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SORGHUM E-Notes

January 22, 2009

NATIONAL SORGHUM PRODUCERS:

the voice of the sorghum industry

Vilsack Confirmed as Secretary of Agriculture

Tom Vilsack was confirmed as U.S. Secretary of Agriculture this week, on the same day as President Obama was sworn into office. The Senate unanimously confirmed him for the nation's top agriculture post.

In his first press conference as Secretary, Vilsack told reporters that he is ready to start work on three of his priorities: ethics, civil rights and reviewing all pending rules and regulations from the outgoing Bush Administration, per instructions from President Obama's Chief of Staff, Rahm Emanuel.

Vilsack said that he is committed to dealing with civil rights issues at USDA in an aggressive way to ensure that in the future, USDA "does not discriminate in any way or any form." He also pledged to focus on implementing the provisions of the farm bill as Congress intended.

Asked about nutrition programs, which account for the lion's share of farm bill funding, Vilsack said, "There is the opportunity for us to be creative and innovative, to inject more nutritious foods into the programs. I would anticipate we probably will put additional resources into food programs."

The Secretary has named top staff positions and has quelled speculation about other staffing at this point. His Chief of Staff will be John R. Norris, Deputy Chief of Staff is Carole E. Jett, and David J. Lazarus has been named Special Assistant to the Secretary.

RMA Announces Price Elections

The Risk Management Agency (RMA) has announced price elections for sorghum for CRC and GRIP policies. Sorghum will be insured at \$3.77 per bushel for areas with a sales closing date before March 15. This compares to \$3.85 per bushel for the APH plan of insurance. Producers also need to ask their agents about enterprise units. RMA has substantially increased the subsidy on enterprise units and this could result in much lower producer premiums for enterprise units. Enterprise units are available in all counties for CRC policies. The availability for APH policies is dependent on the special provisions for each county. Producers should contact their agents for more information, as some counties have a sales closing date of February 2, 2009.

NSP remains very concerned that grain sorghum price elections are so low in comparison to corn. However, because of crop insurance language in the 2008 farm bill, the discrepancy between corn and sorghum price elections should be resolved for 2010 crop year.

NSP Urges Objective Grading

NSP sent a letter to Deputy Administrator of the Federal Grain Inspection Service (FGIS), Randall Jones, thanking FGIS for its commitment to working with NSP on odor grading issues in grain sorghum and urging continued work toward resolving confusion in the inspection system.

The issue came to light last spring when NSP was notified that grain inspectors at the Gulf were grading sorghum unacceptable that had been graded acceptable at its origination point. In the letter sent to FGIS, NSP recommended that FGIS create a task force of industry stakeholders, producers and government representatives to outline a plan of action for determining grades based on odor. NSP encouraged FGIS to maintain clear objectives within the panel and specifically define the word "distinctive" in regard to grain sorghum odor.

NSP will continue to monitor this issue on behalf of growers and the grain industry and keep our membership up-to-date.

About Sorghum Notes

SORGHUM Notes is a publication of the National Sorghum Producers. NSP represents U.S. sorghum producers. The organization serves as the voice of the sorghum industry from coast to coast through education and legislative and regulatory representation. To learn more about NSP visit our website at www.sorghumgrowers.com. Write to us at National Sorghum Producers, 4201 N Interstate 27, Lubbock, TX 79403. *To unsubscribe to Sorghum Notes, please reply to hannah@sorghumgrowers.com.* If you have questions about the sorghum industry or the National Sorghum Producers, please do not hesitate to **call NSP at (800) 658-9808**.

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Quote of the Week:

After all the trouble you go to, you get about as much actual "food" out of eating an artichoke as you would from licking 30 or 40 postage stamps.

-- Anonymous

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