million meals to food banks and NGO's (Non-Governmental Organizations) by 2025.

McCain-branded product as well as non-McCain branded retail. Along with retail, the Plover plant makes product for our food service and quick service restaurant customers.

McCain Foods is a WPVGA member. Why is this important for the company to be involved with the grower and Associate Division members? It is important for McCain to be involved in the Wisconsin Potato & Vegetable Growers Association because it allows us to collaborate with not only growers, but also other industry members within our community.

You also sit on our Associate Division Board, Morgan. Why, and what do you hope to get out of that personally and professionally? When I first stepped into the role of field manager, one of my goals was to get more involved in the industry, which includes learning about the companies that growers work side by side with in the Central Sands.

I believe sitting on the Associate Division Board has helped me do that.

I imagine processing in general and the processing plant, tools and machines have advanced greatly over the years. Any insight into what's new and improved? Two of the improvements that have come to the French fry industry over the last

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"I really enjoy working alongside the growers and collaborating on ways that we can ensure the Plover fry plant has the correct potatoes that we need to be able to make the finished product—French fries!"

— Morgan Forbush



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Left: Morgan Forbush shared this image of a freshly planted potato field in the Wisconsin Central Sands.

Right: It's all part of the process at McCain Foods when potatoes are sorted, and then graded and safely stored.

10 years are the PEF (Pulsed Electric Field, an efficient non-thermal food processing technique using short, high voltage pulses) and higher-quality optical sorters.

Both technologies have allowed us

to decrease water usage and labor used in the process.

Do you enjoy working with the WPVGA grower members and Associate Division members, Morgan? If so, please expound.

I do enjoy working with the WPVGA grower and Associate Division members. There is a passion in this industry that you just don't see in other industries.

I really enjoy working with people who do what they love every day, and that is how the WPVGA grower and Associate Division members are.



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As part of a Potato Industry Leadership Institute trip to California, McCain Foods Field Manager Morgan Forbush visited a Long Beach container terminal.



What do you hope for the future of McCain and its position in the Wisconsin potato and vegetable growing area, Morgan? For you personally in the future? I hope that we can continue the great collaboration that my predecessor, Kerry Larson, started. Collaboration is the key to success!

I hope to continue to be on the Associate Division Board until my term/terms are up. I see a lot of value added in being able to collaborate with other Associate Division members and growers through the WPVGA.

Is there anything I've missed that you'd like to add, Morgan?

Above: Great fries come from great places, such as Upper Knoxford, New Brunswick, Canada, where long-time McCain grower Eugene Antworth and his son, Ethan, are shown harvesting spuds.

Thank you, Joe, for thinking of McCain Foods for the bagging and packaging issue. **BCT**

Contact: Jim, John or Joe

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