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## **SORGHUM E-Notes**

November 5, 2009

NATIONAL SORGHUM PRODUCERS:  
*the voice of the sorghum industry*

### **Texas Producer Represents Sorghum in Washington, D.C.**

Jon Whatley, a sorghum producer from Odem, Texas, travelled to Washington, D.C. this week on behalf of NSP to represent sorghum in a casual discussion with congressmen about crop insurance. Whatley met with Congressman Leonard Boswell (D-Iowa), chairman of the General Farm Commodities and Risk Management Subcommittee, and was joined by ranking member, Congressman Jerry Moran (R-Kan.).

Whatley stressed the seven year struggle NSP has had to correct the crop insurance price election formula, explaining that NSP recently worked with the Risk Management Agency (RMA) to correct this formula. Whatley also discussed the need for insurance coverage for both forage and sweet sorghum as both of these crops are now being used to produce ethanol. He also discussed premium ratings for sorghum. Ratings have not been updated since the Ag Risk Protection Act, not allowing growers to lose a fully-insured first crop of cotton or wheat and both replant and fully insure sorghum as a second crop when it has little to no chance of survival. Congressmen Boswell and Moran were very responsive to Whatley's comments and are aware that changes are necessary. Whatley thanked both of the Representatives for their time and all their continued effort with these issues.

NSP will continue to provide updates on all of these issues as they surface.

### **The Fight for Atrazine Continues**

Although discussions regarding atrazine may seem like old hat, the fight is not yet over. This vital crop protection tool is still being attacked by activist groups and the media. Atrazine is an important herbicide to many farmers around the world and without it, environmental impacts would be severe.

NSP reported last week that atrazine would face a Scientific Advisory Panel (SAP) to determine its environmental impacts. Jere White, executive director for the Kansas Grain Sorghum Producers Association and chairman of the Triazine Network, said the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is not conducting this investigation of atrazine like past reviews. "The SAP has acknowledged that the focus on atrazine at this week's meeting was 'unusual,'" he said. "This meeting would have normally taken place as a review of all the work the SAP was looking at next year and not merely focus on one subject. Regarding atrazine, the catalyst suspected of causing a new review specific to this herbicide is the New York Times article that was published some time ago, which is unlike the normal scientific evidence that is required."

Tuesday's SAP is just the first of at least four concerning atrazine during the next year. NSP is working hard to represent sorghum producers on this issue. Click [here](#) to listen to an interview conducted Tuesday with NSP Chairman of the Board, Gerald Simonsen, discussing the importance of the crop protection tool to farmers.

## **Healthcare Bill Introduces Worrisome Tax**

The Affordable Health Care for America Act, or H.R. 3962, is causing some controversy this week among Washington, D.C. and agricultural groups due to a built-in tax. This employer mandate, an eight percent payroll tax, would be imposed on businesses that chose not to cover their employees and would provide allowances for seasonal workers.

Bob Stallman, president of the American Farm Bureau, said in a letter opposing the bill sent Tuesday to House members, that the individual coverage language in H.R. 3962 is a source of concern. "Farm Bureau believes that health care is primarily the responsibility of individuals, and we are opposed to provisions in the bill that mandate individual coverage. Most farmers and ranchers are self-employed and would already cover themselves if they could afford it. Passing a mandate accompanied by the threat of a tax for noncompliance only makes the situation worse for people unable to afford coverage in the first place."

The bill also currently states that employers with more than 25 employees might have to provide health care options or pay a \$750 annual fee per full-time employee and a \$375 annual fee per part-time employee. Senators Blanche Lincoln (D-AR) and Kay Hagan (D-NC) are attempting to exempt farmers who hire seasonal workers from the small business tax credit calculations.

For more details about H.R. 3962, see the link below:

<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/search/pagedetails.action?granuleId=&packageId=BILLS-111hr3962IH>

## **Ad Hoc Disaster Relief Requests Pour In**

In Washington, D.C. this week, several representatives of producer organizations from Louisiana, Arkansas and Mississippi are discussing the need for disaster relief funds with members of Congress. Senator Lincoln (D-AR), among others, will be meeting with the representatives as well to review the extent of the damage in the Midwest.

Results of these meetings will be reported here by NSP in the coming weeks, so stay tuned for the latest updates.

## **Senate Moves Along Climate Change Bill**

The Senate Environment and Public Works committee met this week to begin the markup of the Clean Energy Jobs and American Power Act. The session was deemed a business meeting by Chairwoman Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.) so the markup could begin despite the absence of committee Republicans. This is a result of the threat made by the Republicans last week to boycott the session until a full cost analysis of the measure is provided, showing caps on greenhouse gas emissions and an established market for the trade of government-issued pollution allowances.

Using an uncommonly used interpretation of panel rules, Boxer was able to push the bill out of her committee without the presence of minority participation. Democrats said this action was meant to send a message to the world that the U.S. is serious about capping carbon dioxide and other emissions, especially prior to the international climate change negotiations next month in Copenhagen.

NSP will continue to bring you information about the bill's progress as more development occurs.

## **Nebraska Board Schedules Meeting**

The Nebraska Grain Sorghum Board has scheduled a public meeting on Nov. 19 to fill a vacancy on the Board, elect new officers and name the cooperators program representatives for the 2009-2010 Fiscal Year. The Board will also discuss reports on research, market development, producer education and federal legislation.

The meeting will take place at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln east campus and will begin at 9:00 a.m. in the Student Union building. For additional information or to request an agenda, email the Board at [sorghum.board@nebraska.gov](mailto:sorghum.board@nebraska.gov) or call 402-471-4276.

## **Iowa State University Offers Seed Technology Graduate Program**

Iowa State University (ISU) is currently offering online courses through the Graduate Program in Seed Technology and Business (STB). The graduate program is designed for seed professionals who have a basic understanding of business skills and processes. STB offers courses in finance, strategy and planning, seed pathology, seed production and more.

Professionals who want to broaden their knowledge of seed technology and production management are encouraged to enroll. Courses will be available beginning July 2010.

For additional information about the STB program and the courses offered through this program, go to <http://www.seedgrad.iastate.edu/index.htm>.

## **Three Percent of Nation's Sorghum Crop Harvested this Week**

Maturity advanced to 83 percent by Nov. 1, six percent behind last year and 10 percent behind the five year average. The most significant delay was evident in Texas where abnormally cool temperatures during the past few weeks left overall progress at 17 percent below normal. Producers harvested three percent of the nation's crop during the week. At 45 percent complete, harvest was 10 percent behind last year and 23 percent behind the average. Overall, 47 percent of the sorghum crop was reported in good to excellent condition, unchanged from ratings last week but down six percent from last year.

## **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](http://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 [alexis@sorghumgrowers.com](mailto:alexis@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.

### **SORGHUM Notes is sponsored by:**

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### **Quote of the Week:**

*"It is one of the commonest of mistakes to consider that the limit of our power of perception is also the limit of all there is to perceive."*

*--C.W. Leadbeater*

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