



NATIONAL SORGHUM PRODUCERS

# SORGHUM *Grower*

SUMMER 2022

## *On the Horizon*

**NEW SORGHUM CROP INSURANCE OPTIONS COMING SOON**

*Also*

**COMBUSTIVE MARKETS**

**TROUBLE ON THE TRACKS**

**MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS**

Also Inside

**SORGHUM CHECKOFF NEWSLETTER**

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NATIONAL SORGHUM PRODUCERS

# SORGHUM Grower

SUMMER 2022

ON THE COVER: National Sorghum Producers has been working with USDA RMA to provide improved coverage and more options for sorghum farmers when it comes to crop insurance. Learn more about these efforts starting on [Page 6](#).

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From the CEO

### Atrazine Fight, Round Unknown



As much of the Sorghum Belt continues to pray for rain, there is a different struggle going on in our nation's capital. Much like drought, the struggle involved is not new, but every few years it seems to get a little more severe. That battle before us involves the reregistration of atrazine. Atrazine was first registered in 1958, so most farmers in the U.S. have never known a world without the use of this trusted, proven product. Over the last 64 years, more than 7,000 studies have been conducted on atrazine utilizing advancements in technology, equipment and methodology as science progressed. Despite these extensive research measures showing atrazine shines as an incredibly safe product, we are once again in a significant battle with the EPA, as the Agency has proposed onerous restrictions and not committed to a Scientific Advisory Panel to evaluate if the proposed changes in the reregistration process are scientifically defensible.

**What are these proposed changes?** Atrazine is utilized on 75 percent of U.S. sorghum acres, and the proposed rule will have drastic impacts on a large portion of those acres, significantly reducing application rates, while also requiring additional mitigations and reporting procedures. The first round of mitigations EPA included indicate you will not be able to use atrazine prior to emergence or spray it from an airplane. The list of mitigations also make little sense for the primarily flat topography and arid climate in which most of the sorghum is grown in the U.S.

**Where do we go from here?** As producers, the first step is for you to fill out the postcard on the front of this magazine and send it in. Every voice matters, and this issue is a matter in which we need voices in the thousands, not hundreds. As your representative in Washington, D.C., National Sorghum Producers' first step is to continue to defend science as the basis for our regulatory process. The second is to remind EPA and lawmakers it does not make sense politically or scientifically to take away the one proven tool allowing farmers to no-till in a time where saving moisture and other precious natural resources, while also sequestering carbon and protecting the climate, is a critical platform of the Administration.

With input prices skyrocketing, it will cost farmers over \$42 an acre more to control weeds without atrazine. In a survey earlier this year, nearly 80 percent of our members said they would go back to plowing if they lost the effective use of atrazine. The stakes are high for all sides on this one. Let's hope common sense and science wins the day. Know NSP will continue to fight to keep this important tool in your toolbox, and we hope you will join us in the fight!

*Tim Lust*

Tim Lust, CEO

# Sorghum Crop Insurance Changes on the Horizon

By John Duff

It has been a busy year for National Sorghum Producers. Historically, producer organizations are busiest when Congress is writing a farm bill. However, with the increasing importance of crop insurance to the U.S. farm safety net, every year has the potential to be as busy as a farm bill year.

In 2022 alone, NSP has engaged with USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA) on five major potential crop insurance changes, three of which could impact producers as early as 2023 and two others as early as 2024. This is the most active year for crop insurance policy work in the organization's history, and 2022 is not over yet.

"RMA is as active as it has ever been," Combest, Sell & Associates (CSA) Chief Economist Brad Weddelman said. "Government agencies being active is not always a good thing, but fortunately today's RMA is as responsive as it is active, and current leadership wants crop insurance to work for producers rather than against them."

## Obstacles to Irrigated Sorghum Production

Responsiveness to problems is key for sorghum producers, including, and especially, those with limited irrigation water. By all accounts, crop insurance for irrigated sorghum production is not working.

"In a sense, crop insurance is actually built into sorghum," Sustainable Crop Insurance Services Manager Chris Cogburn said. "The crop uses one-third less water than corn and tolerates the heat better, so it's often planted as an alternative to corn in dry years and when irrigation water is limited. Ironically, this fact often sets sorghum up for failure, and because crop insurance coverage is based on county yield history, these failures amount to inadequate protection for situations where irrigated sorghum is a much-needed option."

Cogburn added there is no simple solution and the problem is two-fold with both declining yields and rising rates confounding producers with limited irrigation water hoping to transition from corn to sorghum. In the most extreme cases, these rate differences completely preclude irrigated sorghum production, driving sorghum insurance costs as high as 19 times those of corn insurance.

"Yields and rates follow farming practices, for better or for worse, and this double-edged sword makes the problem difficult to address," agreed CSA's Weddelman. "However, from RMA's perspective, and the perspective of the insurance companies, producers planting and insuring less risky crops is desirable behavior, so producers need an insurance option that does not penalize them for such behavior."

Cogburn said one solution is an area-based insurance plan that triggers indemnities based on the applicable area plan of insurance for corn. Plans like these pay an indemnity when the county experiences a loss, and NSP worked with RMA for more than three years to determine the best solution. Prior to that, NSP worked with Members of Congress to insert language into the 2018 Farm Bill instructing RMA to examine the problem.

"This plan would allow producers to insure at a yield and rate more in line with the area corn yield and rate," Cogburn said. "Currently, we're discussing an 80 percent factor that would allow a producer in a county with a 200-bushel corn yield to insure sorghum at a 160-bushel yield."

This plan would come with the downsides accompanying all area plans—namely, the risk that a producer has a loss on his or her farm, but the area doesn't trigger, and no indemnities are paid. Despite this risk, the plan will be an additional option for producers where irrigation water is needed. NSP expects the option will be available in 2023.

## Contract Price Option Addition

Also on the table for a 2023 rollout is an addition of the contract price option as an alternative for sorghum producers, advocated for by NSP. The contract price option would allow producers selling sorghum into a specialty market to insure their crop using the price included on their contract, which is important because of the added value that accompanies most specialty markets.

Earl Roemer, president of Nu Life Market, a leading sorghum producer of food products including gluten-free flours, brans and whole grain options for those with glu-

ten sensitivities, said the average premium for sorghum used for food applications is \$1.00 per bushel.

"Producing food-grade sorghum requires a management commitment by the producer beyond what would normally be necessary for commodity sorghum used in feed and fuel applications," he said. "It is important to provide these producers the opportunity of a contract price option to help protect their increased investment in costs of production."

Richardson Seeds President Larry Richardson agreed on the need for more risk management options for specialty sorghum producers, noting the average specialty premium for producers he works with is \$0.80-\$1.50 per bushel. However, he cautioned that the contract price option currently offered by RMA will not work for every producer or in every situation.

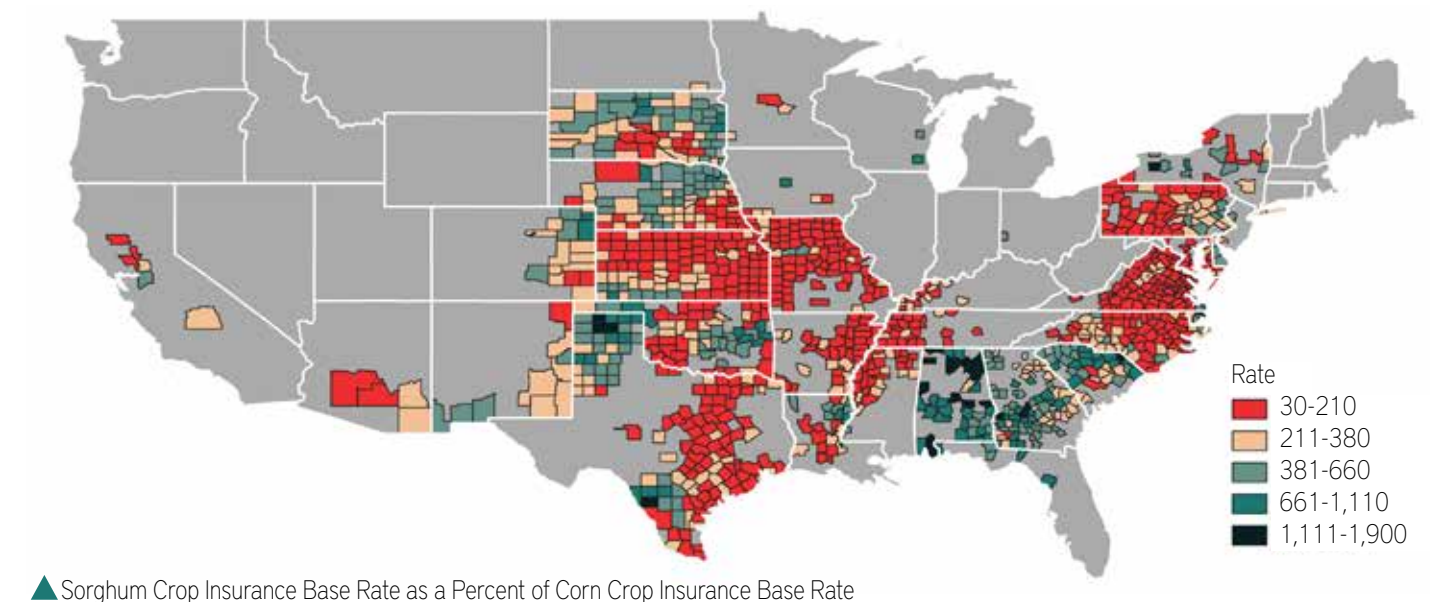
"Neither side would want a binding contract too early," Richardson said of some producers and end-users. "They both want and need to keep options open and often agree to keep doing business as usual."

Fortunately, the contract price option is just that, so producers have flexibility to use it or not, depending on their needs. It is expected to be available in 2023.

## Price Election Changes

For commodity sorghum producers, the price election is based on an average of September or December corn futures prices—depending on the sales closing date—multiplied by a factor calculated using Agricultural Marketing Services (AMS) prices. This factor, and the formula behind it, were revised by RMA in 2009 after eight years of work by NSP. The revision meant RMA included data representative of actual sorghum producer prices for the first time.

(continued on Page 9)





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## QUESTIONS?

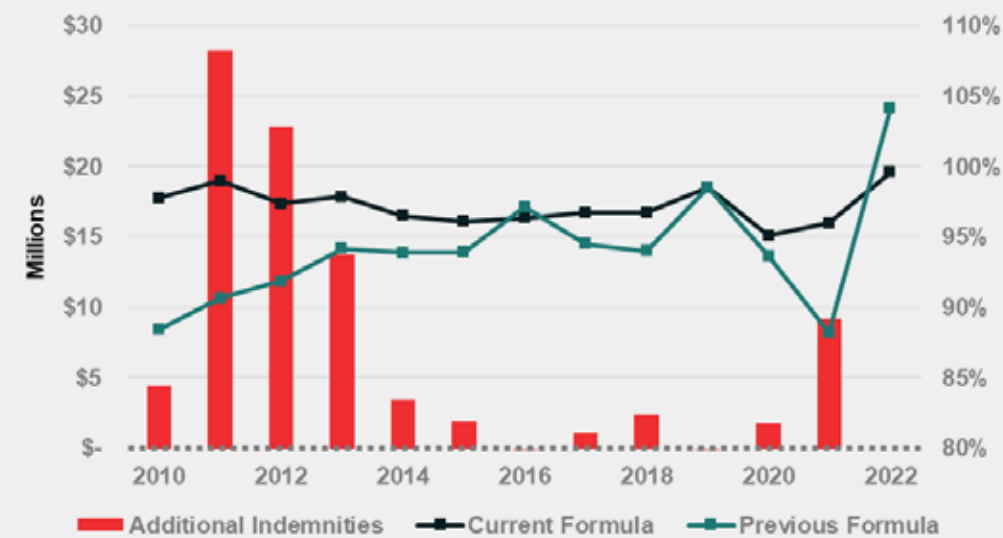
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## Almost \$90 Million in Impact

Sorghum price election relative to corn (right axis) and additional indemnities paid based on current formula (left axis) over time



“Securing the current price election formula was one of the most significant victories in the history of NSP,” said Cogburn, who at the time was serving as NSP strategic business director and overseeing the organization’s work with RMA. “The old formula was just not effective. Currently, we have a formula that accurately reflects the value of sorghum relative to corn and captures the ups and downs of the market without subjecting producers to extreme highs and lows.”

Since 2010, the impact of the current formula has been \$89 million more in indemnities paid to sorghum producers, and the price election has been much more stable year-to-year. Furthermore, when compared to a model of the old formula, the current formula has resulted in an equal or greater price election in 10 out of 13 years.

Why revisit such a successful formula? Due to federal budget cutbacks, AMS stopped reporting prices in certain locations, and some of these locations are used to calculate the sorghum price election. It is unclear what the future for this formula looks like, but NSP began work to ensure sorghum producers are no worse off after it is updated.

“Francie Tolle at the Kansas City RMA office is a producer herself,” Cogburn said. “For that reason, she wants to see an actuarially sound program that will be around to help producers for many years, and, most importantly, she wants a program that works for producers. We’re really looking forward to working with Francie, Zach White and the rest of the outstanding team in Kansas City on a new price election formula.”

The timeline for an actuarial update is unclear, but discussions between NSP and RMA are underway.

## Double Crop Expansion

Rounding out NSP’s active 2022 are conversations related to a potential expansion of double crop insurance and the effectiveness of current damage discounts for quality loss adjustment.

In what is likely to be the most significant one-time expansion of coverage offered by RMA in history, the agency has proposed to radically increase the number of counties where double crop sorghum and soybeans can be insured. For sorghum, this action could see double crop coverage expanded or streamlined in more than 800 counties.

“In some counties, the expansion will come in the form of additional offers that will require existing double crop producers to insure,” Weddelman said. “In

most others, the expansion will mean no production history requirements as a condition of insurance and a

*(continued on Page 10)*



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streamlined written agreement (WA) form that eliminates the need for the arduous WA process.”

The Crop Insurance Professionals Association (CIPA), an association that serves as a voice for crop insurance agents, is also represented by Combest Sell & Associates, and Weddelman noted CIPA members in the Sorghum Belt welcome proposed double crop insurance changes as a positive move for the region.

Cogburn said the expansion will mean thousands of sorghum producers will have the option to insure double crop sorghum virtually overnight under a WA.

“The process will be easy on both the producer and the agent, and producers already growing double crop sorghum, but not insuring it, will not be required to do so,” he said, adding that RMA expects expanded options will be available mostly in traditional double crop areas in 2023.

### Damaged Grain Discounts

Regarding damage discounts, Cogburn noted NSP is having preliminary discussions with producers and RMA about changes to the discounts included in the actuarial documents.

With significant quality challenges on the Texas Gulf Coast in 2021, a number of producers have expressed interest in revisiting these discounts to avoid quality loss adjustment problems in the future.



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These discussions have just started and will likely entail an adjustment of these damages to better reflect commercial discount schedules. It is unknown when such an adjustment would be made.

### Crop Insurance History Q&A with Combest, Sell & Associates’ Senior Counsel Jeff Harrison

#### Q: What crops and perils did early crop insurance cover?

A: The first focus was multiple peril crop insurance (MPCI) for wheat.

#### Q: Who were the early companies providing this coverage?

A: Due to inordinate risk, crop insurance was provided by the federal government from the very beginning.

#### Q: When did crop insurance in its current form begin?

A: Crop insurance limped along from its inception in 1938 until 1980 when delivery was turned over to private companies and agents. That’s when it really began to take off.

#### Q: What are some other key events in the history of crop insurance?

A: Other key events include the 1994 reforms that increased premium support due to the 1993 Mississippi River floods and the 1988 drought; the creation of revenue protection in the mid-1990s; and the Agricultural Risk Protection Act of 2000, which significantly enhanced premium support.

#### Q: When was the Risk Management Agency (RMA) created?

A: RMA was created in 1996. Prior to that, the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation administered the program.

#### Q: How much value is currently protected by crop insurance?

A: In 2021, federal crop insurance protected \$137 billion worth of U.S. agricultural products.



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## NSP and the 2023 Farm Bill: Saddled Up and Ready to Ride

By Jeff Harrison, Combest Sell & Associates

For those who expected a lot to happen this year in anticipation of next year's farm bill debate, they are likely disappointed.

Yes, both the House and Senate Agriculture Committees have held some hearings and listening sessions in Washington, D.C., and out in the field.

However, there has not been the sort of highly choreographed hearing schedule that usually prefaces a farm bill debate.

Democrats have been too focused on completing more pieces of their agenda before the midterm elections where pundits predict Republicans are likely to reclaim the House majority and stand a better than ever chance of also taking the Senate.

For their part, Republicans have been focused on blocking much of that agenda, while also gearing full throttle into their efforts to wrest control of Washington, D.C., come November.

That is not to say there have not been some highlights and important signals sent to date.

In March, our own Verity Ulibarri of Melrose, New Mexico, knocked it out of the park in her testimony before the House Agriculture Committee in spelling out sorghum priorities in the next farm bill, and farm groups have been fairly aligned in sending this message — the farm safety net must be strengthened in the 2023 rewrite.

Furthermore, there will be opportunity for producers to provide more input next year when it really matters.

By that time, a quarter of the U.S. Senate and nearly half of the U.S. House will never have voted on a farm bill.

Hence, hearings next year will not only be an opportunity for farmers to speak their peace but also an opportunity for new members to hear their message.

Rep. G.T. Thompson (R-PA), the heir apparent to the Chairmanship of the House Committee should Republicans win control, has already pledged to hit the ground running with a full slate of hearings — and we would anticipate Chairman Scott would also continue hearings should he remain at the helm under Democratic control.

Remember hearings began in 2018 relative to the last rewrite and, yet, the 2018 Farm Bill became the first to be written in the same year that it was introduced since 1990.

On substance, many have expressed interest in strengthening Title I — the Commodity Title — to enhance reference prices under PLC and ARC and potentially provide some element of margin protection given high costs of production.

Conservation will also be a hot topic, with Democrats likely to seek increases to address climate, especially if they fail to clear a reconciliation bill this year that makes new investments. The Supreme Court's decision to strike down EPA's ability to regulate greenhouse gas emissions under the Clean Air Act under the major decisions doctrine will make this push by Democrats even more certain.

Calls for doubling Market Access Program (MAP) and Foreign Market Development Program (FMD) funding are already being heard, though the funding for both was just doubled in 2018.

There will be a big discussion around ad hoc disaster programs, such as the Wildfire and Hurricane Indemnity Plus Program (WHIP+) and the Emergency Relief Program (ERP), and whether these programs should and could be replaced by either a standing disaster program that does not undermine crop insurance or by further strengthening crop insurance, with the latter making the most sense if the goal is empowering producers with effective risk management tools uniquely tailored to their needs.

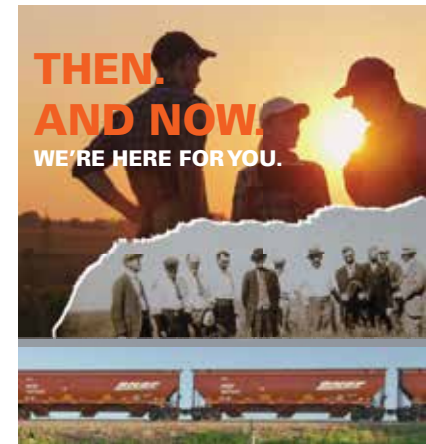
There are, of course, a lingering set of issues in the rollout of ERP, though the Administration certainly deserves high marks for working to use RMA data rather than have FSA recreate the wheel. National Sorghum Producers understands FSA continues to work through the problems with ERP so far, including relative to prevented plant, AGI, and delays in assistance to producers with supplemental coverage, such as SCO, ECO or STAX. These sorts of issues underscore the problems and unpredictability of ad hoc disaster programs, though producers certainly appreciate the help.

And, of course, outside of farm programs, the perennial issue of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) will complicate this farm bill just as it has the previous two, especially given the decision by USDA to increase SNAP funding to the tune of a quarter trillion dollars last August, making any Farm

Bill reauthorization a more than trillion dollar proposition, with the lion's share going to nutrition, at a time when many lawmakers are trying to pare back federal spending to tame inflation.

So, if you are looking for excitement and a photo finish, the 2023 Farm Bill debate is bound to be a good option to watch up close and personal — and, more importantly, to put your shoulders into in making it a timely and solid piece of legislation from the perspective of the American farmer and rancher.

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▲ NSP LEADERS Chairman Kody Carson, Kansas Congressman Tracey Mann, Vice Chairman Craig Meeker and CEO Tim Lust visited at Congressman Mann's Washington, D.C., office in July.



▲ NSP CHAIRMAN Kody Carson and Vice Chairman Craig Meeker had the opportunity to visit with House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) at a fundraiser in Washington, D.C.

◀ LEADERSHIP SORGHUM CLASS V wrapped up a two-year journey recently with their final session in Washington, D.C. During their trip, they received their certificates of completion and visited several departments at USDA in addition to their respective congressional representatives, providing education about the Sorghum Checkoff and Leadership Sorghum program.

## Sustainability Metrics Provide an Opportunity for Sorghum Growth in Food Products

By Rachel Klataske and Karen Watson, Nu Life Market

Referred to as the “camel of crops,” sorghum has long been known as a sustainable grain to those familiar with it, but converting this knowledge into marketable data for food products is a challenge. To make an impact, ingredients must have scientific, evidence-based sustainability metrics that will pique the interest of food companies. Nu Life Market, in partnership with the United Sorghum Checkoff Program, is working to establish sorghum as a major player among sustainable ingredients by collecting data about the sustainability of sorghum farms.

“Guilt free snacking” at one time conjured images of low carb or low calorie offerings. Now, it has another meaning. Consumers who are concerned about the environment are looking for food products that have a positive impact. According to a recent Cargill survey, more than half (55%) of surveyed consumers are more likely to purchase a packaged

food item labeled with a sustainability claim, and a rising number of consumer product goods companies are prioritizing regenerative agriculture in their food production.

Companies such as Gerber, Wasa, Kashi and General Mills are all pushing substantial environmental goals, such as carbon neutrality. New brands Moonshot and Airly Foods both launched “climate-friendly crackers,” allowing consumers to snack while making a positive impact on the environment, as their products have a negative carbon footprint. The trend toward sustainability is poised to continue.

Nu Life Market was founded in 2007 and has built their business on providing sorghum ingredients to food companies with full traceability to the farm level, allowing for control over what varieties are planted and quality measures to eliminate cross-contact with other grains. Nu Life Market worked with

Sustainable Environmental Consultants to quantify in-field farm practices.

Sustainable Environmental Consultants, powered by EcoPractices®, helps the food, beverage and ingredient industries benchmark and track internal and external sustainability metrics. Their EcoPractices platform delivers independent field-level quantification and practice verification services for a complete spectrum of environmental impacts, including soil health, water quality, carbon sequestration, energy use and greenhouse gas emissions. Their team of PhDs, agronomists, environmental scientists and agriculture engineers are committed to collectively working with producers and industry leaders to better the planet.

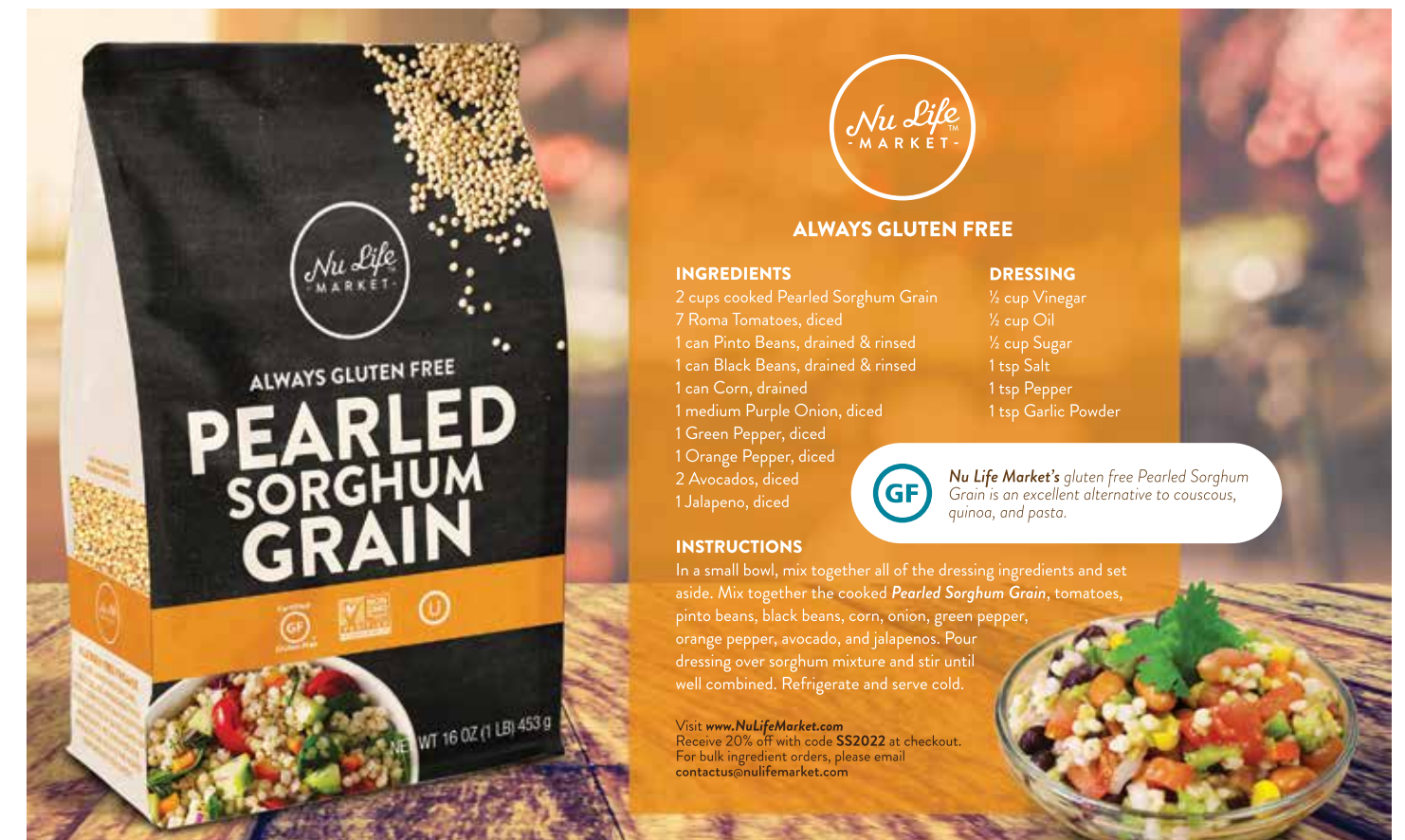
Data collection starts at the field level. Every decision a sorghum farmer makes impacts the data collected. Tillage and irrigation are particularly important factors. Historically, sorghum has been grown using low or no-till practices and a limited amount of irrigation. Being able to quantify the impact of these decisions rewards the farmer for practices they implemented long ago. The data gathered will also help farmers understand the overall economic impact of their practices by helping them better understand overall input costs. Gathering data year after year will allow farmers to track if their metrics are improving and know what practices made an impact.

This data can be used to increase product marketability, enhance industry communications and provide valuable insight for future in-field decisions. Nu Life Market farms

included in the study were shown to be 95 percent no-till and 95 percent non-irrigated. The average distance from field to processing plant was 49 miles. The study showed a positive trajectory rating for soil quality, as well as 83 percent lower soil erosion than the national average. Most importantly, 0.2 tons per acre of carbon were sequestered while the sorghum crop is grown, giving sorghum in the field a negative carbon footprint.

Once field-level practices are understood, the data collection can go one step further to include the whole farm operation, called a Life Cycle Analysis (LCA), which takes a comprehensive look at all the inputs of the farm operation. Nu Life Market will work with Sustainable Environmental Consultants to complete an LCA on their milling and processing facility in Scott City, Kansas. This will allow food companies using sorghum to know the complete footprint of the sorghum flour going into a gluten-free bread or the sorghum meal being puffed into a snack. Having this data will allow for claims on product packaging that are meaningful to consumers, driving awareness of sorghum and its sustainability benefits.

Initial feedback from climate-focused food companies has been very positive. Companies are looking for partners who are able to provide useful data to help them achieve their goals and are interested to learn sorghum is a great option to help them reduce their carbon footprint. As the food industry shifts toward sustainability, sorghum is well situated to be an industry leading sustainable food ingredient.🌱



The image shows a bag of Nu Life Market Pearled Sorghum Grain and a recipe card for a salad. The bag is black and orange, labeled "ALWAYS GLUTEN FREE PEARLED SORGHUM GRAIN". The recipe card is orange and white, titled "Nu Life Market" and "ALWAYS GLUTEN FREE". It lists ingredients for a salad and a dressing, and includes instructions for preparation. A small bowl of the finished salad is shown in the bottom right corner.

**INGREDIENTS**

- 2 cups cooked Pearled Sorghum Grain
- 7 Roma Tomatoes, diced
- 1 can Pinto Beans, drained & rinsed
- 1 can Black Beans, drained & rinsed
- 1 can Corn, drained
- 1 medium Purple Onion, diced
- 1 Green Pepper, diced
- 1 Orange Pepper, diced
- 2 Avocados, diced
- 1 Jalapeno, diced

**DRESSING**

- ½ cup Vinegar
- ½ cup Oil
- ½ cup Sugar
- 1 tsp Salt
- 1 tsp Pepper
- 1 tsp Garlic Powder

**INSTRUCTIONS**

In a small bowl, mix together all of the dressing ingredients and set aside. Mix together the cooked *Pearled Sorghum Grain*, tomatoes, pinto beans, black beans, corn, onion, green pepper, orange pepper, avocado, and jalapenos. Pour dressing over sorghum mixture and stir until well combined. Refrigerate and serve cold.

Visit [www.NuLifeMarket.com](http://www.NuLifeMarket.com)  
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**Nu Life Market's** gluten free Pearled Sorghum Grain is an excellent alternative to couscous, quinoa, and pasta.

# Combustive Markets: U.S. Farmers Burned by Diesel Price Hikes

By Patrick Wade, Policy Director  
Texas Grain Sorghum Producers

In Germany, near the end of the 20th century, mechanical engineer Rudolf Diesel believed he could improve the efficiency of the recently invented internal combustion engine. Instead of relying on an ignition mechanism such as spark plugs, the engine that would go on to bear Diesel's name would produce its combustion by directly injecting the fuel into air hyper-compressed by a piston at precisely the right time. Diesel theorized, correctly, that the more concentrated the air, the greater chance the fuel had to react with and ignite the oxygen molecules.

Eventually, a thicker type of fuel with greater energy density that perfectly complemented this engine would also bear Diesel's name. These discoveries revolutionized industrial applications of the internal combustion engine, allowing for a more efficient and reliable form of power generation that would go on to be the standard in agriculture, construction, mining and countless other essential sectors of the economy. Diesel's hypothesis for turning pressure into combustion, as it turns out though, would not only apply to engineering but to economics, as well.

For more than a decade, a perfect storm of macroeconomic factors has been steadily applying greater pressure to the global energy sector. From 2010 to 2019, the domestic U.S. oil and gas industry saw production grow, driven in large part by shale regions in Texas and North Dakota.

However, by the end of the decade, capital and labor investments began to see diminished returns even before the COVID-19 pandemic sent rippling effects through both supply and demand expectations. Investments in new production—particularly in the form of refining capacity—were already expected to be scaled back by 10-15 percent by exploration and production firms before COVID-19, based on concerns the market was oversupplied and incurring heavy debt, according to Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas. Investment shifts can have an outsize effect on markets, as constrained refining capacity serves as a bottleneck limiting the impact of expanded exploration and extraction operations.

In addition to this market-based pressure, there has also been a sea change in global policy priorities with momentum building each year toward more ambitious climate change mitigation strategies. As these green energy policies continue to grow in popularity, size and scope, investors are increasingly wary of the returns offered by traditional oil and gas investments. Despite increased production, S&P 500—the S&P 500 energy index—only gained 6 percent in value from 2010-2019, compared to an 180 percent growth rate for the entire S&P 500 index.

According to Refinitiv data compiled by Reuters, the U.S. energy sector saw total earnings decline by 15 percent during that time period, while all other major sectors of the domestic economy grew by at least 28 percent.

This capital divestment was compounded by the pandemic and its subsequent labor shocks. At a meeting with the Texas Grain Sorghum Producers Board, a representative of the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas also noted the average shift on a drilling rig had risen to nearly six months, signaling a major scarcity in available labor that further inhibited production capacity.

These forces are like the compression stroke in the diesel engine, raising the pressure to such a degree that one triggering event occurring at just the right time—such as a large-scale military conflict involving one of the largest energy exporters in the world—could result in a devastating conflagration.

Before Russia's invasion of Ukraine, global oil inventory was already at its lowest level since 2013 and down 8 percent relative to the five-year seasonal average. The subsequent sanctions placed on Russia's oil and gas exports only exacerbated this scarcity and, in the process, ignited one of the most combustive hikes in gasoline and diesel prices in recent memory, affecting both consumers and industry alike.

In the weeks building up to this magazine's publication, we have seen gasoline and diesel prices marginally recede from heights reached in early summer, but this offers little reprieve considering just how vertiginous those heights were. According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, on-highway diesel fuel prices averaged \$5.68 per gallon in the first week of July, up from \$3.33 per gallon during the same week in 2021.

Few industries bear the burden of these heightened fuel costs as much as agriculture. Tractors and combines may be the most commonly recognized, but they are far from the only pieces of heavy equipment that need fuel on a modern farm. Producers across much of the Sorghum Belt must also foot the bill to power electrical generation of irrigation networks.

Work trucks used for field scouting and trailer trucks that haul grain to elevators or ports also contribute to a producer's fuel budget. In 2016, the U.S. Department of Agriculture estimated diesel was the primary source of energy on U.S. farms, comprising 44 percent of all consumption—nearly double that of electricity, the second highest source.

Experienced producers may be able to prepay or contract diesel at slightly discounted bulk off-road rates, which eliminates the tax added for on-road uses. These options can defray slight increases in prices at the pump but offer little protection against increases like these of 50 percent and higher.

Perhaps the most challenging aspect of high diesel prices for farmers and ranchers is that, unlike other agricultural inputs, there are no real alternatives, nor is there the option to simply do without.

For example, fertilizer, one of the other agricultural inputs to recently experience skyrocketing costs following

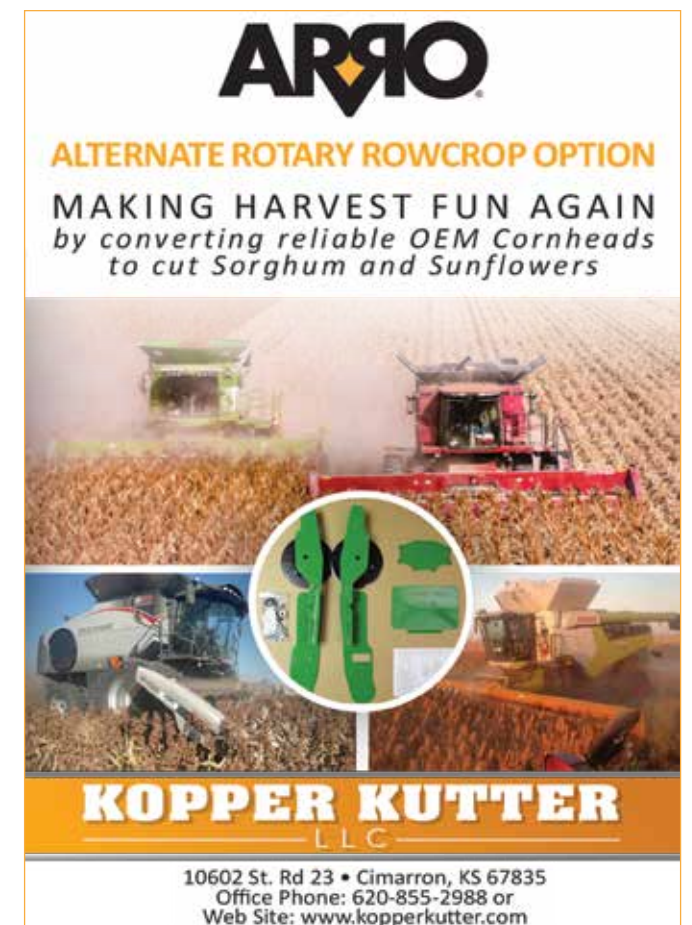
a perfect storm of supply chain challenges, can, at times, be scaled back in applications, albeit at great cost to yields. However, when it comes to fueling the heavy equipment that sows, cultivates and harvests crops, producers have no recourse but to absorb high prices at the expense of their bottom line.

Were it only one critical input seeing greater costs, relatively strong commodity prices may cancel that financial burden out, but fertilizer, gasoline, diesel and labor costs all rising at once pose a serious threat to a producer's ability to stay in business.

The final stage of the combustion cycle in a diesel engine is known as the exhaust stroke, when the piston moves back up and ejects the exhaust generated by the combustion, clearing the way for the process to continue.

Along that line, there's good reason to believe some of the factors putting upward pressure on fuel prices will recede. Market forces naturally seek an equilibrium. But many of the policies and incentives for green energy are likely here to stay.

As this transition continues, it is critical that legislators, regulators, trade associations like National Sorghum Producers and Texas Grain Sorghum Association, and all our allies across the agriculture industry work to ensure farmers and ranchers are not casualties of the next combustion as well.✍



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## Trouble on the Tracks

### Rail Issues Compromise Sorghum Exports

By Jennifer (Blackburn) Warren

Class I railroads have come under scrutiny recently, particularly from agricultural shippers, for inconsistent and unreliable services. The issues, amplified by the pandemic, include staff shortages, steep increases in prices for cars, delayed loading and unloading, and one-sided financial penalties, which have had a negative impact on sorghum exports.

The sorghum industry relies heavily on the U.S. rail system. In a typical year, approximately 40 percent of sorghum travels down domestic tracks to export facilities, primarily in the Gulf Coast. This year, however, changes in logistics resulted in almost 48 percent of sorghum traveling to ports in the Pacific Northwest when railroads put in competitive freight rates. Typically, less than 10 percent of U.S. sorghum travels to the PNW for export.

Tom Williamson, founder of Transportation Consultants Co.—a company that specializes in transportation consulting for the agricultural industry with emphasis on rail, barge and ocean freight service, rates and rail car leasing—described the current situation with the U.S. rail system as a collision of multiple issues and the “biggest mess” he has experienced in his more than 50 years in the industry.

“We have filed more shutdown logs as a company in 2021 and 2022 combined than I have in the rest of my career put together,” he said.

### STB Hearing Highlights Concerns

Challenges with Class I railroads’ performance are so significant the Surface Transportation Board (STB), the federal agency with jurisdiction over railroad rates, practices and service issues, scheduled a federal hearing at the end of April in Washington, D.C.

In response to the extensive problems described at

the hearing, the STB issued an order May 6 requiring the four largest U.S. railroads—Union Pacific Railroad (UP), Norfolk Southern Railway (NSR), CSX Transportation, Inc. (CSX) and BNSF Railway Company (BNSF)—to file service recovery plans that would specifically describe their key remedial initiatives and promote a clearer vantage point into operating conditions on the rail network.

“Unfortunately, [UP, NSR, CSX and BNSF] submitted plans that were perfunctory and lacked the level of detail that was mandated by the Board’s order. The plans generally omitted important information needed to assure the Board and rail industry stakeholders that the largest railroads are addressing their deficiencies and have a clear and measurable trajectory for doing so,” STB said in a June 13 statement, ordering the four major railroads to correct deficiencies in their rail service recovery plans.

### One-Sided Financial Penalties

One issue highlighted in the STB hearings was the matter of demurrage, which occurs when a fee is assessed to a shipper who is slow to load or unload rail cars. Railroads are not required to pay penalties to shippers when rail cars are late, bringing the full force of the financial penalties onto the shippers for circumstances out of their control.

Jewel Bronaugh, U.S. Department of Agriculture Deputy Secretary, told the STB it should use all its authority to incentivize the railroads to provide better service.

“We cannot continue a system where the railroads face no consequences for providing unpredictable service,” she said, “and shippers and, ultimately, farmers, ranchers and the American public—pay for it when it goes wrong.”

There are also financial challenges in the secondary railcar market, which is the trading of guaranteed railroad ag covered hoppers between railroad customers. Secondary market prices have shot sky high.

“If you look at that secondary market, it has been thousands of dollars per car to buy a train and to get stuff moved,” Williamson said. “So that tells you that people have a market for the grain or they are wanting to begin to clear out their elevators and make room for what they see as a good size harvest.”

Despite merchandisers buying cars for specific time slots, getting the cars to the facility in a timely manner remains a challenge.

“Even though you may buy a first half of June time slot, it may be mid-July before you get it,” Williamson said, adding the railroads then have to pay a penalty to the original buyer, which falls short in making up the losses shippers incur after contract delivery terms are not met as a result of the delays.

### 100 Miles to Right the Rails

While the rail issue is broad and complex, Williamson believes many of the problems we are facing can be solved in the first 50 miles and the last 50 miles of service.

“That is where we are having tremendous problems today,” he said. “We cannot get cars picked up. We cannot get plants switched. Once they get to that first terminal, we

have good solid service, but once it gets to that last terminal, we can’t get it delivered to the plant that it needs to go to.

“We have all these metrics that tell us how fast trains are going and how many days cars are held in yards, but nothing measures that first 50 miles and last 50 miles of service.”

Williamson believes as the railroads start measuring this service area in response to STB reporting requirements, performance will improve through increased resources, management and manpower, which have all been limited following cutbacks during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Cargill’s North American rail leader Brock Lautenschlager told the STB during its April hearings that based on employee data reported by the railroads, the current Class I transportation train and engine employee count is 6,400 employees, a 12 percent decrease from December 2019 levels.

Williamson said the STB will meet with the railroads’ major players in Kansas City prior to harvest to evaluate and forecast the market outlook. He said it will be key between now and then for the railroads to hire more people.

While Williamson is optimistic, he warned we are not out of the woods anytime soon. As harvest, winter weather and the holidays approach, strain on the system will increase, pushing many realistic improvements to next year.



## Stewardship Critical with New Herbicide Technologies

By Brent Bean, Ph.D., Sorghum Checkoff Director of Agronomy

**S**orghum growers have long recognized the need for better grass control options, especially for post emergence control.

In 2021, Advanta Seeds introduced their igrowth® sorghum technology in the United States and a significant number of acres were planted. This summer, S&W Seed Company brought to market its Double Team™ sorghum. Joining these two technologies is Inzen™ sorghum from Corteva, whose seed has been limited, but supply is expected to increase substantially in the near future.

It now falls on growers to be good stewards of the technologies to ensure effectiveness of these new technologies for years to come. Through past experiences with other technologies, growers are now well aware of how quickly weeds can become resistant to any given herbicide when overused and when sound resistant management techniques are not utilized.

For these technologies to last, it is very important growers use sound stewardship practices to prevent the development of herbicide resistance in grasses.

Resistance to Johnsongrass and shattercane are particularly concerning. Both of these grasses are closely related to grain sorghum and can potentially cross pollinate. While gene flow between sorghum and its weedy relatives does occur in nature at low frequencies, the risk can be greatly minimized by strictly following good stewardship practices.

Although igrowth® (SU) and Inzen™ (IMI) hybrids are very different, for stewardship purposes it is important to remember they are both tolerant to ALS herbicides (Group 2), although different subclasses.

When resistance develops in weed populations it is known that cross-resistance between SU and IMIs is possible, making the weeds resistant to both subclasses. For this reason, when considering stewardship practices, igrowth® and Inzen™ technologies should be considered to have the same mode of action.

Double Team™ hybrids are tolerant to the ACCase (Group 1) FOP herbicides. It is important to note Double Team™ hybrids are NOT tolerant to ACCase DIM herbicides. Examples of DIM herbicides that Double Team™ is not tolerant to are Select Max (clethodim) and Poast (sethoxydim).

Although there are several stewardship practices that are common for all herbicides and crops, such as using herbicides with multiple modes of action, the following are specific to sorghum and focused on preventing resistance developing in Johnsongrass and shattercane:

### Specific Stewardship Guidelines for Herbicide Technology (HT) Sorghum

1. **A Group 15 herbicide should be applied preemergence.** These include S-metolachlor or metolachlor (Dual), acetochlor (Warrant) and dimethenamid (Outlook). Using one of the Group 15 herbicides provides a second mode of action to control grass that may be resistant.
2. **Control grasses when they are small, preferably less than 4 inches tall.** Grasses are much easier to control when small, which lessens the potential to escape control and produce seed.
3. **Do not use if Johnsongrass or shattercane biotypes are present in the field that are known to be resistant to the herbicide technology being planned.** These biotypes will not be controlled and will only get worse unless controlled by other weed control options.
4. **If Johnsongrass or shattercane are present in the field following herbicide application, these plants must be controlled prior to flowering.** It is very important Johnsongrass and shattercane plants are not flowering at the same time as the HT sorghum in order to prevent cross-pollination (Ohadi).
5. **Manage Johnsongrass and shattercane growth in road ditches, fence rows and nearby places so flowering does not coincide with HT sorghum flowering.** There is no set distance, but pollen from grain sorghum can travel hundreds of feet. For certified seed production, the Texas Department of Agriculture requires fields to be isolated from other sorghum fields, or off-type sorghum plants, by 660 feet to avoid cross pollination.
6. **Control all volunteer sorghum/off-types in the following year prior to flowering.** Not only does this prevent cross-pollination to nearby Johnsongrass and shattercane, but it also prevents the establishment of resistant wild sorghum in the field.
7. **Scout for grass escapes.** If resistance is suspected, treat the escaped grass with a herbicide with a different mode of action (or tank mixes) from that used in the initial application, and/or use nonchemical methods to achieve control where possible.
8. **If grasses are not controlled as expected following herbicide treatment, contact the seed company or**

**crop protection company immediately.** Develop a strategy for controlling suspected resistant grass.

9. **Utilization of a desiccant at the end of the season can help to control escapes and minimize viable grass seed production.**
10. **Consider tarping grain trucks.** In trucking HT grain from the field following harvest, care should be taken to avoid spills along roadsides that could lead to wild HT sorghum the following year.

### Crop Rotation Considerations

In the crop following igrowth® or Inzen™ sorghum, avoid solely depending on SU or IMI herbicides (both are Group 2 herbicides). Likewise, in the crop following Double Team™ sorghum, do not depend on ACCase herbicides (Group 1), especially FOPS, to control grass. If an ACCase herbicide is used, it should be from the DIM subclass. Examples are Select Max (clethodim) and Poast (sethoxydim).✂

### REFERENCES

Ohadi, S., G. Hodnett, W. Rooney & M. Bagavathiannan. 2017. Gene flow and its consequences in sorghum spp., Critical Reviews in Plant Sciences, 36:5-6, 367-385, DOI: 10.1080/07352689.2018.1446813.

“For these technologies to last, it is very important growers use sound stewardship practices to prevent the development of herbicide resistance in grasses.”



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# NEWSLETTER

sorghumcheckoff.com | Summer 2022

## Sorghum Announced as Newest Addition to USDA Food Buying Guide

In a major step forward for the sorghum industry, school foodservice providers and American schoolchildren, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) recently added sorghum, a nutrient-rich, high-protein, gluten-free ancient whole grain, to its Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs. The Food Buying Guide is the primary resource used by school foodservice directors to build menus that comply with USDA nutrition requirements.

"The inclusion of sorghum in the Food Buying Guide is a monumental win for sorghum producers as we continue seeking to develop new markets for our crop," United Sorghum Checkoff Program Executive Director Norma Ritz Johnson said. "Sorghum's inclusion in the guide is pivotal in our efforts to increase its visibility and ease-of-use among foodservice professionals, as well as the students they serve, and the industry is excited to deliver this nutritious whole grain to the plates of America's schoolchildren."

In an effort extending over many months, the USCP worked with USDA to add sorghum to the Food Buying Guide. This effort began with a formal request to USDA to consider adding sorghum to the Guide, and USCP has subsequently followed up with nutritional information to equip the agency with the necessary data to support the grain's inclu-

sion. This is just one piece of a larger, comprehensive strategy USCP is employing to develop new food markets for sorghum, including in federal school nutrition programs.

As of July 1, 2022, USDA implemented a new requirement stating at least 80 percent of the weekly grains in school lunch and breakfast menus must be whole-grain rich, which has resulted in school nutrition providers actively seeking foods to satisfy this requirement. As a nutrient-rich ancient whole grain, sorghum will prove to be the solution for school nutrition professionals for the upcoming school year and beyond.

"The Food Buying Guide is a critical resource on which foodservice professionals rely to formulate meal plans for school nutrition programs that meet USDA nutrition requirements," Sorghum Checkoff Director of Food Innovations & Institutional Markets Lanier Dabruzzi, MS, RD, LD, said. "As the 2022-23 school year opens, schools are working around a new 80 percent whole grain requirement. This timely addition will give school nutrition providers a new ingredient to include in bowls, salads, soups, baked goods and more."

The Food Buying Guide provides a roadmap for foodservice professionals to develop well-rounded nutritious menus

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**Sorghum Checkoff Continues the Cultivation of Sorghum Leaders**



The National School Lunch Program provides low-cost or free lunches to **29.6 MILLION CHILDREN** each school day, at a total cost of **\$14.2 BILLION**



by defining how certain foods contribute, or credit, toward federal nutrition guidelines. The inclusion of whole grain sorghum, pearled sorghum and sorghum flour in this Guide is an important acknowledgement by USDA that sorghum is a nutritious addition to the plates of American

schoolchildren as a nutrient-rich, high-protein, gluten-free ancient whole grain.

Foodservice professionals who are interested in incorporating sorghum into their school menus as a healthy and gluten-free whole-grain can visit [www.sorghumcheckoff.com](http://www.sorghumcheckoff.com), or

contact Lanier Dabruzzi at [lanier@sorghumcheckoff.com](mailto:lanier@sorghumcheckoff.com), to learn more about purchasing and utilizing sorghum in a variety of ways, offering a new and nutritious menu option to satisfy students of all ages.

## Summer Trade Teams Strengthen Trade Relationships

The United Sorghum Checkoff Program, along with our state partners and the U.S. Grains Council, typically hosts 7-10 trade teams each year, highlighting the complete marketing chain from field to port. While the spring and summer of 2022 did not bring as many trade team visits, the Sorghum Checkoff was happy to host one of the first sorghum buyer teams to the United States since the COVID-19 pandemic.

The vast majority of the U.S. sorghum crop is exported, so trade teams consisting of global buyers are important to help promote the value of U.S. sorghum across the globe, showcase our grower stories and help cultivate the important relationship between producer and buyer or end-user.

Domestic trade missions this year kicked off May 15-21 with buying teams from Spain, Portugal and Turkey. Given the ongoing shortage of non-GMO corn worldwide, an increased interest in the non-GMO status of sorghum played a role in why these particular countries visited the Sorghum Belt.

Turkey, a non-GMO corn importer that traditionally imports 6 million metric tons (MMT) of corn per year from the Black Sea area, has little experience with U.S. sorghum, but a portion of what has typically been corn purchases will need to be replaced by alternative non-GMO feedstocks in the coming year. Grain buyers from Spain and Portugal have more recent experiences with U.S. sorghum and typically

import U.S. sorghum when the price is more competitive.

During the week-long visit to Texas, the trade teams toured Quality Beef Producers feedlot in Wilderado, Amarillo Grain Exchange, Hansen-Mueller export facility, and Andersons, Inc. Houston Export Elevator. The team also met with Richardson Seeds, Attebury Grain and Texas Grain Sorghum Producers. Additionally, the group had the opportunity to participate in a tractor ride and planting at Friche Farms in Dumas, as they visited the Texas High Plains at the height of planting season.

Team members included importers and distributors of raw materials for their respective markets, as well as feed mill operators for livestock and pet food.

While the team was in the U.S.,

Riera Roura, a Barcelona-based importer handling 59 MBU of grain and oilseeds per year, received a vessel of U.S. sorghum in Spain. Their operations involve the importation and distribution of raw materials to the Spanish feed market. Year to date, Spain has imported 3.4 million bushels of U.S. sorghum.

Following the teams from Portugal, Spain and Turkey, a team of 13 delegates from the feed milling sector of Jalisco, Mexico,

attended the Feed Manufacturing on-site course at the International Grains Program at Kansas State University. While at K-State, the participants incorporated the knowledge learned in their respective operations to reassess U.S. sorghum in its formulations. The team toured a sorghum farm and ADM Animal Nutrition in Abilene, Kansas.

While travel restrictions have impacted in-person meetings and tours, which are an important

component to facilitating international trade, the Sorghum Checkoff is hopeful many more buyers will be visiting the Sorghum Belt during harvest to facilitate connections between buyers and U.S. sorghum farmers. These tours allow those buyers to better understand how sorghum is produced with the end goal of choosing U.S. sorghum, and U.S. sorghum farmers gain perspective of the needs, wants and uses of their U.S. product in another country.

## ESMC and USCP Launch Project for Sorghum Farmers to Realize Added Value in Ecosystem Services Credits

The Ecosystem Services Market Consortium (ESMC) and the United Sorghum Checkoff Program have announced the launch of a pilot project in western Kansas for sorghum farmers to generate high-quality carbon, greenhouse gas, water quality and biodiversity credits in ESMC's market program. The project will test ESMC's streamlined programing to create environmental credits from sorghum farmers' fields. Many of the farmers are new to private voluntary ecosystem markets linked to conservation practice adoption, so the project will also develop knowledge, capacity and repeatability to continue expanding support for sorghum growers in the region.

The research project covers about 5,000 acres in western Kansas and works with sorghum farmers interested in implementing conservation practices such as nutrient management and edge of field practices. Sorghum farmers can earn credits from increased soil carbon, reduced or eliminated greenhouse gasses, improved water quality, and preserved habitat at field edges that

increases plant, bird and insect biodiversity and populations. In addition to the Sorghum Checkoff and ESMC, project partners include ServiTech – which will provide soil sampling and lab analysis– as well as Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever – the nation's leading upland habitat conservation group – working on biodiversity components of the project.

"We are excited to provide this pilot opportunity to our farmers, especially to increase opportunities for edge of field practices that provide habitat for key species and earn biodiversity credits," Sorghum Checkoff Sustainability Director Adam York said. "As The Resource Conserving Crop™, sorghum plays a key role in sustainable agriculture in Kansas and throughout the High Plains region of the United States. Working with ESMC, our pilot partner organizations, and our farmers to develop biodiversity credits is emblematic of our commitment to sustainability and on-farm profitability on the High Plains."

"As we continue to build out market program scope and scale, we are excited to bring on

additional crops like sorghum," ESMC's Executive Director Debbie Reed said. "Partners like the Sorghum Checkoff help us ensure this program works first and foremost for agricultural producers, so they are rewarded for the value and the outcomes of their work and the adoption of conservation practices. Our role is to document those improved outcomes in our science-based, standards-based market program and monetize the outcomes to benefit the growers."

In 2022, ESMC is targeting up to 500,000 acres of enrollment with the market program launch. ESMC's program stacks multiple ecosystem credits, including increased soil carbon, reducing greenhouse gases, water quality, water use conservation, as well as biodiversity, to make ESMC a unique and attractive option for farmers and for buyers and investors seeking high-quality carbon and environmental credits. For more information contact Adam York at adam@sorghum-checkoff.com.

## Sorghum Checkoff Continues the Cultivation of Sorghum Leaders

The United Sorghum Checkoff Program is accepting applications for Leadership Sorghum Class VI, a program designed to cultivate the next generation of sorghum leaders.

During the 14-month leadership program, class members will have the opportunity to experience various aspects of the sorghum industry, in addition to personal development and networking opportunities. Through both hands-on and classroom-style learning experiences, class members develop an understanding of how sorghum moves through the value chain, how checkoffs and stakeholder organizations interact on behalf of the industry, and what the future holds for sorghum.

"The design of the program was centered around farmers who are passionate and are looking for opportunities to grow in this industry," Sorghum Checkoff Executive Director Norma Ritz

Johnson said. "This investment in the program is not just an investment into individual class members, but the U.S. sorghum industry as a whole. Those who choose to participate will walk away armed with the skills, knowledge and understanding to be the next generation that takes the sorghum industry to new heights."

USDA-approved criteria states eligible applicants must be U.S. citizens and farmers actively engaged in sorghum production within the U.S. Fifteen growers will be accepted into the program's sixth class. More information on the class schedule and program criteria can be found at [leadsorghum.com](https://leadsorghum.com).

"Watching each class member grow, learn and experience new things has been so fulfilling," Director of Emerging Markets & Grower Leader Development Shelee Padgett said. "We are equipping each class of Leader-

ship Sorghum with the tools to advocate for sorghum, take newfound knowledge back to their communities, and further the industry by becoming involved in leadership positions across the industry."

Full consideration will be given to all applicants regardless of age, gender, race or occupation. Every effort will be made to select a class, based on the applicant pool, which is representative of the entire sorghum industry, its diversity and rural community interests.

Applications for the program are available at [sorghumcheckoff.com/leadershipsorghum-apply/](https://sorghumcheckoff.com/leadershipsorghum-apply/) and are due by 5:00 pm CST on September 23, 2022. Following the application deadline, all applications and references will be reviewed by a selection committee. Finalists may be contacted via phone to arrange an interview. For more information visit [leadsorghum.com](https://leadsorghum.com).

### SORGHUM INDUSTRY EVENTS

**August 11** Sorghum U/Wheat U™  
Wichita, KS

**August 15-18** National Sorghum Producers and Sorghum Checkoff Annual Board Meetings  
Wichita, KS

**Sept 7** Labor Day  
Office Closed

For more events, visit [sorghumcheckoff.com/calendar](https://sorghumcheckoff.com/calendar)

### USCP MISSION

The Sorghum Checkoff commits to reveal the potential and versatility of sorghum through increased shared value.



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# NSP Update

## Sorghum PAC Series Breaks Fundraising Record For The Third Consecutive Year

The National Sorghum Producers 2022 Sorghum PAC Series broke the organization's fundraising record for the third consecutive year. The series, co-sponsored by Sorghum Partners and ADAMA, brought in more than \$188,000 for the Sorghum PAC—an increase of more than \$50,000 from the previous year.

"I am continually impressed by the support my fellow farmers and the sorghum industry have shown for the Sorghum PAC," Sorghum PAC Chairman Shane Ohlde, a sorghum farmer from Palmer, Kansas, said. "Funds raised through the 2022 Sorghum PAC Series were more than double what was raised in 2020, and we look forward to continuing that trend through new and innovative events to help further NSP's advocacy efforts on behalf of U.S. sorghum farmers."



The 2022 Sorghum PAC Series consisted of the return of the annual Sorghum PAC Casino Night & Auction at Commodity Classic and an auction hosted by BigIron Auctions. The conclusion of the series was the Second Annual Sorghum PAC Golf Tournament held in Wellington, Kansas, on April 28.

"We are extremely grateful for the generosity of our members, donors and sponsors," NSP Industry Relations Director and PAC Events Coordinator Jamaca Battin said. "Even in turbulent times, our producers and partners continue to show they understand the immense importance of the Sorghum PAC and the work NSP does to promote sound farm policy on Capitol Hill."

The Sorghum PAC promotes worthy legislators who understand and advocate on behalf of sorghum priorities, and it serves as an influential alliance of NSP members and sorghum associations working to uphold and protect the interest of growers across the country. More information about the Sorghum PAC can be found at [SorghumGrowers.com/sorghum-pac/](https://SorghumGrowers.com/sorghum-pac/) or by contacting Sorghum PAC Events Coordinator Jamaca Battin at [jamaca@sorghumgrowers.com](mailto:jamaca@sorghumgrowers.com).

## NSP Submits \$69 Million Climate-Smart Grant Application

National Sorghum Producers applied for a \$68.7 million

climate grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture under the Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities.

NSP's approach will focus on quantifying the climate impact of incorporating sorghum and other tools into rotations in carbon-equivalent terms. Rather than focusing on soil carbon sequestration alone, NSP plans to create a pathway for the impact of all practices to be quantified, tracked and verified with the intent to monetize these practices in ecosystems services markets. Average payments of \$40 per acre will be made to producers to introduce sorghum along with a suite of additional practices. A robust measurement and quantification program will accompany these payments in order to highlight the climate impacts of the associated practices.

The technical program will center specifically on enabling farmers to take advantage of added value under the California Low Carbon Fuel Standard as this market requires the most rigid measurement/quantification, monitoring, reporting and verification systems and already consumes up to one-third of the U.S. sorghum crop annually. NSP expects to learn if the grant will be funded by Sept. 30, 2022.

## Erramouspe Departs Team Sorghum

After almost four years working with National Sorghum Producers, Haleigh Erramouspe has stepped down from her role as communications coordinator and executive director for the New Mexico and Colorado Sorghum Associations. Erramouspe has transitioned to a new role as assistant director of communications for the Texas Tech University Office of Advancement.

"It has been incredibly rewarding to witness the innovation the sorghum industry has seen in the field and the increased awareness and presence sorghum has had in Washington, D.C., in the few years I worked with NSP," Erramouspe said. "I have been sincerely blessed to be part of such a dedicated and impactful team and industry."

Erramouspe started with Team Sorghum in the fall of 2018 as a communications intern and returned to the organization in January 2020 as communications coordinator after spending a semester working as a congressional intern for the House Committee on Agriculture in Washington, D.C. During her time at NSP, Haleigh coordinated communications projects and led the New Mexico and Colorado Sorghum Associations. She also organized NSP's first virtual D.C. Fly-In during the COVID-19 pandemic and coordinated more than 200 in-person and virtual Congressional and agency meetings, helping to increase governmental awareness of sorghum priorities.

"Haleigh has been an invaluable member of Team Sorghum and her impact on communications, state relationships and legislative affairs will be sorely missed," NSP Vice President of Communications Jennifer (Blackburn) Warren said. "We wish Haleigh the very best as she takes this next step in her career."

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# Mental Health Matters

By Lauren Pritchett

**F**armers have relied on the weather and economics since the beginning. They wear many hats and rely heavily on often inconsistent and unpredictable factors to run their business, which often makes the job of a farmer vastly different from occupations in other fields. Being a farmer often means relying on a strong hope to tide them through the many turbulent variables out of their control, as well as bearing the often heavy load of the demands and stresses surrounding those circumstances. The culmination of years bearing the weight of producing under such uncertainty can lead to many farmers and ranchers struggling with mental health obstacles. This is further compounded by the stigma of mental health issues often found in rural communities.

Tiffany Dowell Lashmet, J.D., associate professor and extension specialist in agriculture law with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, has taken on the issue of mental health as a personal interest and is advocating as a voice for the importance of mental health care and awareness in rural America.

“Ag producers have unique stressors and unique circumstances that other people don’t have to deal with, and we are at the mercy of things we cannot control like the weather, the market and input costs,” Lashmet said. “We cannot control any of these factors, and I think that there is a lot of stress that comes from that.”

She further explained for many producers, their family legacy is tied up with the farm or ranch operation, which adds a lot of pressure, as well. Lashmet is working to bring information, resources and content to help agriculture producers and rural America be more aware of and understand the importance of mental health.

“If you look at statistics of mental health issues in rural America, and agriculture specifically, we’re sort of in a crisis,” Lashmet said.

Lashmet and her colleague, Miquela Smith, Health Program Specialist with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, have partnered with the Southwest Center for Agricultural Health, Injury Prevention and Education (Southwest Ag Center) with the hopes of spreading mental health awareness and access to resources. Southwest Ag Center was created at the University of Texas in the Tyler Health Science Center to assist agricultural workers and their families by conducting programs, research, prevention, intervention and education.

Lashmet and Smith are working with the Southwest Ag Center to create video testimonials from people involved in

agriculture sharing their stories or mental health journeys. The purpose of sharing these testimonies is to help show farmers and ranchers they are not alone and encourage others to share their own stories or reach out for help. These testimonies will soon be uploaded to Southwest Ag Center’s website, which can be found at [www.uthct.edu/southwest-center-for-agricultural-health-injury-prevention-and-education-2/](http://www.uthct.edu/southwest-center-for-agricultural-health-injury-prevention-and-education-2/).


“When we are vulnerable enough to share our stories, I think that is where people realize that they are not alone and that other people are going through these things, as well.” Lashmet added. “Our stories can literally help save our neighbors.”

If you or someone you know is dealing with mental health issues, contact: **800-FARM-AID (327-6243) or the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, 988.**

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## Sorghum Update

Brought to you by the Kansas Grain Sorghum Commission

### Maddy Meier Joins Kansas Sorghum Staff



**N**ow that I’ve had a month under my belt working for Kansas Grain Sorghum, I’d like to take the opportunity to formally introduce myself. My name is Madeline (Maddy) Meier, and I am serving as the organization’s director of programs.

As a third-generation agriculturalist from south central Kansas, my parents moved our

family to Goessel, population 500, in 2012 to be closer to my mom’s childhood home. My grandfather has owned the family farm, a row crop and livestock operation, since the late 1960s. Named Flatland Farms, the farm essentially became a second home. I became active in my local 4-H and FFA programs, participating in as many projects and career development events as I could. However, raising and exhibiting beef cattle was definitely a highlight. While I own a multitude of breeds, our shorthorns were always my favorite! My biggest competitors always worked beside me in the barn as I rinsed calves every summer, including my identical twin sister, Emily, and, later on, our younger sister Grace.

With a family who has ‘bled purple’ for as long as I can remember, it was no surprise I decided to attend Kansas State University and pursue a degree in agricultural communications and journalism with a secondary major in global food systems leadership. When I stepped on campus as a freshman in the fall of 2018, I had no idea of the experiences waiting for me. From being involved in Greek life to the College of Agriculture Ambassadors, I found myself busy but surrounded by high-achieving students who pushed me toward greatness.

Through these organizations, I found networking opportunities which would later lead to exciting internship experiences. Leading up to graduation, I had worked with Kansas Farm Bureau, the Kansas Department of Agriculture and the Kansas Soybean Association. I knew I had a passion for

connecting others through agriculture, but a question still remained unanswered as I approached my final semester: What am I going to do after I graduate?

That question would be answered sooner than I had anticipated. One night, after scrolling through job announcements, a notification popped up on my cell phone from a colleague, suggesting I apply for an open position with Kansas Grain Sorghum. I wanted to work with a commodity organization where I would be able to integrate my passions of creativity, sustainability and above all, advocacy for the industry which had provided me with so many opportunities throughout my life. I sent in my resume, and well, the rest is history.

On a day-to-day basis, you can usually find me in my office creating social media content or engaging with industry partners in order to find new ways to promote the sorghum industry, such as through the Kansas Farm Food Connection platform.

As the month of July progresses, I have already been given tremendous opportunities within the industry. I was able to meet with a trade team from Mexico and assist in tours of various feed and grain processing facilities in central Kansas and even connect with talented researchers, communicators and leaders within the sorghum industry. Later this month, I will represent the Kansas Grain Sorghum Association at Syngenta’s Leadership At Its Best Conference in Washington, D.C. Here, I will not only continue to develop my leadership abilities but will also be meeting with state congressional leaders in order to discuss various topics surrounding the sorghum industry.

One of my favorite parts about my position is every day there is always something new to learn. I am so excited to be able to continue to connect with sorghum stakeholders across the country and further develop industry relations. As Kansas Grain Sorghum’s director of programs, I will continue to serve and advocate for sorghum growers. I am so fortunate to have joined a community of individuals who share my passion for such a great industry.

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# Sorghum Shortcuts

## National Sorghum Foundation Awards 2022-2023 Scholarships

The National Sorghum Foundation awarded scholarships to three students for the 2022-2023 academic year with awards totaling \$4,500.

- **Trace Harris** - Bruce Maunder Scholarship winner: Harris is a junior agricultural economics major at Texas A&M University from Poth, Texas. After graduation, Harris plans to pursue a career in agricultural lending.
- **Benjamin Kamrath** - Darrell Rosenow Memorial Scholarship winner: Kamrath is a sophomore agronomy major at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln from Columbus, Nebraska. Upon graduation, Kamrath plans to work in seed sales as an agronomist.
- **Joshua Strine** - Bill Kubecka Memorial Scholarship Winner: Strine is from Bryan, Texas, and is currently in graduate school at Texas A&M University, pursuing a master's degree in agricultural economics. Following graduation, Strine hopes to work in agricultural finance, specifically relating to commodities.

These scholarships provide each winner \$1,500 to help students with education expenses. For more information about the National Sorghum Foundation, visit [SorghumGrowers.com/foundation-scholarship](https://SorghumGrowers.com/foundation-scholarship).

## Team Sorghum Takes Home Eight ACN Awards

Recently, Team Sorghum's Communications Teams spent the week in Raleigh, North Carolina, for Ag Media Summit, the largest gathering of the agriculture industry's top writers, editors, photographers, publishers and strategic communicators in the U.S. During this time, the Agricultural Communicators Network (ACN), formerly the American Agricultural Editors' Association (AAEA), hosted its annual communications awards ceremony where USCP and NSP placed top three in eight categories, four of them being first place. Below are the winnings:

- NSP *Sorghum Grower* magazine, 1st place, Publication: Print or Electronic (Not-For-Profit)
- USCP Annual Report, 1st place
- USCP Website, 1st place

- USCP, Photography, 1st place, Digital Enhancement Photography Category
- USCP, Photography, 2nd Place Digital Enhancement Photography Category
- USCP, Photography, 3rd place Digital Enhancement Photography Category
- USCP Sorghum: Smart Talk Podcast, 2nd place
- USCP Food & Nutritional Ad for the American Cancer Institute, 3rd place

## 2022 Yield Contest Taking Entries

The 2022 National Sorghum Producers Yield Contest is open and includes new deadlines for entry and harvest forms submission.

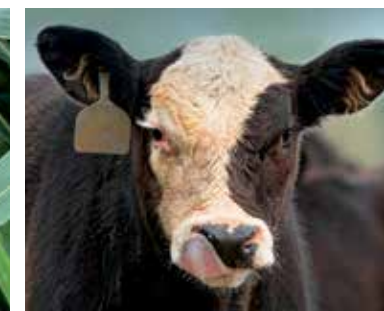
The new entry deadline for the 2022 Sorghum Yield Contest is October 15. Additionally, the 10-day waiting period between submission of the entry form and the harvest report is eliminated. Harvest reports will be made available to contest entrants beginning October 16 and must be received at the NSP office or postmarked no later than November 25.

The goal of the yield contest is to increase grower yields, transfer knowledge between growers to enhance management and identify sorghum producers who excel in each state and throughout the country. In order to enroll, contestants must be a paid NSP member at the time of entry. More than one member of a family may enroll, but each member must have a separate membership. All entries will be reviewed and divisions will be placed off of yield only. National and state winners will be recognized at the 2023 Commodity Classic in Orlando, Florida.

To find the entry form, 2022 yield contest rule changes and more information, interested contestants can visit [SorghumGrowers.com/yield-contest/](https://SorghumGrowers.com/yield-contest/) or contact NSP at 806-749-3478.

## Fall Sorghum Grower Magazine: Photo Submissions Being Accepted

Get your camera (or even phone camera) ready, we want to see your sorghum field! Submit your field photos here, or tag us in your #FromTheField photos on social media for a chance to be featured in the upcoming Fall edition of the *Sorghum Grower* magazine!



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