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SPRING 2017

A FIRST
LOOK AT THE
COMMODITY
CONSERVATION
& ENERGY
TITLES

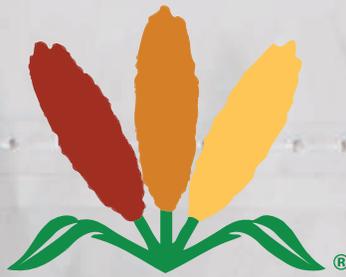
The Farm Bill

SPECIAL EDITION

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U.S. FARM POLICY

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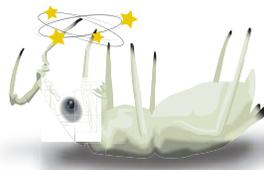


ON THE COVER: National Sorghum Producers Vice Chairman Dan Atkisson testified before the Subcommittee on General Farm Commodities and Risk Management in March, advocating for a strong safety net and crop insurance program for sorghum farmers in the next farm bill. Photo provided by U.S. House Committee on Agriculture.



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Chairman's Desk

*New Administration,
 New Farm Bill:
 Same Tradition
 Representing You*



To borrow a quote from the French novelist Alphonse Kan, “The more things change, the more they are the same.” While it seems like only yesterday, or last year at the most, that National Sorghum Producers past chairman Tobi Bostwick asked me if I would be interested in serving on the NSP legislative committee, it has actually been nine years.

The first NSP D.C. Fly-In I attended was in 2009. We noted at the time it was almost like attending a kindergarten class on the first day of school because of all the changes the 2008 election brought. We knew there would inevitably be a lot of changes in store for us in agriculture, as well. Our lobbying firm and our legislative committee pointed out there would have to be a tremendous amount of communication with each other, our producers and with our congressional representatives. I thought we went through that change with flying colors.

Then, there was the ongoing battle of the 2014 Farm Bill. Again, we persevered and came out very well with the sorghum reference price being \$3.95 and the Price Loss Coverage (PLC) program becoming available. Nearly 70 percent of our producers enrolled in the PLC program adding \$400 million of additional revenue last year alone to their bottom lines.

Now, here we are in 2017 with new appointees and a farm bill nearly up for renewal. Once again, your National Sorghum Producer association is spending a lot of time and effort in helping to see that our producers are represented and treated fairly in the upcoming discussions being held regarding research, trade, farm policy and other areas of concern. And again, we are asking our members to communicate with us, and when the call to action is made, to contact your congressional representatives when influence from the heartland is needed and every vote counts.

Together, with your input and support, National Sorghum Producers will continue to move the sorghum industry forward by representing you, our producers, in Washington, D.C., as we have for more than 50 years.

Don Bloss
 Board Chairman



farm bill history

*by Jeff Harrison
Combest Sell & Associates*

Joseph stored up huge quantities of grain, like sand of the sea;

it was so much that he stopped keeping records because it was beyond measure.

Genesis 41:49

Words taken from the Book of Genesis indicate farm policy has been around for a long time. After all, food and clothing are necessities. Critics of U.S. farm policy gloss over not only this world history but 228 years of U.S. farm policy, asserting that America's policy only dates back to the Great Depression. This assertion ignores America's history of farm policy that stretches to its beginnings.

U.S. farm policy has taken different approaches over 228 years to tackle different problems. But, broad consensus among Americans in support of farm policy has never wavered.

In our early years, from 1790 to 1854, Washington passed laws to reduce the cost of land, ease credit, and forgive debt to encourage westward expansion. This culminated with passage of the Homestead Act in 1862 that gave land to anyone who would farm it.

When the West was settled, America worked to enhance productivity and create a better life on the farm, establishing the Department of Agriculture, land grant universities, experiment stations and extension services. This second wave of farm policy, including laws like Smith-Lever, formed an education system to provide independent farm and ranch families with the tools necessary to feed and clothe a nation.

But no good deed goes unpunished. As America's farmers and ranchers increasingly fed and clothed the country in a manner unrivaled in history, the problem of surpluses and depressed prices surfaced. This problem was compounded by natural disasters more common in newly settled parts of America, expensive and hard to secure credit, increasing market leverage among sectors that adversely impacted producers, and policies that favored industry to the detriment of agriculture. In response, laws, including the Capper Volstead Act of 1922, were enacted to empower farmers and ranchers by enabling them to better market their commodities and by putting producers on a more equal footing with other sectors of the economy.

With industrialization, rising urban populations and World War I, America's farmers and ranchers experienced a boom with commodity prices rising to levels known as parity prices. But, the cure for good prices is good prices.

Farm numbers reached their zenith in 1920, numbering about 6.5 million. But, when "the war to end all wars" ended and Europe rebuilt, commodity prices collapsed. A conservative, Republican Congress approved a farm bill, including price supports, four times. But, each was vetoed despite the support of the Vice President and the Secretary of Agriculture. In 1929, a GOP President and Congress finally enacted the first farm bill. It was too little, too late.

It took the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl for Washington to finally enact a farm bill up to the task. The Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1933 was supposed to achieve parity prices farmers received from 1909 to 1914. However, by 1936, a legal challenge had reached the Supreme Court which struck down the measure, not due to the support for farmers and ranchers but over a tax. The Chief Justice sided with the majority in exchange for a commitment that the author of the opinion uphold a future farm bill without the tax.

That farm bill was the Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1938, which remains permanent law today. Between 1933 and today, 17 farm bills have been enacted. These farm bills have used a combination of price supports and supply management to help ensure the country, and increasingly the world, is well fed and well clothed in spite of inherent challenges farmers and ranchers face. However, as export markets have risen in importance to U.S. producers, supply management has largely given way to other market-oriented domestic support.

The success of early farm bills was measured by its achieving parity prices. The 1948 Farm Bill sought to attain 90 percent of parity while the 1949, 1954 and 1956 Farm Bills set sites lower, sometimes getting politicians in trouble. Secretary of Agriculture Ezra Taft Benson once persuaded President Dwight D. Eisenhower to veto a farm bill that sought to shore up the safety net. While Ike survived the uproar from the countryside, the GOP's congressional majorities did not. After successfully winning back Congress after nearly 25 years in the political wilderness, the backlash landed Republicans back in the minority for another 40 years save a short stint in control of the Senate.

The farm bills in the 1930s through 1950s were called the Agricultural Adjustment Act or the Agricultural Act. The 1965 Farm Bill would be the first to change the name, while the 1970 and 1973 laws would also change the contours. The 1965 law, which lowered support, was dubbed the Food and Agricultural Act, while the Agricultural and Consumer Protection Act of 1973 was the first to amend the Food Stamp Act of 1964. The Agricultural Act of 1970 may have returned the farm bill to its traditional name, but it also broadened the purpose by introducing a precursor to the Rural Development Title. The 1970 Farm Bill also has the ignominious distinction of intro-

ducing payment limits. In its defense, the \$55,000 pay limit of 1970 would be worth more than \$352,000 today.

Of course, as America's farmers and ranchers relied increasingly upon export markets to make a livelihood, farm policy was ever shifting away from supply management toward domestic supports involving payments, including target prices and deficiency payments introduced in the 1970s. This increased movement toward farm payments naturally led to the discussion and ultimately the adoption of payment limits, as counterproductive as these limits are to the promotion of U.S. global competitiveness and the survival of independent farm and ranch families.

NSP LEADERS (L-R) Bernie Hynes, Leo Bindel and Bill Kubecka discuss sorghum policy with Senator Pat Roberts (R-KS) in 2001. ▼



▲ FORMER NSP Chairman Jeff Casten testifies before Congress in 1991 promoting sorghum trade during NAFTA negotiations.

HOUSE AG Committee Former Chairman Larry Combest (right) reviews NSP priorities during 1990-era farm policy. ▼



▲ NSP DELEGATES gathered on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., during the annual DC Fly-In prior to passage of the 1996 Farm Bill.

The 1977 Food and Agriculture Act consummated the marriage of agriculture and food stamps while also increasing support for commodities, particularly peanuts which was, perhaps, a house warming gift for the new occupant at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue (Jimmy Carter was a peanut farmer from Georgia). The '77 law also comes closest to what the farm bill looks like today, encompassing a relatively wide-ranging variety of policy titles, including trade, food stamps, research and extension, rural development, in addition to the mainstays of commodities and conservation.

The Agriculture and Food Act of 1981 and the Food Security Act of 1985 modified or lowered farm supports and with catastrophic results. In 1983, President Reagan had to initiate "PIK and Roll" to rescue a reeling farm economy, and the 1985 legislation struggled in the face of the full-fledged farm financial crisis that was unfolding, requiring emergency legislation. The 1985 law greatly expanded conservation, including the introduction of the Conservation Reserve Program, but it also heralded in swampbuster and sodbuster.

The Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990 froze target prices on one hand while allowing greater planting flexibility on the other. It was also the last of its kind. The 1996 Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act would mark a sea of change in U.S. farm policy. The 1996 law ended all remnants of supply management for most staple commodities while granting farmers near full planting flexibility.

The Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 significantly strengthened the farm safety and expanded it to fully include peanut, soybean, wool, mohair, honey and pulse crop farmers. The measure also updated dairy policy, expanded conservation, and included the first energy title.

The Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 built on the 2002 law, further updating dairy, while adding safety net options, most notably livestock disaster, and expanding food stamps.

Finally, the Agricultural Act of 2014, with a name that harkens back to earlier laws, sought to save money while maintaining a strong safety net, with increased emphasis on risk management. Dairy policy was updated again and cotton was significantly altered, but neither policy is working and both are expected to be strengthened.

Although grain sorghum is never expressly mentioned in a farm bill until 1956, farm bills did allow, but did not require, support for grain sorghum farmers. Moreover, when grain sorghum was expressly mentioned in a farm bill, it was grouped in with other feed grains and given unspecified and discriminatory support. It would not be until 1996 that grain sorghum

would gain partial recognition as its own crop, alongside the others. Then, in 2002, grain sorghum received full recognition. In 2008, the farm bill took aim at discrimination against grain sorghum in the context of crop insurance, and the 2014 Farm Bill did the same with respect to the Commodity Title. For grain sorghum farmers, it's been a long row to hoe.

This is a general history of U.S. farm policy but it does not tell the whole story. As important as farm bills are, they complement many other farm laws. Thumb through a farm bill, and you will notice that a farm bill is not legislation made from whole cloth but primarily amends permanent farm laws.

These laws provide a safety net for farmers and ranchers; advance clean air and water, healthy soils, and habitat for wildlife; and promote U.S. farm products abroad, while sharing our harvest with people around the world in need. They help low-income families put food on the table and ensure farmers and ranchers get the credit they need. They ensure small towns have water and sewer and life-saving

technology in rural hospitals while electrifying rural America. And they promote research and extension, healthy forests and energy independence—the list goes on.

These policies are a recognition of the special importance of farmers and ranchers and the unique

challenges they face. Yet, high-powered, well-heeled critics prowl about seeking the ruin of 228 years of hard work. These critics see the next farm bill as their time to strike.

With the political balkanization of the country, longstanding bipartisan support of the farm bill has become precarious, especially with the partisan divide over food stamps. Fewer Americans are living in the countryside and small towns, and even fewer still make a living on the farm or ranch. The number of Members of Congress with any practical knowledge or understanding of farming and ranching, to say nothing of policy understanding, is diminishing, as well. What is more, the sharpened political edges on each side of the spectrum are especially sharp when it comes to U.S. farm policy. One side loathes farm policy because its adherents believe it harms human health and the environment, and it helps them fundraise. And the other side loathes farm policy because its adherents believe it costs too much, undermines free markets and trade, and it helps them fundraise.

In short, the history of U.S. farm policy is as old as our nation itself. And, if you want to preserve it going forward, it is more important than ever that you stay active in National Sorghum Producers. For if we allow ourselves to rest on our laurels, U.S. farm policy may become just that: history. ♪

“
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conservation title

by Pelham Straughn, 9B Group

One theme in the conservation arena that has been pervasive through the 114th Congress and into the current Congress is the success of voluntary, incentive-based conservation programs. Whether it is popular cost share programs like the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) or the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), working lands programs are vital to providing incentives to sorghum growers to adopt conservation practices.

As we all know, sorghum is the nation's premier water-saving grain that provides valuable conservation benefits through its drought and heat tolerance, high residue stubble, expansive root systems, carbon sequestering capacity, and wildlife habitat and food. Conservation and sorghum naturally go hand in hand.

The Agricultural Act of 2014 had a number of reforms, consolidations and innovations, and it will be important to build on those accomplishments. Like most farm bills, funding will be key not only to the conservation title, but through the farm bill as a whole. Decisions

the agricultural committees will be required to make will be dictated by whether the bill receives additional funding, the same amount (a so-called "baseline bill"), or whether the committees must cut funding to find savings.

Most of the focus in the conservation title will be on the "big five" programs, which include the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), CSP, EQIP, the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) and the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). In addition, there will be debate on how the new provision of conservation compliance tied to crop insurance is working for farmers.

One program that Congress will certainly evaluate is CRP, which currently has a cap of 24 million acres—an 8 million acre reduction from 2013 levels. Congress will be exploring the right size for this set-aside program. House Committee on Agriculture Ranking Member Collin Peterson from Minnesota and some wildlife organizations, including Pheasants Forever, are calling for the cap to be raised to 40 million acres. The biggest question with the

40 million acre proposal will be how to pay for it, and a lot of groups on all sides of the issue are working to find a solution. If Congress elects to give significant funding increases to some programs, other conservation programs will most likely have to be reduced. Raising the cap by 16 million acres would cost billions of dollars, so it will be important to monitor this debate. In addition, Ranking Member Peterson would like to see reforms to the program that could reduce the cost and hopefully compete less with farmers wanting to rent land. Ranking Member Peterson believes reforms are integral to the future success of the program.

In a February 28 House Agriculture Subcommittee on Conservation and Forestry hearing titled, “The Next Farm Bill: Conservation Policy,” the importance of working lands was prevalent through each witness’s testimony. The gold standard for conservation programs for many is EQIP, and the panelists spoke about its importance. The program, which pays for a portion of the cost of implementing mostly structural-type conservation practices, is funded at \$1.75 billion per year throughout FY18 and beyond. This program is most likely not in danger of major reductions in funding but is annually reduced during the appropriations cycle through changes in mandatory spending programs (CHIMPS).



Another working lands program, CSP, which has more than 80 million acres currently enrolled, is going through a transition period as the Natural Resource Conservation Service looks to reform the program. The goal of this reform is to make the program easier to understand and more transparent. While the program is popular among some producers, Congress will evaluate the program fully. CSP’s biggest champion, former Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA), has retired, so some in Congress may look to this program for further reform and possible cuts.

One feature of CSP, specifically designed for sorghum growers, was the resource conserving crop rotation practice. The National Sorghum Producers will continue to evaluate the effectiveness of this practice and whether it is being implemented as Congress intended. This practice was intended to recognize the water-saving benefits of sorghum. Sorghum is drought tolerant and well suited for arid conditions and is especially important in areas that draw water from the Ogallala Aquifer to support agriculture. As the Ogallala has struggled to maintain adequate levels and recharge, sorghum’s ability to produce grain with significantly lower water requirements is critical for the long-term existence of the Ogallala.

As with any new program, the innovative RCPP will also be looked at closely by the agriculture committees. While the program is certainly popular among many in the conservation and commodity communities, Congress will evaluate ways to improve the program. One area of improvement could be the overall flexibility of the program, and Congress also needs to evaluate in this farm economy whether leveraging private funds is an impediment to some organizations participating. The complexity of the application process is one other area that Congress should consider reforming.

As the the farm bill process moves forward, Members of Congress will start introducing “marker bills” of in-

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terest to them and usually to their home state or district. One such bill was introduced the last week of February by Senator John Thune (R-SD). The Soil Health and Income Protection Program (SHIPP) is designed to take the least productive portion of fields out of production and move them into a perennial, conserving use crop in exchange for a payment equal to half the CRP county rental rate. This short-term program would only be for 3-5 years and would also allow a crop insurance premium benefit to producers utilizing the program. The NSP will monitor this and many other bills that will be introduced over the coming months.

As NSP finalizes priorities for the conservation title, we want to ensure the conservation title works better for dryland farmers in the western plains. Whether that is water conservation practices in EQIP or resource-conserving crop rotation practices in CSP, we want the conservation title to work for all producers in all regions of the country.✍

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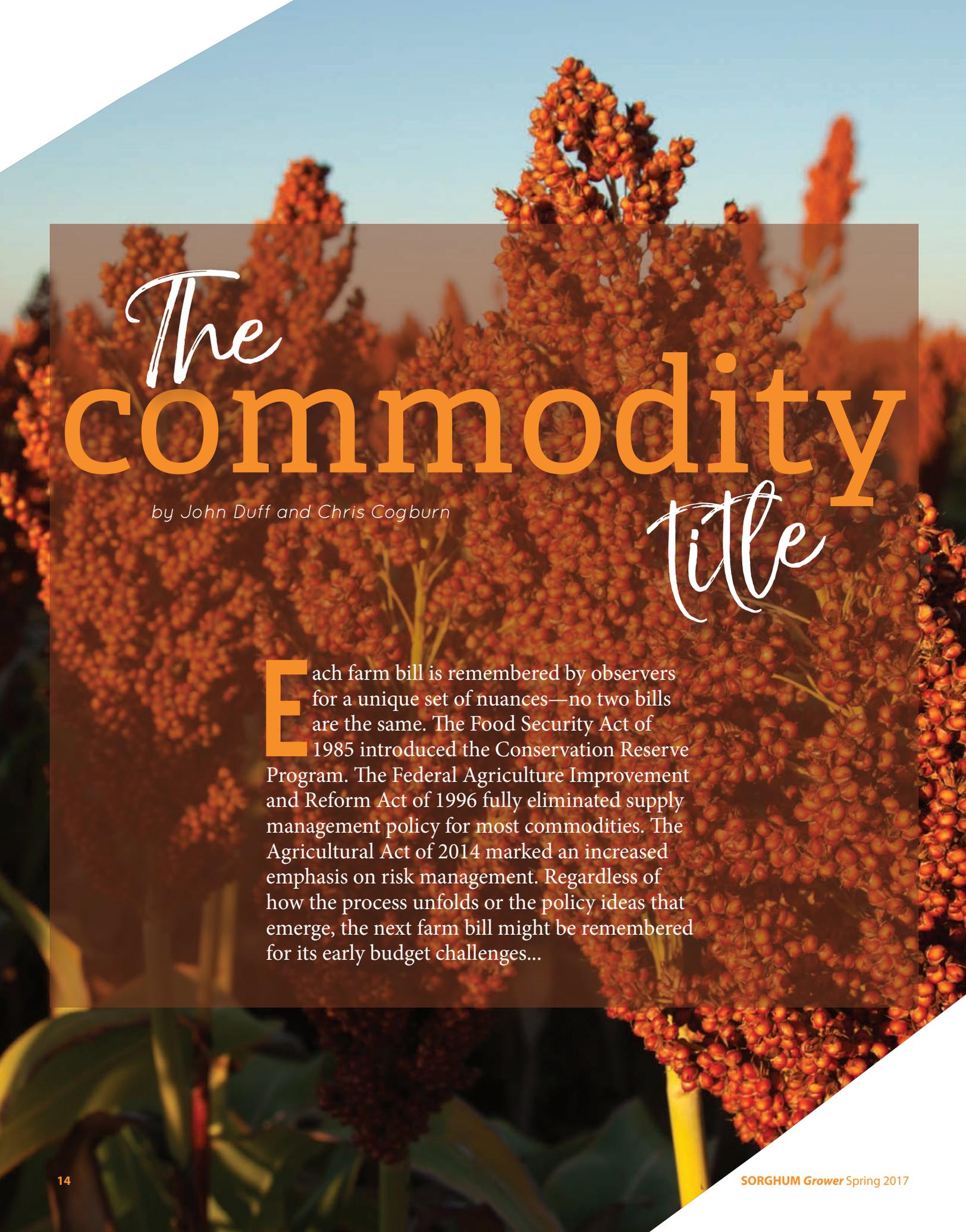
At National Sorghum Producers, we believe in the sorghum industry, and we believe in team work. Our mission and vision indicate our commitment to leading the charge for this industry through advocacy, relationships and steadfast leadership. For an industry to realize its full potential, it takes everyone working together. Financial support from the Industry Partner Program allows NSP to be the best in the world at representing the U.S. sorghum industry and sorghum farmers.

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The commodity Title

by John Duff and Chris Cogburn

Each farm bill is remembered by observers for a unique set of nuances—no two bills are the same. The Food Security Act of 1985 introduced the Conservation Reserve Program. The Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996 fully eliminated supply management policy for most commodities. The Agricultural Act of 2014 marked an increased emphasis on risk management. Regardless of how the process unfolds or the policy ideas that emerge, the next farm bill might be remembered for its early budget challenges...

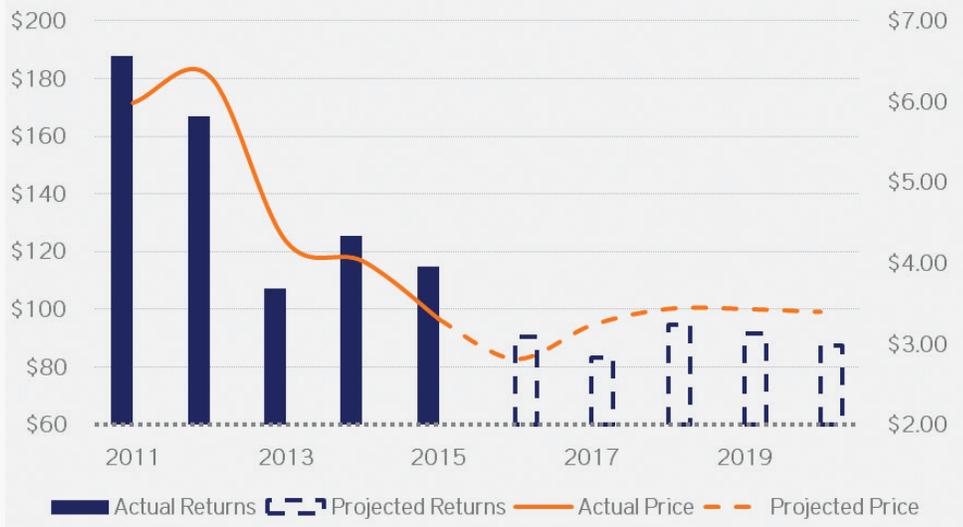
Farm bills are written explicitly for difficult times, but it is hard to comprehend the magnitude of change in farm fortunes in the U.S. since the current bill was enacted. Figure 1 illustrates the drop that has exposed producers to their largest losses since the 1980s. The depicted high point in return over variable costs is 126 percent higher than the projected low point. With commodity program payments at their lowest levels in a quarter century, producers are already in need of assistance. Figure 2 highlights the farm bill's recent shift away from producer support and toward nutrition assistance.

With producers facing such a difficult economic situation, it is almost fitting the architects of the next farm bill are in similarly dire financial straits. Due to the rolling nature of the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) program's revenue benchmark, coverage levels for producers enrolled in the program are in the midst of a precipitous decline. Figure 3 (next page) depicts the falling ARC guarantees for sorghum producers in Rooks County, Kansas.

This decline has helped drain the farm bill's programs of baseline funding, or the funding that will be used as a starting point for the next bill. Figure 4 (next page) depicts the latest baseline projections for corn ARC and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) payments from the Congressional Budget Office (CBO). If not for CBO's assumption that corn producers enrolled in ARC would switch to PLC after a hypothetical extension of the current bill, baseline funding for the next bill's corn safety net would be almost nonexistent.

SORGHUM PROFITABILITY

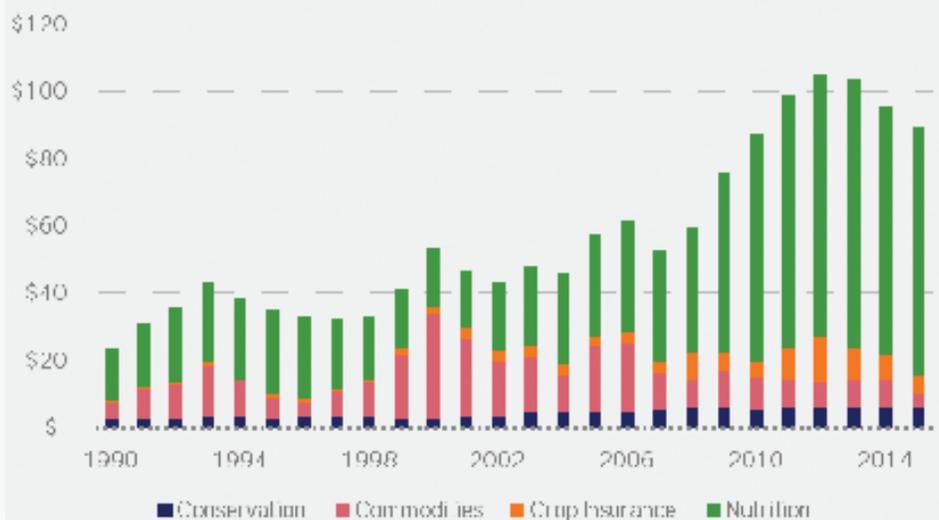
Returns over variable costs (left) and price (right) for sorghum



▲ SORGHUM PRODUCERS HAVE experienced a historic decline in returns over variable costs since the Agricultural Act of 2014 was enacted. According to the Food and Agricultural Policy Research Institute, this situation will not change anytime soon. (Figure 1)

NOT YOUR FATHER'S FARM BILL

Major farm bill program expenditures in billions of dollars



▲ NUTRITION ASSISTANCE HAS been an integral part of the farm bill debate as the coalition between urban and rural interests helps secure a strong safety net for producers. This assistance has become a larger part of the debate over the last decade. (Figure 2)

▼ AFTER PAYMENTS OF over \$30 per acre in the first two years of the ARC program, sorghum producers in Rooks County, Kansas, face three consecutive years of \$0 ARC payments where the actual revenue is above the guarantee. (Figure 3)

FALLING GUARANTEES

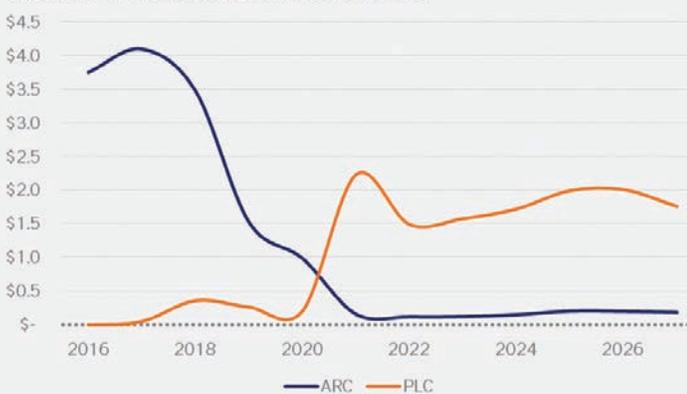
Sorghum ARC revenue guarantees, maximum payments, deductibles and actual revenues in Rooks County, Kansas



▼ THE CURRENT CBO baseline projects total ARC payments will fall from a high of \$4.1 billion in 2017 to a low of \$118 million in 2022. This loss of baseline funding will make the process of writing a new farm bill difficult. (Figure 4)

SAFETY NET CONCERNS

Projected corn ARC and PLC payments in billions of dollars



▼ WITH REALITY \$1.11 lower than projections, ARC's price protection has all but disappeared. Not only has this lowered the effectiveness of ARC as a safety net, but it has decreased baseline funding for the next farm bill as well. (Figure 5)

A LARGER-THAN-EXPECTED DECLINE

Actual versus projected corn prices over time



Why such a steep decline? The corn market is partially to blame. ARC is based on a rolling revenue benchmark calculated by multiplying the five-year national marketing year average price by the five-year Olympic average county yield. As long as prices stay firm, ARC complements multiple peril crop insurance by providing an additional band of coverage and added price protection. Prolonged periods of low prices, on the other hand, lower the revenue benchmark to levels where all but the most severe yield losses fail to trigger a payment.

Large ARC payments were a virtual certainty in the program's first two years as revenue guarantees for sorghum were based on five-year national marketing year average prices of \$5.10. Today, the situation is radically different with projections pegging this benchmark near the sorghum reference price of \$3.95. The outlook for the corn price benchmark is no brighter. Figure 5 illustrates the difference between the corn price projection from 2013 and the reality of the corn market since.

Other farm bill programs are similarly underfunded. Figure 6 (right) lists 37 programs without baseline funding. These programs contributed \$2.6 billion in five-year baseline funding to the current farm bill, and several have been highly beneficial to sorghum producers. For example, the bioenergy program for advanced biofuels was originally funded at \$75 million over five years. Authorized by section 9005 of the farm bill, this program has returned over \$60 million to sorghum ethanol producers since it began in 2010. This funding helped facilitate sorghum use and led to ethanol becoming the foundation of domestic sorghum demand, so NSP is advocating vigorously for the program's continuation.

The commodity title has other challenges, as well. The most well-known ARC problem that does not involve the budget is the possibility of large payment inequities across county lines. These possibilities can be partially remedied by a migration to the Risk Management Agency as the primary data source, but a hybridized approach or even a complete restructuring of the program may be necessary.

The cotton industry finds itself in a similar position as the cotton-specific stacked income protection plan (STAX) has not worked as expected. The ineffectiveness of

▶ COMMODITY PROGRAMS are not the only programs without baseline funding. Many of these programs are less familiar to sorghum producers, but they contribute more than \$500 million per year to rural businesses, researchers and biofuel producers. And, they contribute to the farm bill's overall baseline funding level. (Figure 6)

FIGURE 6. UNFUNDED PROGRAMS

Farm Bill programs without continuing funds

NAME OF PROGRAM	2014 FARM BILL FUNDS IN MILLIONS OF DOLLARS
COMMODITY PROGRAMS	
Commodity Program Implementation	\$120
CONSERVATION	
Grassroots Source Water Protection	\$5
Voluntary Habitat Incentive	\$40
Small Watershed Rehabilitation	\$250
Terminal Lakes	\$150
Wetlands Mitigation Banking	\$10
NUTRITION	
Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations, Feasibility Study	\$1
Pilot Projects to Reduce Dependency and Increase Work Requirements and Work Effort	\$200
Review of Cash Assistance Program in Puerto Rico	\$1
Retail Food Store and Recipient Trafficking	\$15
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands Pilot	\$33
Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive	\$100
Pilot Project for Canned, Frozen, or Dried Fruits and Vegetables	\$5
RURAL DEVELOPMENT	
Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance	\$15
Value-added Agricultural Product Market Development Grants	\$63
Pending Water and Waste Disposal Applications	\$150
RESEARCH AND EXTENSION	
Organic Agricultural Research and Extension	\$100
Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development	\$100
Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research	\$200
ENERGY	
Biobased Markets	\$15
Biorefinery Assistance	\$200
Repowering Assistance	\$12
Bionergy Program for Advanced Biofuels	\$75
Biodiesel Fuel Education	\$5
Biomass Research and Development	\$12
Biomass Crop Assistance	\$125
HORTICULTURE	
Farmers' Market and Local Food Promotion	\$150
Organic Production and Market Data Initiative	\$5
National Organic Program Technology Upgrade	\$5
National Organic Certification Cost-share	\$58
CROP INSURANCE	
Crop Insurance Implementation	\$70
Index-based Weather Insurance Pilot	\$50
MISCELLANEOUS	
Sheep Production and Marketing Grant	\$2
Outreach for Socially Disadvantaged and Veteran Producers	\$50
Pima Cotton Trust Fund	\$80
Wool Apparel Manufacturers Trust Fund	\$125
Wool Research and Promotion	\$11
TOTAL	\$2,607



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▶ PLC PAYMENTS to be made in October 2017 are based on the national average sorghum price for the marketing year that began on September 1, 2016. Kansas State University currently projects this price will be **\$1.26** below the \$3.95 sorghum reference price. (Figure 7)

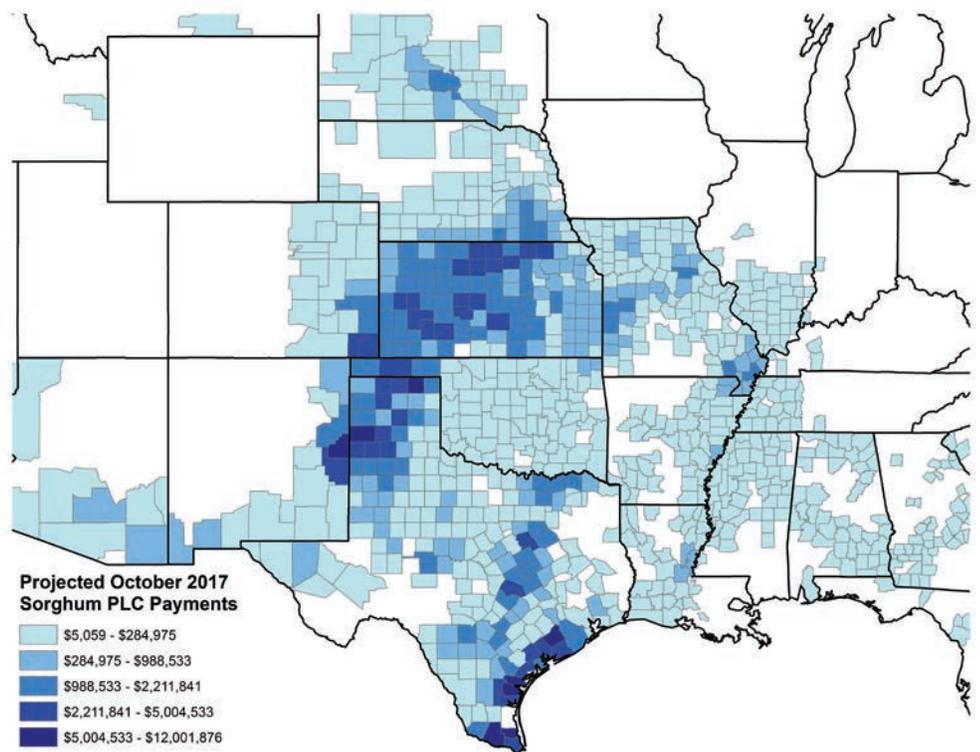
STAX coupled with a steep decline in prices led cotton producers to call for significant changes to cotton policy, and their work toward a new, cottonseed-based program continues. The fate of generic base under a new program remains unclear, but the issue has been closely watched as payments to crops attributed generic base acres have been large. Soybean programs saw the highest

generic attribution in 2016 with corn and wheat programs also receiving significant attribution. Sorghum programs were attributed just over 800,000 generic base acres.

Smaller, seemingly cosmetic changes to the farm bill are also needed. For example, as credit tightens, adjustments in payment timing could significantly help producers with cash flow problems. The same could be said for higher loan rates; however, neither of these changes come free of a cost.

Is there any good news to report? Fortunately, silver linings can be found. Although sorghum producers would rather have a strong price and receive no program payments, few would argue the coming PLC payments will be insignificant. Figure 7 maps the projected PLC payments coming in October 2017. Although the final national marketing year average price is yet to be known, current Kansas State University projections peg this price at \$2.69. The resulting \$1.26 price loss should translate to around \$400 million in total PLC payments this October. PLC was elected on approximately 6.0 million base acres, so the average payment per acre will be \$55.

Whether the budget challenges of the next farm bill reduce the effectiveness of its policies or not is unknown at this point. The state of the U.S. farm economy necessitates swift action, but it is unlikely the process will be easy. Fortunately for sorghum producers, PLC is working as intended and will provide significant support no matter the outcome. 🌾



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Sorghum Shines at 2017 Commodity Classic

By Sydney Nelson

More than 9,300 growers, media and exhibitors attended this year's 22nd annual Commodity Classic in San Antonio, Texas, March 1-4. National Sorghum Producers joined the National Corn Growers Association (NCGA), National Association of Wheat Growers (NAWG), the American Soybean Association (ASA) and the Association of Equipment Manufacturers (AEM) co-hosting America's largest farmer-led, farmer-focused convention and trade show.

The 2017 Commodity Classic featured a sorghum agenda chock-full of technology advancements, industry updates and policy discussions. During the week in San Antonio, NSP held its spring board of directors meeting, annual Sorghum General Session, the 2016 NSP Yield Contest Awards Dinner and Sorghum PAC Casino Night.

Doubled Haploid Discovery Announcement

On the trade show opening day, the United Sorghum Checkoff Program held a press conference to announce the discovery of two sorghum haploid inducer lines. This discovery is the result of a three-year collaborative effort between USCP and DuPont Pioneer and will be a major tool for sorghum improvement. These patent-pending inducer lines are the first of their kind and will enable the creation of doubled haploid sorghum, which is the first step in significantly accelerating the sorghum breeding process. You can read more on this exciting news in the Sorghum Checkoff newsletter on page 32.

Sorghum General Session

This year's Sorghum General Session, sponsored by ADM, highlighted updates on sugarcane aphid management, tactics for marketing sorghum and sorghum breeding research breakthroughs.

The session kicked off with a video presentation featur-

ing NSP board of directors Chairman Don Bloss and USCP board Chairman David Fremark who discussed collaborative efforts by both organizations to address sugarcane aphid management and export markets, along with respective insights to legislative efforts and emerging research. You can watch the address at [YouTube.com/SorghumGrowers](https://www.youtube.com/SorghumGrowers).

The sugarcane aphid panel discussion, sponsored by the Sorghum Checkoff, consisted of David Kerns, Ph.D., a professor at Texas A&M University and the Texas State Integrated Pest Management Coordinator; Angus Catchot, Ph.D., a professor of extension at Mississippi State University; and Larry Earnest, the director of the Rohwer Research Station and sorghum producer from Star City, Arkansas. The panel noted some of the identifying characteristics of sugarcane aphids and what producers should do once they have identified the pest. Research and best management practices for combating sugarcane aphids were also discussed, as well as aphid biology and reproduction. Another key point that was discussed is how producers can weigh their options between using sugarcane aphid tolerant hybrids versus managing for aphids through other means, like pesticides.

"These sugarcane aphid tolerant hybrids do work. But it all depends on what works best for your operation," Kerns said. "If that hybrid is not a yielder on your farm, then it has limited benefits. If that is the case, you are better off planting the most productive variety of sorghum and managing for the aphid in other ways."

The panel discussion was followed by Rick Rigsby, Ph.D., a former award-winning journalist and Texas A&M University professor, who now devotes his full attention to empowering people worldwide. During his talk, Rigsby encouraged producers to go back to their communities and make an impact by being leaders, modeling excellence and by growing

the best crop possible despite the many hardships faced by farmers today. Rigsby went on to emphasize the importance of stewardship and good management practices in order to lay the foundation for the next generation of producers.

“You are the trustees of the land,” Rigsby said. “What you model really determines the future of the growers association. What you model today sets the bar for younger generations who will join this association.”

Rigsby’s talk was followed by a panel discussion on marketing sorghum and navigating through a historic drop in the grain market. The panel featured three producers who grow sorghum in three geographically different areas of the country: James Born from Booker, Texas; Kent Martin from Carmen, Oklahoma; and Shane Beckman from Selden, Kansas. Each producer took questions about their local sorghum markets, goal setting, marketing strategies and choosing a marketing consultant.

“Over the years I have used a number of marketing advisers,” Born said. “One of the most important things I have found is that you have to find a marketing adviser who not only fits your needs and personality, but someone who also understands the economics of your area.”

The Sorghum General Session closed with a joint discussion on soil and wildlife conservation by Tim Lust, NSP’s chief executive officer, and Howard Vincent, president and chief executive officer of Pheasants Forever. Lust and Howard discussed sorghum’s role and benefits in the

next farm bill as a natural conservation crop, conservation program options for sorghum, and future policy efforts between the two organizations. To watch the entire sorghum general session, visit NSP’s Facebook page at [Facebook.com/nationalsorghumproducers/videos](https://www.facebook.com/nationalsorghumproducers/videos).

Classic General Session

A Commodity Classic tradition, NSP Chairman Don Bloss joined leadership from classic affiliate organizations—NCGA, NAWG, ASA and the AEM— on stage at the Classic General Session to discuss issues facing the agriculture industry. Bloss addressed a national average yield increase despite sugarcane aphid pressure, the announcement of two haploid inducer lines found in sorghum, priorities for the upcoming farm bill, and strong U.S. sorghum exports.

“There have been a lot of resources invested in the sorghum industry through research, market development and so on,” Bloss said. “I think there is a very bright future ahead for sorghum, and it’s a really exciting time to be involved.”

House Agriculture Committee Chairman Mike Conaway also addressed the general session on Friday. Conaway discussed the farm bill and assured producers he will be working hard to complete the farm bill on time.

In addition to Chairman Conaway’s remarks, the General Session included a presentation (*Continued page 26*)





2016 Yield Contest Winners



Winter Johnston
Fulton County, PA



Sam Santini Jr.
Warren County, NJ



Robert Santini Jr.
Warren County, NJ

Dryland Conventional-Till

In a competition between husband and wife, Winter Johnston came out on top. Four years ago, a neighboring farm convinced Winter and her husband, Harry, to grow sorghum as it was more profitable at the time. Johnston liked how easy sorghum is to grow especially with less rainfall. "I would say we would have to owe the success to fertilization," Johnston said. "It was a dry season this year, so fertilization played a key role."

Dryland Double Crop

Sam Santini Jr. started growing sorghum about 5–6 years ago to help supply a local bird seed company. The bird seed company provided a value-added market for the Santinis to sell sorghum, he said. Santini owes his yield success to high moisture content. Santini also likes growing sorghum as it is a good rotation crop with corn, soybeans and wheat while having less risk in the case of drought.

Dryland No-Till

Robert Santini Jr. contributes his successful yield to soil health. "On my farm, we do not cut corners with soil health. Straight from the agronomist are appropriated recipes to meet high yield goals," Santini said. Though he had a dry season with sporadic storms, Santini is thankful for sorghum's drought tolerance, and next year he hopes to see the 250 bushel yield mark finally achieved.

184.80 bu/ac

Pioneer 84G62
Safener: Concep
Plant Date: 5/20/2016
Population: 135,000 seeds/acre
Previous Crop: Soybeans
Rainfall: 20 inches
Bicep Magnum II, 2.5 qts, Pre-emerge
Liquid Nitrogen, 135
Dry Phosphorus, 70
Dry Potash, 90
Harvest Date: 10/26/2016
10 total Acres

198.36 bu/ac

Pioneer 84G62
Safener: None
Plant Date: 6/3/2016
Population: 130,000 seeds/ac
Previous Crop: Rye
Rainfall: 30 inches
Lumax, 2 qts., Postemerge
Dry Nitrogen, 200
Chicken Manure- 2 Tons
Harvest Date: 10/21/2016
13.64 total acres

178.04 bu/ac

Pioneer 84G62
Safener: None
Plant Date: 6/7/2016
Population: 130,000 seeds/ac
Previous Crop: Corn
Rainfall: 25 inches
Mustang Max, 4 oz, Broadcast
Lumax, 2 quartz, Preplant
Nitrogen, 200; Phosphorus, 100; Potash, 100
Harvest Date: 10/21/2016
25 total acres



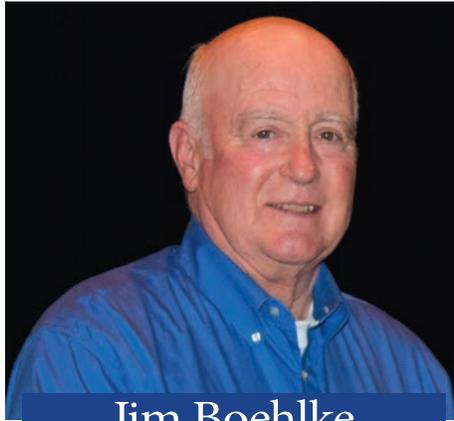
Travis Walker
Caldwell County, MO

Dryland Reduced Till

Travis Walker was looking for a crop that was more economical and beneficial for rotational purposes when his seed provider showed him sorghum. Having good soil conditions and adequate rainfall, Walker realized he had the opportunity for decent yields and decided to enter the yield contest. With a national yield contest win under his belt, Walker owes his success to weed control and fertilizing regularly. "I will definitely be planting sorghum again next year."

184.59 bu/ac

- Pioneer 84P72**
- Safener: None**
- Plant: 5/22/2016**
- Population: 100,000 seeds/ac**
- Previous Crop: Soybeans**
- Rainfall: 49 inches**
- Bicep, 3.3 qts., Pre-emerge**
- Anhydrous Ammonia, 120; Dry Nitrogen, 20;**
- Dry Phosphorus, 40; Dry Potash, 60**
- Harvest Date: 11/28/2016**
- 84.9 total acres**



Jim Boehlke
Bell-Key Farms
Canyon County, ID

Irrigated Conventional-Till

Jim Boehlke of Bell-Key Farms does not pray for rain, he makes sure his fields are watered. To help a neighboring hog farm out, Boehlke planted 5.12 acres of sorghum in 2009. After entering the sorghum yield contest and winning the Idaho state contest, Boehlke continued to plant for the contest and for their registered Angus cattle. To achieve higher yields, Boehlke uses optimized equipment, compost fertilizer and always keeps the fields 10 percent wetter than normal. "I always try to stay on the efficient side of water, not short it"

208.40 bu/ac

- Pioneer 85Y40**
- Safener: Concep III**
- Plant Date: 5/22/2016**
- Population: 105,000 seeds/ac**
- Previous Crop: Turnips**
- Rainfall: 8.5 inches**
- Parallel PCS, 1.7 pt, Preplant**
- Dry Nitrogen, 100;**
- Manure, 20 tons**
- Harvest Date: 11/10/2016**
- 25.6 total acres**



Jeffrey Barlieb
Warren County, NJ

Irrigated Double Crop

Jeffrey Barlieb farms in the northeast with his family where he says the ground is ideal for planting sorghum. Conditions aligned for his sorghum crop this year, which provided both favorable planting and harvest seasons. Barlieb, a newcomer to the sorghum yield contest, is part of the Santini family who certainly has a long history of sorghum yield contest wins. Under the guidance of his father-in-law, he said sorghum is a crop he sees a lot of success with. "We'll be shooting for the same great yields this growing season," he said.

176.33 bu/ac

- Pioneer 84G62**
- Safener: Concep III**
- Plant Date: 5/18/2016**
- Population: 130,000 seeds/ac**
- Previous Crop: Rye**
- Rainfall: 25 inches**
- Lumax, 2 quarts, Postemerge**
- Liquid Anhydrous Ammonia;**
- Liquid Nitrogen, 30 gal**
- Harvest Date: 10/4/2016**
- 11.4 total acres**



Robert & John Reznik
Moore County, TX

Irrigated No-Till

The Rezniks have been growing sorghum since the 1950s in the Texas Panhandle. Growing sorghum mainly on dryland acres as a rotational crop with corn and wheat, Reznik says their success is due to some of the best soils for growing sorghum. "We are over here in the northwestern part of the Texas Panhandle," Reznik said. "The soils here have a lot of water holding capacity."

188.90 bu/ac

Pioneer 84P80
Safener: Concep
Plant Date: 5/14/2016
Population: 56,000 seeds/ac
Previous Crop: Corn
Rainfall: 15 inches
Prevathon, 16 oz, Broadcast; Sivanto, 5 oz, Broadcast
Atrazine, 1.5 lbs, Pre-emerge;
Me-Too-Lachlor, 1.33 pt, Pre-emerge;
Roundup, 1 lbs, Post Plant
Liquid Nitrogen, 280; Dry and Liquid Phosphorus, 70
Harvest Date: 9/26/2016
14 total acres



Ron Robison
Harlan County, NE

Irrigated Reduced -Till & Food Grade

Ron Robison has been growing grain sorghum off and on since he was a kid. However, it was not until a trip to Dallas and hearing about the push for GMO-free products that he decided to grow food-grade sorghum. Winning in the Irrigated Reduced-Till and the Irrigated Food Grade categories, Robison owes his success to timely rains and the right temperatures while trying to nurture the plants. "It has been a fun adventure," Robison said. "It has been fun trying new things and working as a team [with his wife]."

197.68 bu/ac

Pay Dirt J300
Safener: Concep
Plant Date: 5/20/2016
Population: 105,000 seeds/ac
Previous Crop: Corn
Rainfall: 24.5 inches
Bicep Magnum II, 1 qt, Pre-emerge; Lumax, 1.5 qt, Pre-emerge; Touchdown, .875 qt, Pre-emerge; Touchdown, 1.5 qt, Preplant; 2-4 D, .313 qt, Preplant; Dicamba, .125 qt, Preplant;
Liquid Nitrogen, 180; Liquid Phosphorous, 20; Manure, 25 tons
Harvest Date: 11/3/2016
132.5 total acres



Triple Creek Farm
Yadkin County, NC

Non-Irrigated Food Grade

Peter Fleming of Triple Creek Farm fell in love with growing sorghum in 1970s with his dad for their hog farm because the crop is drought-tolerant. Now he grows it for his daughter and other individuals with gluten-intolerance. Fleming owes the success winning the non-irrigated food-grade division to good soils, knowledge of the crop and the seed companies guidance. "I base my success on being in part of the country that just had a really good growing season and that everything went right," Fleming said.

122.89 bu/ac

Sorghum Partners NK8828
Safener: Concep
Plant Date: 5/30/2016
Population: 95,000 seeds/ac
Previous Crop: Sorghum
Rainfall: 30 inches
Bicep II, 1 qt, Preplant
Liquid Nitrogen, 20
Harvest Date: 10/14/2016
1.67 total acres



(Continued from *Commodity Classic* page. 21)

from John O’Leary, who shared a message of navigating adversity through decision-making, revealing to the farmer audience a brighter vision for what is possible and living boldly to impact others.

NSP Yield Contest Dinner

NSP recognized the winners in the nine different categories of the 2016 NSP Yield Contest during a dinner at Commodity Classic sponsored by DuPont Pioneer. This year’s contest had entries from 25 states, including a top yield of 208.4 bushels per acre entered by Jim Boehlke – Bell-Key Farms of Nampa, Idaho (see winners on page 22).



Sorghum PAC Casino Night

Following the yield contest dinner, the annual Sorghum PAC Casino Night kicked off with a silent auction and casino games. The Sorghum PAC is the bipartisan political action committee of the NSP, created by the board of directors in 2010 to advance the political interests of sorghum producers. This year’s fundraiser garnered approximately \$80,000 to support NSP legislative activities.



Trade Show

This year’s Commodity Classic Trade Show filled 226,600 square feet of booth space with 425 participating companies and welcomed 83 first-time exhibitors.

NSP booth visitors were able to speak with fellow growers and industry leaders about best management practices, sorghum markets and upcoming policy decisions. The NSP and Sorghum Checkoff booths were the talk of the show where visitors were able to get a taste of sorghum with a sampling of sorghum three bean salad and a sorghum pico de gallo dip. You can find those recipes at SimplySorghum.com. There was also an opportunity for booth visitors to sample sorghum whiskey made from sweet sorghum.

Join NSP in Anaheim

Mark the calendar for the 23rd annual Commodity Classic, Feb. 27 – March 1, 2018, in Anaheim, California. The event will include all the great programs associated with Classic, including the NSP Yield Contest Dinner, Sorghum PAC Casino Night and more. For details and updates visit www.CommodityClassic.com.



Meet Your New USDA Secretary: Sonny Perdue



Photo Credit: Ohio Ag Net

George Ervin “Sonny” Perdue III grew up on a row crop farm in central Georgia. The son of a farmer and a teacher, Perdue attended the University of Georgia where he earned a doctorate in veterinary medicine in 1971. He served in the U.S. Air Force, stationed in Ohio from 1972 to 1974, and rose to the rank of captain in that short time. In 1972, Perdue married his wife Mary Ruff. The couple now has four children and 14 grandchildren. After the air force, Perdue worked as a veterinarian for a brief time in Raleigh, North Carolina, before returning to Georgia where he became a successful small-business owner. In 1990, Perdue was elected to the state senate and served in that capacity for 11 years, first as a Democrat and then as a Republican. On January 13, 2003, Sonny Perdue was sworn in as governor of Georgia, where he would go on to serve two terms.

Editor's Note: We completely expected a new Secretary of Agriculture to be in place by now, but at press time, confirmation was scheduled for April 24. So, fingers crossed, readers, meet your (almost... maybe) new Secretary!

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Sorghum Recipe





SPINACH AND ALMOND SORGHUM SALAD

Make
this
recipe

INGREDIENTS:

Dressing:

- 1/4 cup hulled strawberries, cut in half (fresh or frozen)
- 1/4 cup balsamic vinegar
- 1/3 cup olive oil
- 1/2 teaspoon sorghum syrup
- 1/4 teaspoon sea salt

Salad:

- 2 teaspoons olive oil
- 1/2 cup raw whole grain sorghum
- 5 ounces spinach, washed and dried
- 1/4 cup almonds, toasted and slivered
- 1 1/2 cup strawberries, hulled and sliced

DIRECTIONS:

1

In a blender add strawberries, balsamic vinegar, olive oil, sorghum syrup and sea salt. Blend until strawberries are pureed, about one minute. Set aside or refrigerate until further use.

2

Heat a 12-quart stock pot over medium heat. Add olive oil and whole grain sorghum (not rinsed) to the pot. Increase heat to medium-high heat, and cook until sorghum is done (according to package directions).

3

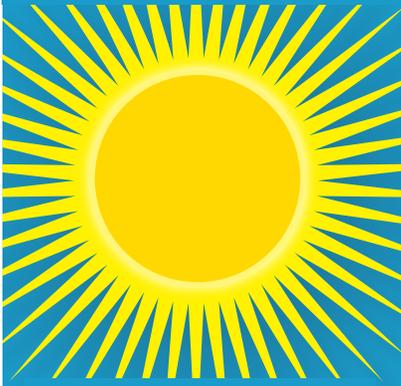
Once the sorghum pops, stir with a wooden spoon. Make sure to stand a small distance from the stove to avoid any splatter. Once there are more than 10 seconds between pops, remove from heat. Place in a medium-sized bowl and set aside.

4

Place spinach, almonds, sliced strawberries, and 3/4 of the popped sorghum in a salad bowl, and mix until well combined. Add dressing, and top with remaining popped sorghum.

For this recipe and more, visit:
SimplySorghum.com

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Sorghum Update

Brought to you by the Kansas Grain Sorghum Commission

Kansas Sorghum Supplies Drought-Stricken South Africa

Program is assisting other countries through exports and industry relationships

The Kansas Grain Sorghum Commission and the U.S. Grains Council work to position U.S. sorghum as a high-quality feed grain in global markets in collaboration with the United Sorghum Checkoff Program. Recent export success in South Africa demonstrates the value of these relationships within the U.S. sorghum industry and throughout the world.

Following a severe drought in 2015 and 2016, the South African feed industry needed to import feed grains for the first time in almost a decade. The United States had corn available, but export potential was limited by lagging biotechnology approvals in South Africa. To help meet the South Africans' need for high-quality grain, the USGC quickly went to work demonstrating the value of U.S. sorghum.

To start, the USGC sent a team of staff and member delegations to South Africa in May 2016 to meet with key stakeholders and learn more about these market constraints. Immediately following this first trip, the USGC brought a team from one of the largest corn milling companies in South Africa to Kansas to offer additional information about the U.S. grain handling system and quality standards. In the fall of 2016, the USGC organized a second trade team of South African commercial grain traders and end users specifically to showcase the 2016 U.S. sorghum harvest.

As a result of these outreach efforts, by the USGC in collaboration with the KGSC. South African buyers purchased

about 3.91 million bushels (almost 100,000 metric tons) of U.S. sorghum in 2015/2016. These sales compare to the prior five-year average (2010/2011-2014/2015) of about 938,000 bushels (almost 24,000 metric tons).

The drought in South Africa has now subsided and the South African government has implemented biotech approvals for U.S. corn. Even with these market constraints eased, year-to-date sales of U.S. sorghum in the 2016/2017 marketing year already total about 1.95 million bushels (49,500 metric tons) as of Feb. 23, 2017.

Thanks to the combination of opportunity and hard work by the USGC and its members, South African buyers now recognize U.S. sorghum as a quality option for their feed grain demand, an opportunity that should continue to grow throughout the region.



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NEWSLETTER

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TWO HAPLOID INDUCER LINES DISCOVERED IN SORGHUM

The United Sorghum Checkoff Program with DuPont Pioneer made a groundbreaking discovery announced at the 2017 Commodity Classic. Through a three-year research collaboration in an effort to revolutionize the breeding process and technology for sorghum, DuPont Pioneer research scientists, led by Cleve Franks and Tanveer Hussain, discovered two sorghum haploid inducer lines. This scientific discovery is a major step in streamlining the sorghum breeding process, ultimately enabling new hybrids to go to farmers' fields faster.

"The development of doubled haploid sorghum capabilities represents a major leap forward in sorghum breeding technology," said Tim Lust, United Sorghum Checkoff Program CEO. "This technology provides sorghum breeders with a powerful means of developing higher-yielding sorghum hybrids with the technology our growers need, both in the U.S. and abroad."

The collaboration launched in 2014 with a \$800,220 investment from the United Sorghum Checkoff Program. Research took place in Texas, Kansas, Puerto Rico, Mexico and Iowa using the world-class, global breeding programs of DuPont Pioneer. The investment made by sorghum producers in this project was a valuable first step to advance sorghum genetics

and brighten the future of the sorghum industry.

The first of its kind in sorghum, the discovery of two haploid inducer lines creates opportunity to cut years off the time it will take to improve sorghum hybrids and to place those hybrids into the hands of farmers. What once took five years to produce needed, finished parental lines and get them into the hybrid pipeline, may now take one year.

"From a breeding perspective, this could be a game-changing discovery," said DuPont Pioneer's Cleve Franks at a press conference during Commodity Classic. "This could give sorghum breeders the opportunity to create finished products, finished parental lines to go into producing hybrids in one single step."

With high demand for sorghum across the globe in numerous marketplaces, this discovery comes at an optimum time for sorghum farmers. Breeders can now create natural hybrids with drought-tolerant, high-yielding or sugarcane aphid-resistant qualities to meet farmers' needs faster than ever before. This technology is a huge step forward in improving the crop.

"To me one of the biggest benefits in this is finding the genetics that have the resistances and other things that we want and need for our crop, which will be done much faster," said Kent

Martin, Sorghum Checkoff board member from Carmen, Oklahoma. "As a checkoff group, we want to advance our crop. This is a process that had probably the biggest reward potential of anything that we could be doing right now."

Martin and other board members are excited about the opportunities this discovery offers sorghum growers across the country. This new technology will help all types of sorghum growers in numerous marketplaces, something Martin said he takes into consideration during each board meeting.

"The thing that has to go through my mind is how can we represent all growers and advance this crop for the good of all growers," Martin said. "This is one of those projects that truly does that because you can see so many advances taking place that affect so many people across all of our geography."

As the Sorghum Checkoff collaborates with private and public industry partners, advancements continue to be made in sorghum crop improvement and genetics. The more we understand about our crop, the more we can do to create better hybrids, develop best management practices and create new opportunities for sorghum.

"Farmers have benefited from this technology in other commodities, and we are excited to unlock the same potential for sorghum," said Justin Weinheimer, crop improvement director for the United Sorghum Checkoff Program. "The sooner this technology reaches the plant breeders, the sooner they can leverage this enabling technology to improve sorghum."

The Sorghum Checkoff and DuPont Pioneer will continue to partner on making this technology available to sorghum breeders, and we are looking into opportunities to partner in the future. ✓

SORGHUM SUPPLY COULD FALL SHORT OF ESTABLISHED DEMAND

Sorghum producers worked hard to meet growing demand for the 2016/2017 marketing year by harvesting 480 million bushels across the nation with a record-setting average yield of 77.9 bushels per acre. However, current acreage projections jeopardize the ability to meet created demand, and the U.S. sorghum supply could fall short of expectations.

Demand for the current marketing year breaks down into the following: 225 million bushels to exports, 115 million bushels to ethanol, 100 million bushels to livestock and 20 million bushels to the consumer food industry. This already totals 460 million bushels of the available 480 million bushels, yet these calculations do not include other niche markets nor the opportunity for expansion.

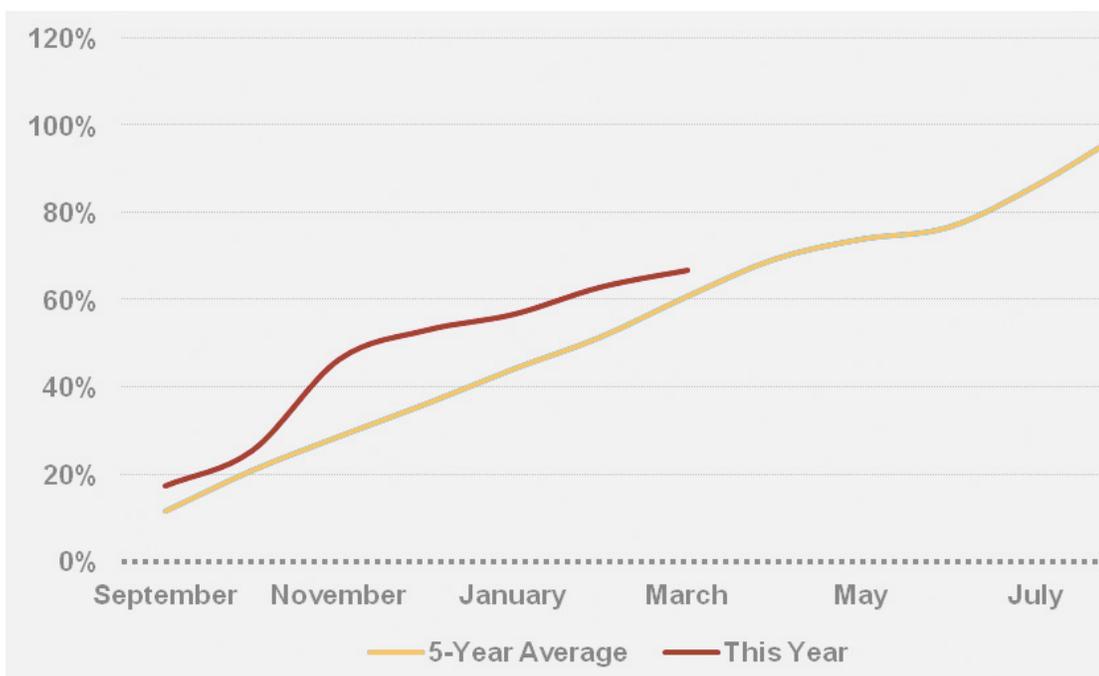
"We recognize and understand the current market price and local basis alone for sorghum do not necessarily indicate strong market demand," said Florentino Lopez, Sorghum Checkoff executive director. "However, we believe current export bids at the port continue to reflect strong demand for sorghum, as evident by sorghum's price exceeding the current export price for corn."

Exports remained the highest market for sorghum in the 2015/2016 marketing year, as 339 million bushels or 55 percent of U.S. sorghum was shipped internationally. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) estimates that 225 million bushels could be exported for the present marketing year, but current calculations and new bids for sorghum suggest exports could surpass this estimate and reach 250 million bushels. As shown in Graph 1 (see next page), the sorghum export pace exceeds the five-year average for the current marketing year.

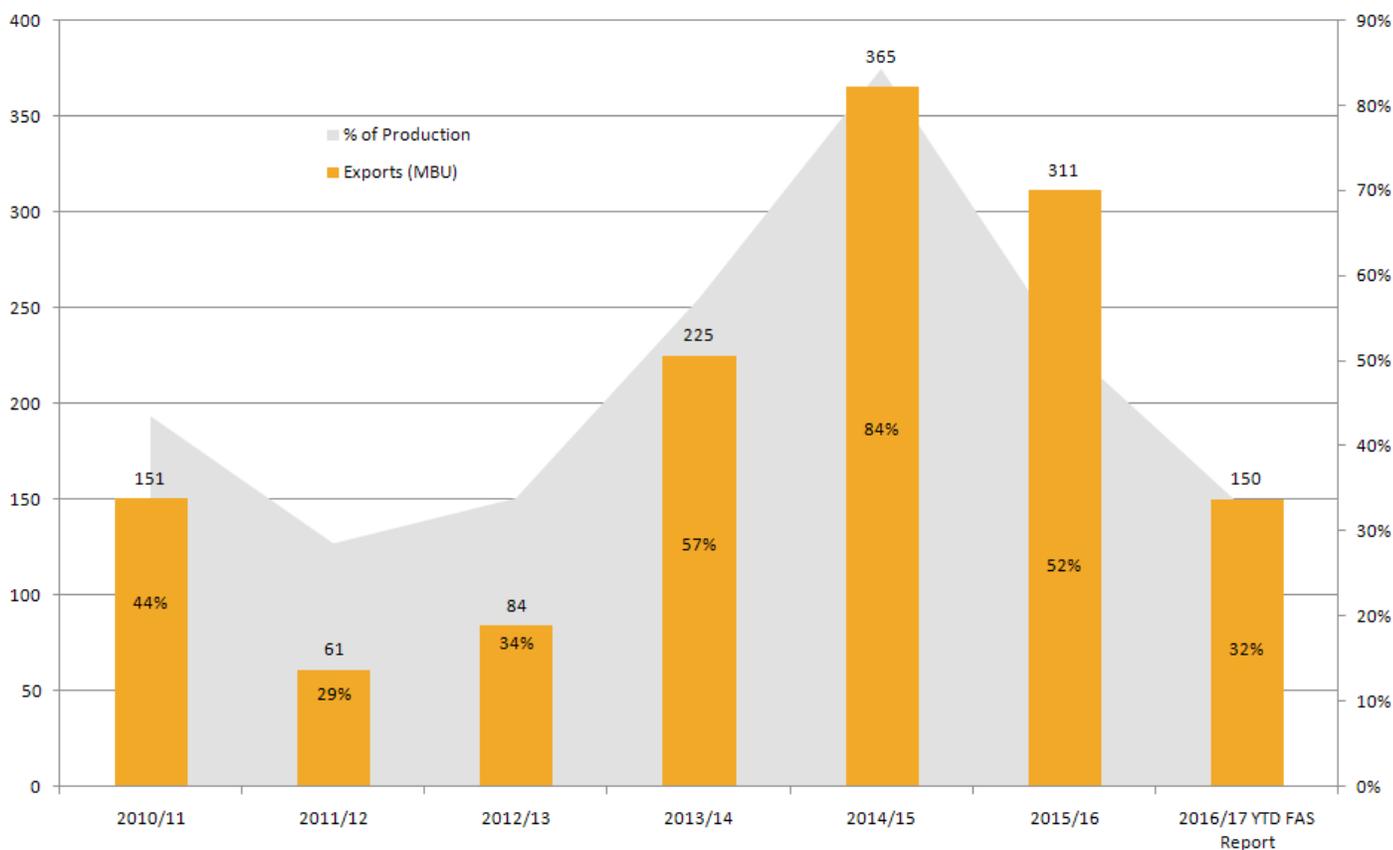
"The Sorghum Checkoff has worked diligently locally and abroad to establish increased and new demand for U.S. sorghum," said Jim Massey, Sorghum Checkoff board director from Robstown, Texas. "Clearly, our export market is the driving force right now, and as we expect that demand to continue to grow, it will be important for producers who are able to capitalize on this demand to give sorghum a hard look this spring."

New opportunities in China through the use of sorghum in the popular Asian drink baijiu and the expansion of marketplaces in Peru and Columbia are proving that demand for sorghum only continues to rise internationally.

Graph 1. Sorghum Export Pace Relative to the USDA Target of 225 Million Bushels



Graph 2. Sorghum Exports by Bushel and Percentage of Total Production



U.S. commitments have reached 150 million bushels to the export market. Currently at 32 percent of the available crop, exports continue to provide high demand for sorghum.

Ethanol is another traditional marketplace for sorghum, and last marketing year a record 21 percent of U.S. sorghum went directly into domestic ethanol production. Sorghum demand for consumer markets continues to rise, as well. Sorghum is in over 1,000 retail food products and is an ingredient on 1.7 percent of restaurant menus, an eight-fold increase over the last three years.

“There is a steady demand for sorghum in the U.S. and an increasing demand internationally,” Lopez said. “Sorghum is unique in utilizing this much of their crop so early in the marketing year, with a continued anticipation of growing demand.”

The most recent USDA grain stocks report shows sorghum stock at 180 million bushels in all positions, or 32 percent of production. This is lower than the reported average of 44 percent, demonstrating sorghum’s ability to move quickly into different markets as grain continues to be purchased. The ability of sorghum to move at an above average pace showcases its increasing demand.

Though there is evidence of growing demand for sorghum, it may still be difficult to take advantage of growing opportunities. When marketing sorghum, it is important to look at all options and each market segment available.

“Invest in someone like a marketing consultant who has the time and expertise to watch the different markets and help you analyze them,” Massey said. “It can be difficult to understand the oppor-

tunities you have access to, but you must take action and capitalize on sorghum’s growing opportunity.”

Massey also suggests building on-site storage and waiting out for a higher price if possible. There are numerous options when it comes to marketing sorghum, but the first step is knowledge, he says. Understanding sorghum’s demand, the different marketplaces and available opportunities to maximize profit are key items to consider.

The projected and current numbers showing sorghum demand provided through the USDA and other forecasts will only continue to increase over the remaining five months of the 2016/2017 marketing year, and they are estimated to continue to increase into the 2017/2018 marketing year. However, planting estimates for the next marketing year are expected to be 5.8 million acres. With such a large difference in expected production and expected demand of sorghum in the coming years, the market will see a deficit in grain, and as a result the market momentum could drop off.

“The market opportunities and the demand for sorghum exist and will only continue to grow if sorghum growers can supply the amount of needed grain,” Lopez said. “Now is the time to rise to the challenge, seek out marketing opportunities, and gain knowledge of how to meet this growing demand while maintaining a profit.”

SORGHUM INDUSTRY EVENTS

Apr. 18 - Swisher Spring Ag Day
Tulia, Texas

May 4 - PGFA Convention
Amarillo, Texas

June 3-6 - TSTA Annual Meeting
Galveston, Texas

June 9 - McLennan County Row Crop Tour
Waco, Texas

For more events, visit sorghumcheckoff.com/calendar

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SORGHUM CHECKOFF MISSION

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energy title

by John Duff



have enough technological and political risk without adding feedstock risk, as well. Why not play for short-term wins with proven technology and familiar crops?

Over the last decade, the U.S. advanced biofuels industry has seen both incredible opportunities and tremendous challenges. As with any new industry, many companies have experienced only limited success, and setbacks have sometimes seemed more common than growth. These growing pains

Gulf Oil was featured in a newspaper article in 1976 about cellulosic ethanol production. By 1983, these same newspapers were announcing the coming advanced

biofuel revolution with the now-familiar headline “Cellulosic ethanol just five years away.” Over the next 30 years, strange bedfellows including oil companies, life sciences conglomerates, agriculture giants and the federal government plunged billions of dollars into advanced biofuel research and development. The problem? Many still believe cellulosic ethanol is five years away.

Arguing against this belief in the context of a farm bill debate is not easy given recent setbacks in cellulosic ethanol production. However, National Sorghum Producers continues to advocate for sorghum’s use in this space. The advantages are clear: Sorghum is a source of starch, sugar and cellulose all in a single crop; its agronomic needs are well-known to U.S. farmers; and it is supported by a seed industry with world-class infrastructure and decades of experience.

Simply put, unlike other advanced biofuel feedstocks, sorghum was built to last and is here to stay. And, cellulosic ethanol and other advanced biofuels

have meant many financial and technological casualties, but they have also rewarded winners. The next farm bill must do the same.

While many programs authorized by the 2002 and 2008 Farm Bills provided much needed support during a time when little was known about the commercial viability of many advanced biofuel technologies, today’s environment is significantly different. This farm bill’s energy title must combine and update programs to better suit the needs of the current advanced biofuel industry. The focus must shift from facilitating greater energy production by proven market participants to supporting further research and development on experimental crops and unproven technologies.

The last decade has shown what works and what doesn’t. The U.S. advanced biofuel industry must spend the next decade delivering on its promises.

Does this mean the farm bill’s energy title should eschew risky projects altogether? Absolutely not. However, the U.S. is home to hundreds of biofuel producers—ethanol plants, biodiesel plants, cellulosic ethanol plants, pellet mills, biogas digesters—with proven track records. Why not facilitate small steps toward greater advanced biofuel production with these successful facilities as the centerpiece?

National Sorghum Producers will work to highlight these successful facilities and expand domestic energy production.✍

Meet Your New EPA Administrator: **Scott Pruitt**

Edward Scott Pruitt was raised in Lexington, Kentucky. Pruitt earned a baseball scholarship to the University of Kentucky where he played second base. He finished his bachelor's degree in communication and political science at Georgetown College. In 1992, Pruitt married his wife Marilyn. The couple now has two children together. After earning his law degree from the University of Tulsa in 1993, Pruitt joined a Tulsa-based private practice law firm. Pruitt entered the Oklahoma's political stage in 1998 when he was elected to the state senate where he served as the Republican Whip and the Republican Assistant Floor Leader. In 2004, he became the general manager and co-owner of the Oklahoma RedHawks baseball team. Pruitt served as Attorney General of Oklahoma from 2011 to 2017 and was elected as chairman of the Republican Attorneys General Association in 2012.

“I seek to listen, learn and lead with you to address these issues that we face as a nation.”

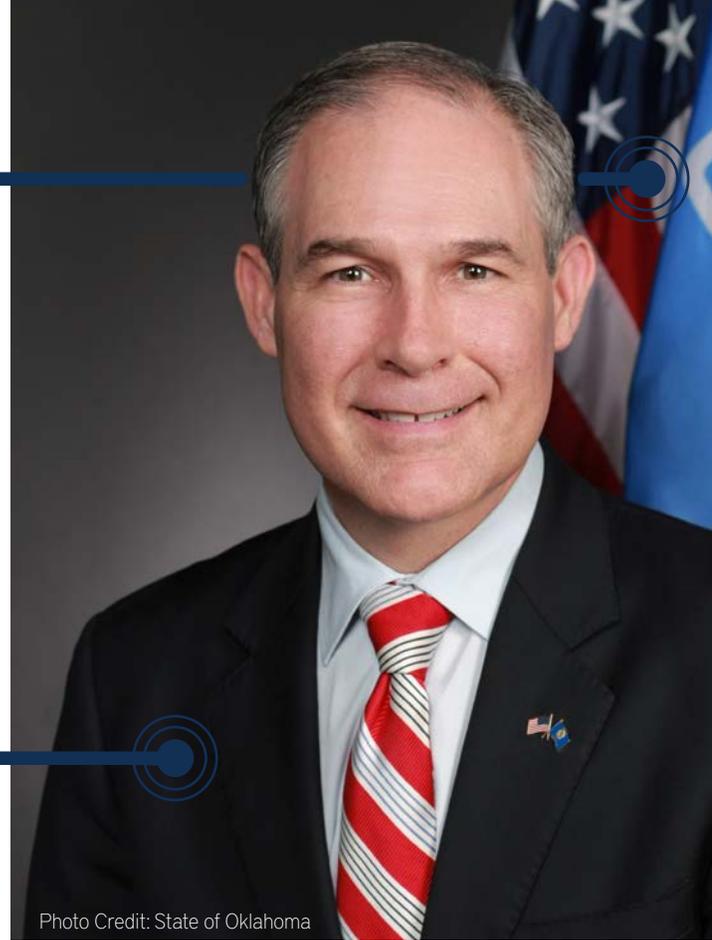


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Sorghum Shortcuts

Letters to Bruce



Bruce Maunder, Ph.D., has faithfully served U.S. sorghum producers for more than 20 years through his work as a volunteer research adviser at National Sorghum Producers.

Before joining the NSP team, Bruce directed worldwide sorghum research for Dekalb Genetics Corporation

and was responsible for the release of more than 150 commercial sorghum hybrids grown on as much as 9.8 million acres in 15-20 countries.

This past March, Bruce announced his full retirement at the age of 82. Bruce's passion for excellence has driven him to continually make an impact for people all around the world.

In an effort to show our appreciation for all the work he has done for sorghum farmers over the years, NSP asks you for letters with stories or letters of thanks to Bruce. Even if you did not have the opportunity to know or work with Bruce, we encourage you to send letters by email or through the postal service. Bruce's dedication and service to the sorghum industry is unparalleled, and we here at NSP appreciate your help thanking him for his service. **Oh, and by the way, please keep this a secret until our summer issue is released!**

National Sorghum Producers

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2017 NSP & BASF Scholarship Winners

Scholarships play a huge role in many college students' education. The National Sorghum Producers along with BASF recognize the importance of investing in students' education to ensure a bright future for the agriculture industry. Together NSP and BASF offer scholarships each year to two individuals pursuing an undergraduate or graduate degree in an agriculture related degree option. Applicants must be a child or grandchild of an NSP member.

This year's scholarship covered the cost to attend the 2017 Commodity Classic in San Antonio, Texas, March 2-4, 2017. Commodity Classic is a great learning opportunity for students to learn about new technology and issues that affect grain commodities like sorghum.

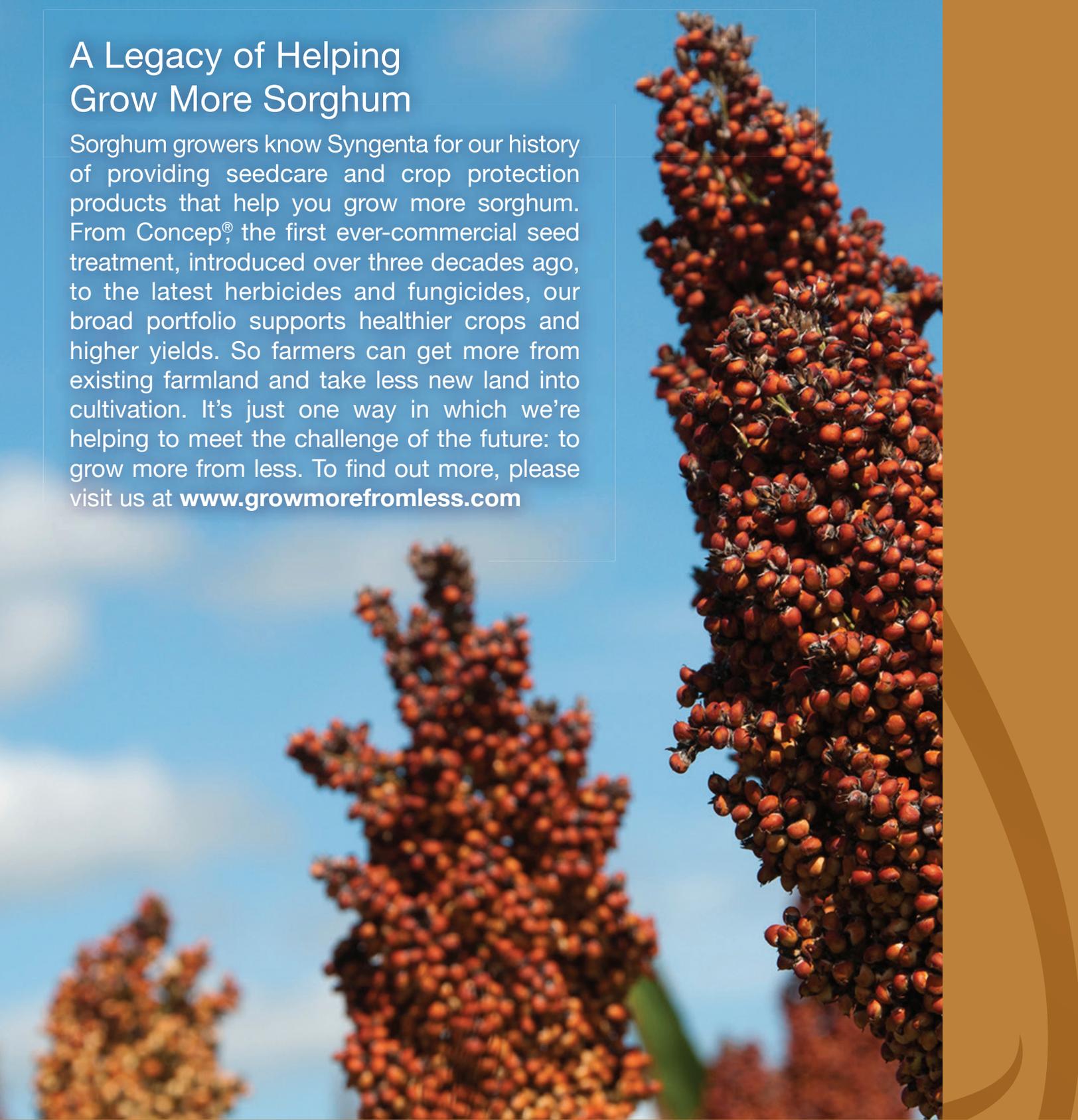
This year's recipients were Abigail Arthaud of Oklahoma State University and Cody Nedbalek of Texas A&M University.



▲ (L-R) BASF MARKETING DIRECTOR Neil Bentley, scholarship recipients Abigail Arthaud and Cody Nedbalek and Sorghum Foundation Director Larry Lambright.

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