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FALL 2014

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CEO's Desk



Farm bill sign-up, China & basis

AS THIS ISSUE OF SORGHUM GROWER MAGAZINE hits mailboxes, many growers will be just starting to get serious about farm bill program sign up decisions.

Don't get in a hurry. Updating yields is the easiest choice you can make, and that can be done now and put to bed. However, when it comes to reallocating base and making the choice between PLC and ARC, take your time. FSA has not released all of the county ARC yield information, which will be key in deciding between PLC and ARC. That decision will also impact your reallocation of base acres. Are you trying to maximize payments the first couple of years of the program when prices look to be low or are you more worried about the out years and having the best plan in place for 2017 and 2018?

While NSP works through the details of farm bill implementation, the sorghum industry is finding itself in an interesting time and place. Demand for sorghum is as strong as it has ever been. China cannot get enough U.S. sorghum and other end users, both new and old, are competing for bushels. We simply do not have enough sorghum to meet this growing demand.

So, what's the deal with sorghum prices? Sorghum prices have dropped largely due to large corn and soybean crops. However, sorghum basis continues to show strong demand for the crop and the need for more bushels next year. During the month of October, we saw a record high spread of 130 percent the price of corn at the Gulf with sorghum basis as high as \$1.95 over the futures. Growers in north central Kansas, Oklahoma and the East Coast have also reported strong basis.

Good things are happening in the sorghum industry, and we will continue to protect your interests in what could prove to be an interesting policy and regulatory environment as a new Congress begins in January.

Tim Lust
 NSP CEO

USDA Sets Key Deadlines for New Farm Bill Programs

By Lindsay Kennedy & Chris Cogburn

IN EARLY OCTOBER, THE U.S. Department of Agriculture released a set of important dates for farmers regarding the new programs Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) established by the 2014 Farm Bill.

Growers must elect ARC or PLC in a one-time decision effective at least through 2018 when the current farm bill expires. ARC protects against falling revenue, while PLC provides payments when crop prices fall below levels set in the farm bill. Producers

will have through early spring of 2015 to select which program works best for their businesses.

Farm owners have been able to update their yield history and/or reallocate base acres at their local Farm Service Agency (FSA) office since Sept. 29. However, our understanding was that FSA employee training on these programs did not start until late October, so many growers are likely just now starting that process.

While not all of the data has been released at press time, USDA's Risk

Management Agency (RMA) has released SCO information for sorghum and FSA has released some county ARC yields.

Every farmer will have to look at individual farms to make the decision to go with PLC or ARC. A big determinant in that decision will be the ratio of the producer's PLC yield to the county ARC yield if the producer is going with the county option. If a producer has a PLC yield quite a bit under the county ARC yield, then county ARC might be the better option.

This will also depend on what the SCO yield is in that county. Our early analysis has found some counties where SCO would have netted \$75 since 2000 and some where it would have been a net loss of \$8 over the same time period.

To assist with the decision making process, USDA awarded \$3 million to the Food and Agricultural Policy Research Institute at the University of Missouri, the Agricultural and Food Policy Center at Texas A&M, and the University of Illinois to develop decision tools for farmers.

The tools and information about the programs can be found at www.fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc. 📄



ARC & PLC Deadlines

Now through February 27, 2015

Land owners may update their yield history and/or reallocate base acres at their local Farm Service Agency office.

November 17, 2014 through March 31, 2015

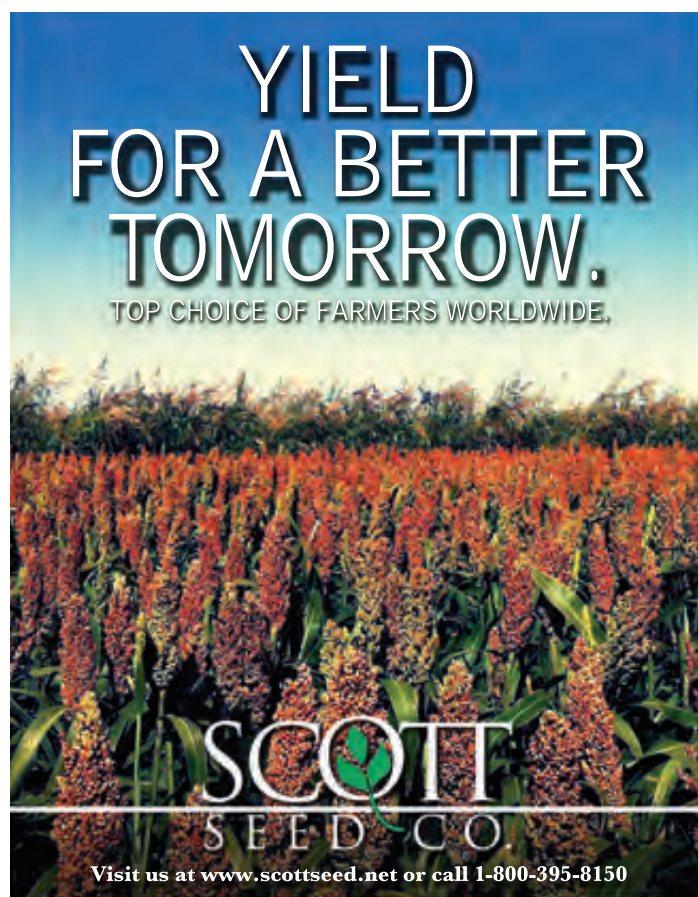
Growers can make a one-time election of either ARC or PLC for the 2014-2018 crop production years.

Mid-April 2015 through Summer 2015

Growers can sign contracts for 2014 and 2015 crop years.

October 2015

Payments for the 2014 crop year will be made if needed.



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How Will You Hand Over the Reins?

By Kevin Spafford, eLegacyConnect

ALL BUSINESS OWNERS HAVE AN EXIT strategy, although they may not be aware of it. These strategies can be placed into three broad categories:

1. Lifetime transfer of ownership interest and management responsibility.
2. Estate plan implements the exit strategy.
3. Let the heirs worry about it.

A. Lifetime Transfer of Ownership and Management.

The optimal succession plan usually combines a lifetime transfer of both ownership and management of the business to the owner's successor(s) with a contingency plan that becomes effective if the owner prematurely dies or becomes disabled.

A lifetime transfer of business ownership and management responsibility allows the owner to guide and mentor the successors (management and ownership) during the transition process. In most cases, the current owner is the best person to facilitate these transitions. The owner's involvement in the transition also can inspire the confidence of employees and key outsiders.

The owner must have a great deal of confidence in the successor to hand over the business during his lifetime. Beside the emotional attachment to the business, the owner is likely to have continued financial ties that make him dependent on its future success. A management succession plan that allows the owner to observe the successor as he or she gradually assumes increased responsibility should build the owner's confidence in the successor and increase the owner's willingness to make a lifetime transfer.

B. Using the Estate Plan to Implement the Exit Strategy.

While transferring ownership and management responsibility during the owner's life is optimal, many owners have no intention of retiring. Some owners are not ready or able

to address all the family issues that are encompassed in a lifetime exit strategy, fearing that their succession decisions will cause family tensions. These owners often adopt an exit strategy using the estate plan to transfer business ownership at their death.


Even though the ownership and management succession will not take place until the owner's death, this is still a planned succession strategy. Therefore, the owner must decide who will acquire the ownership interest and how it



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will be transferred. A buy/sell agreement funded by life insurance is often used to implement an ownership transfer at the owner's death.

When the estate plan is used to implement the exit strategy, the issue of management succession is often overlooked. Instead, the new owner(s) are often left to determine who will assume management responsibility after the owner's death. If one individual does not own a controlling interest, it may be difficult to agree on who will assume the management role. This can lead to power struggles and may pit the siblings against each other. Obviously, this may have a negative impact on the business. Similarly, without the owner available to help the successor(s) transition into the management role, chances for success are greatly diminished.

Owners who use their will to implement the succession plan should inform family members and key employees of their decisions. This may help them understand and accept the plan and work out any unforeseen problems during the owner's life. Clearly, communicating the plan will be difficult if the owner's fear of creating family conflicts is the reason for using the estate plan as the succession plan. However, the owner should recognize that

failing to communicate is often more destructive to the family than dealing with a difficult situation.

C. Letting the Heirs Worry about It. This plan has the most negative impact on the owner's survivors and the business. At the owner's death, ownership in the business is transferred under the terms of the owner's will or under state law. Thus, ownership may be transferred to various heirs who may not be willing to work together. Ownership may be so fractionalized that decision-making becomes either very inefficient or even impossible, crippling the business. Failing to give any thought to who will own and manage the business after the owner's death will likely result in the business failing or declining drastically in value.

Though the future of business is fraught with many challenges, so is stepping away. All too often people make hasty decisions based on unclear desires. The questions in this eLegacyConnect self-assessment may help to get the thought process started: *Ready to Hang Up Your Spurs?* 🐾

Kevin Spafford is the founder of eLegacyConnect which provides succession solutions for farm families. Members of NSP receive a discount for full access to eLegacyConnect. Use membership code 'sorghumgrower' at eLegacyConnect.com

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Leafy Greens

Forage sorghum gaining ground in livestock feeding

By Lindsay Kennedy & Cailee Gilbreath

The livestock feeding market has long been the foundation of the sorghum industry both domestically and internationally. From a grain sorghum perspective, the livestock feeding industry represents nearly a third of the crop's total market share.

Like its cousin on the grain side, forage sorghum, too, has a blossoming relationship with the livestock industry as a water-efficient silage option for dairies. As dairies look to lower their input costs and conserve precious water resources, forage sorghum has stepped up as a productive part of dairy cattle feeding rations without sacrificing nutrition.



The dairy industry has grown tremendously during the last two decades on the High Plains of Texas and eastern New Mexico as dairyman from California and other states migrated to the region seeking cheaper land prices, better operating environments, and access to forages. The number of dairy cows in the Texas Panhandle alone has grown from 20,000 in 2001 to the current number of nearly 285,000, according to Texas A&M AgriLife, representing roughly two-thirds of Texas' milk production.

As dairies on the High Plains looked to rebound following the severe drought that pressured the region's water resources during the last few years, they have turned to more water efficient forage alternatives to complement corn silage, or in some cases, completely replace it.

Enter forage sorghum.

With water use as the main driver, Legacy Farms, a dairy in Plainview, Texas, recognized the need to change to a more water-efficient forage for their dairy operation. The dairy has been feeding forage sorghum silage to its heifers for the last decade, and following the recent drought, Legacy Farms expanded its forage sorghum acres to feed their lactating cows.

"Lactating dairy animals require highly digestible forages," said Will Leone, Legacy Farms veterinarian. "With the changing water restrictions, declining water table and drought in this part of the country, we have looked to sorghum as a forage to supplement our needs at the dairy."

Forage sorghum types range from sudangrass to traditional grain sorghum, can be brown midrib (BMR) or photoperiod sensitive, and require less total water to reach their production potential. Both BMR and non-BMR varieties can produce quality silage with yields similar to those of corn while using 30 percent less irrigation water.

Joe Osterkamp, owner and operator of Stonegate Dairy in Muleshoe, Texas, has been growing sorghum for silage for two years and has been feeding it for three years on his 3,000-head dairy.

"Three years ago, after the first year of the drought, more and more people started looking for other crops that could be considered more drought tolerant," Osterkamp said. "We were approached by a few of our usual

growers and asked if we had any interest [in sorghum]. We decided to ensilage around 4,000 tons as a trial to see what would happen to the performance of the cows.

"The sorghum silage fed well, and the cows never skipped a beat."

Osterkamp, who is the chairman of the Texas Association of Dairyman, said during the next two years they bought more sorghum silage from neighbors and began growing it themselves.

“...as water conservation becomes more important, more and more dairies will increase dependence on sorghum for feed needs.”

"Most of the dairies in our area are using sorghum," he said. "Everyone has their own system, but as water conservation becomes more important, more and more dairies will increase dependence on sorghum for feed needs."

Sorghum has not only worked nicely into their crop rotation, but it has found a home in their feeding ration as well. Osterkamp is currently feeding corn and sorghum at a 50/50 mixture in his milk cow ration, while his heifers get all sorghum silage in the ration.

"Our cows have performed great," Osterkamp said. "The combination of corn silage and sorghum silage has lowered our ration costs without sacrificing health or production of our herd. At the end of the day, the cows can't put milk in the tank if they aren't healthy."

Thirty-one miles to the northeast of Osterkamp's dairy, Justin Damron, a farmer in Flagg, Texas, said he began growing forage sorghum because of the decline in water availability in his area. This year was his third consecutive year growing forage sorghum in his crop rotation of corn silage, alfalfa, wheat and cotton.

"Forage sorghum is able to handle a lot more drought stress and still make a crop," Damron said. "You can lose a well and watch the sorghum just look on the verge of death and come back when it finally does catch a rain or irrigation resumes."

◀ CHOPPED. Gilmer Dairy in Lamar County, Ala., utilizes forage sorghum as an essential part of its total mixed ration. Photo courtesy of Will Gilmer.



◀ **LOW INPUT, HIGH OUTPUT.** Forage sorghum provides dairies with a low-input, high production forage option without sacrificing nutrition. Bottom photo courtesy of Justin Damron.

Damron is expecting good yields from the Sorghum Partners Integra 1990 he planted this year. The large live-stock feed demand in his area makes for a great market with the majority of his crop this year going to a local dairy.

Carson Ward of Gayland Ward Seed in Hereford, Texas, says forage sorghum allows growers to have fewer input costs per acre while producing equal or more energy per acre.

“Forage sorghums are forgiving, which gives you some flexibility,” Ward said. That flexibility makes the crop a good fit for the often unforgiving conditions where High Plains dairies are located. You don’t have to be on the High Plains to appreciate forage sorghum’s water-use efficiency. Fourth generation Alabama dairyman, Will Gilmer of Gilmer Dairy LLC, has made forage sorghum a mainstay in his operation.

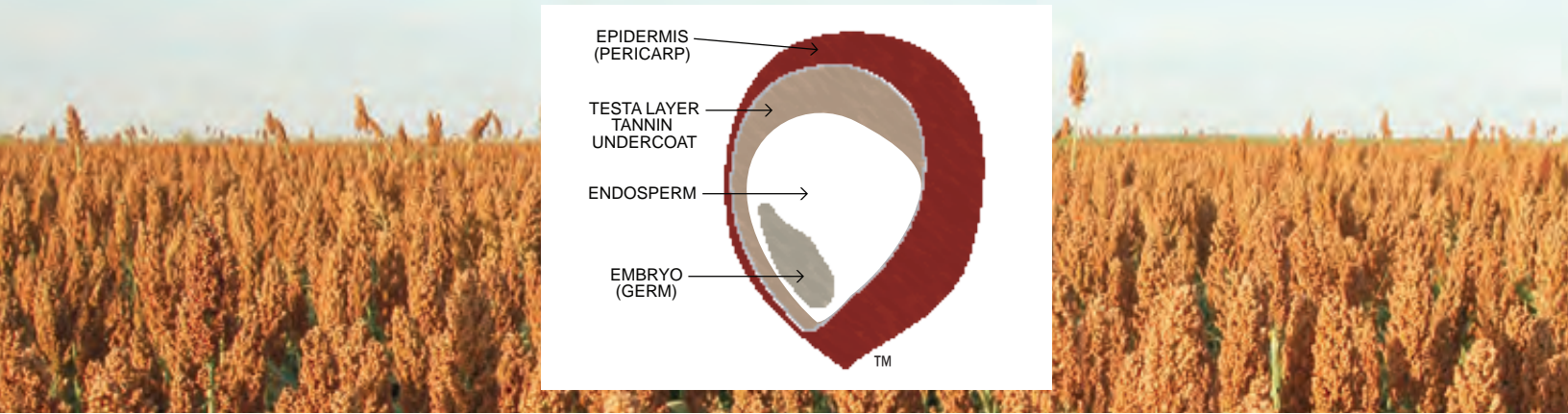
“Over the past four years, we have made BMR hybrids an intentional part of our forage program,” Gilmer said. His dairy planted Forage First/Croplan BMR varieties for the past four years, initially using a shorter-season variety, but transitioning this year to a longer season, BMR-6 brachytic dwarf variety.

Over the years, Gilmer Dairy has used sorghum to replace corn silage in their operation to hedge against drought-diminished corn yields on their 100 percent dryland farm. Sorghum’s later planting date also allowed them to grow a cool season small grain silage crop on the same acreage. In a normal year, Gilmer averages 13 to 14 tons of silage per acre (averaging 0.75 percent moisture) on 75 to 85 acres. He utilizes strip-tilling and injecting liquid nitrogen fertilizer pre-planting has returned the highest, most consistent yields.

Gilmer said he chops all of the sorghum he grows for silage, which is fed to his 235-head dairy operation in Lamar County, Ala. The high moisture sorghum silage is mixed with bermudagrass hay and a custom formulated feed in their milking herd’s total mixed ration.

“We obviously have to adjust our custom feed formulation when we switch our cows from corn to sorghum silage, but we have seen very little change in their milk production between the two,” he said. 🐄



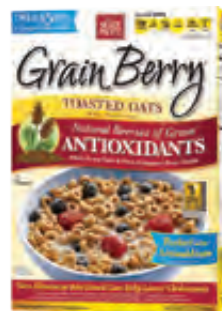


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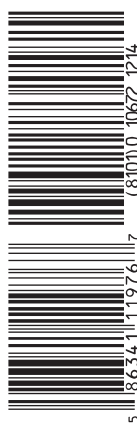
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Growers Boost Profit with Storage

By Jennifer Blackburn

JUST AS GROWING CONDITIONS FOR SORGHUM are unique in every state, markets can be equally diverse. Farmers are looking at ways to capitalize on these markets and some are just searching for a solution to the market challenges they face in their particular growing region.

The opportunity for sorghum growers to profit using on-farm storage is becoming an increasingly attractive option for many farmers. If they play their cards right and have some patience, they often can put more money in their pockets on their own timeline.

Illinois sorghum farmer John Williams began storing grain sorghum five years ago on his farm in Enfield, using 60,000 bushels of his 136,000-bushel capacity exclusively for grain sorghum.

“We started sowing so much grain sorghum during the last few years and had so many bushels that we decided to hold some of it over and sell it at the first of year to get a better price,” Williams said.

The added flexibility of having on-farm grain storage allows Williams to put the grain in his bins and get back in the field.

“We have been able to sell at a higher price in the winter time instead of right out of the field,” Williams said.

Mark Wiethorn, a sorghum grower from McGregor, Texas, also benefits from the added flexibility of storage.

“With on-farm storage we don’t have to be in a hurry to move the grain,” Wiethorn said. “A lot of people who use sorghum in our area don’t use a large amount of pounds at one time, and if you can hold it and get it to them when they need it, you can sometimes capitalize on a little higher basis than the regular market.”

Market Diversity

Wiethorn’s primary market for grain sorghum is Land O’Lakes in McGregor where the grain is utilized in beef cattle cubes, but because he has storage, Wiethorn also utilizes other smaller, niche markets when they are available.

“At certain times, we will have a specialty market where there is not a lot of sorghum

◀ **STORING UP.** Mark Wiethorn and his two sons Jason and Matthew utilize grain storage to capitalize on higher basis to maximize their profit with grain sorghum.



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producers to fulfill the need,” Wiethorn said. “If we’re lucky, we will get into a bird feeding outfit that wants to use sorghum.”

Jeff Zortman grows sorghum near Dodge City, Kan., and has utilized his local ethanol market for close to a decade, hauling to the plant exclusively for the last five years.

“For the longest time we hauled to our local elevator, and that was really the only market we used,” Zortman said, “but in the last several years, we saw the basis advantage of hauling to the ethanol plant. It was an attractive option, and we’ve been doing it ever since.”

Storage Options

While Zortman’s bins can handle up to 50,000 bushels of grain, he also utilized bags last year, adding 10,000-20,000 bushels of storage in close proximity to his local ethanol plant.

“The fields we were harvesting were near Highway 54 close to the ethanol plant,” Zortman said. “Due to the location of the fields, it was more convenient to bag the milo there.”

Zortman said a good rule of thumb is it takes 30 cents per bushel to put sorghum in the bag and to take it out. He said his basis pays more than 30 cents per bushel, so it makes sense to utilize bag storage.

Zortman also stood to profit from his bin storage right away because he was able to use older bins that already existed on his farm rather than building new bins.

“The cost of getting our older bins operating again was very low,” Zortman said. “That made it really attractive to us to get them going and use them again as there really wasn’t any capital to start storing grain, and most of the basis gain was profit.”

Wiethorn has utilized on-farm storage on his farm since 1998 when he built his first bin, and he built a bin every year after that for the next six years, bringing his total storage capacity to 70,000 bushels.

“I started with four brand-new bins then built two bins out of one older, larger bin,” Wiethorn said. “It was a little challenging to build from an older bin, but you just have to be careful of what you paid for that bin and what you put into it. It worked out well for us.”

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Challenges

Zortman, who used older bins, had to take a few steps to bring them to working order. An electrical check was required, and he said a couple of the bins had sweep augers, which they had to make sure were running correctly. They also repaired and filled cracks and cleaned out the storage bins.

As for Zortman's bags, storing the grain from November to February required some maintenance over nearly a four-month period.

"You have to watch the bags on a regular basis," Zortman said. "I drive by weekly and make sure there are no holes from wildlife or other causes and patch holes, so we don't let in any moisture."

Zortman said a key thing to consider when bagging is moisture level. He said it's important the moisture is at a level his end user will take as that level will remain the same from bagging until he hauls it to the ethanol plant.

For Wiethorn, a storage challenge he sees when dealing with niche markets is his ability to separate out different types of sorghum.

"While it is a lot more economical to build larger bins," said Wiethorn, "growers should keep in mind that certain niche markets want a certain type of milo, and it's hard to isolate that grain if it's all in one big bin."

Wiethorn said this challenge often presents more work, but if a company is willing to pay a premium, it's worth it.

Williams said new bins are often better equipped to handle sorghum and were a good fit on his Illinois farm.

"Grain sorghum is so little and fits so tightly in the bin you have to have the newer bins and better fans to keep optimal air circulation."

Advantages

While each of these farmers' growing and market conditions are different, each are taking proactive steps to utilize the markets around them in a way that will add more dollars to their bottom line while easing harvest pressure and having a convenient place to store their grain.

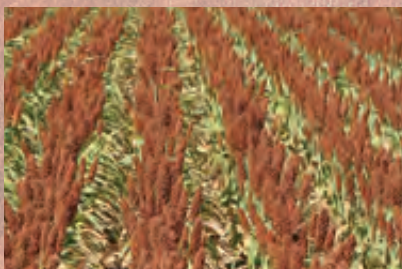
"Even if you start out small," Zortman said, "get your feet wet, see what works best for your operation and see if it can work for you." 📌

The logo for Gayland Ward Seed is a red oval with a green horizontal line across the middle. The word "Gayland" is in white serif font above the line, and "Ward" is in white serif font below the line. A small green leaf icon is positioned between the two words. Below "Ward" is a green oval containing the word "SEED" in blue capital letters.

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SORGHUM Grow Fall 2014



Sorghum *Update*

Brought to you by the Kansas Grain Sorghum Commission

Kansas Grain Sorghum Commission Research Update

The vision of the Kansas Grain Sorghum Commission (KGSC) is focused on increasing grain sorghum profitability and being recognized as a valuable asset by the Kansas grain sorghum producer. KGSC directs the investment of funds generated by the grain sorghum checkoff to enhance producer profitability. Since the inception of the United Sorghum Checkoff Program, KGSC has invested over \$2 million in research. Below is a listing of the projects that KGSC will be funding beginning Oct. 1, 2014, through Sept. 30, 2015. For more information about these projects, please contact KGSC at jill@ksgrainsorghum.org.

Key 2014-2015 Kansas Grain Sorghum Commission Research Investments

- Remote Sensing Screening Tools for Sorghum Breeding Programs
- Best Management Practices for Top-Yields in Sorghum
- Sorghum Yield and Profitability Response to Water Supply and Irrigation Management
- Germplasm Screening Host-Plant Interactions and Inoculation Techniques for Sorghum Stalk Rot Diseases in Kansas
- Evaluation of Sorghum Germplasm for Herbicide Tolerance
- Improved Genomic Mapping and Marker-Assisted Selection for Cold Tolerance in Grain Sorghum
- Evaluating Nitrogen and Iron Use Efficiency in Advanced Sorghum Lines
- Development of sorghum parental (A/B and R) lines with enhanced drought and cold tolerance
- Improving Yield Potential of Grain Sorghum through Drought and Heat Tolerance
- Breeding Sorghum for Improved Production and Utilization
- Effect of Chinch Bug Feeding and Drought on Sorghum Stand Establishment and Yield
- Development of Long-Term USDA-ARS PSGD Sorghum Breeding Presence in Kansas
- Sorghum Double Haploid Technology for Kansas Farmers

Responding to farmers' need for better weed control, KGSC is investing in a herbicide screening project that evaluates sorghum germplasm for herbicide tolerance. Also, KGSC responded to a timely priority for Kansas farmers by funding a best management practices and economics of irrigated sorghum project. Sorghum farmers will have access to current water research with a coordinated research project that addresses best management practices, updating the water efficiency curve and associated water farm economics.

KGSC approved funding of over \$750,000 in research with Kansas State University, USDA-ARS and Heartland Plant Innovations. Kansas Department of Agriculture Deputy Secretary Chad Bontrager participated in KGSC's proposal review process. "It is clear KGSC is focused on producer productivity," Bontrager said. "Key priorities for KGSC are yield, weed control and agronomic traits from pest and disease control to trait development in the breeding program."

KGSC Board of Directors: District 1 – Lonnie Wilson, Colby; District 2 – Greg Graff, Leoti; District 3 – Boyd Funk, Garden City, Secretary / Treasurer; District 4 – Stephen Bigge, Stockton; District 5 – Clayton Short, Assaria, Chairman; District 6 – Jay Zimmerman, South Haven; District 7 – Nathan Larson, Riley; District 8 – Jeff Casten, Quenemo, Vice-chairperson; District 9 – Gary Kilgore, Chanute.

*For more information about the Kansas Grain Sorghum Commission, contact
KGSC Administrator Jill Barnhardt 795 22nd Rd. NW, Lebo, KS 66856
(785) 477-9474, jill@ksgrainsorghum.org, www.ksgrainsorghum.org*



Don't Be Afraid of the Little Bug

The sugarcane aphid has introduced itself to U.S. sorghum fields in 11 states. Despite the bug's persistence, many growers are not shying away from planting sorghum in the 2015 crop year.

By Lindsay Kennedy

LUKE SAYES KNEW HE WOULD eventually find them.

During the 2014 growing season, the DeVille, La., farmer scouted his sorghum fields for the new bug that first made an appearance on his farm late last year.

Louisiana was one of 11 states that confirmed the white sugarcane aphid, *Melanaphis sacchari*, in sorghum fields in 2014 and was one of three states that saw the pest in 2013.

"We knew there was a chance we would see them again this year, so we made sure we were scouting from the get go," Sayes said. He scouted his fields two to three times a week until he eventually found the sugarcane aphid on the plant close to pollination.

In 2013, the pest had made its way north from Mexico, damaging sorghum from the Rio Grande Valley and the Coastal Bend to south central Oklahoma and over to the Delta. Growers hoped the harsh winter

in those regions would prevent the aphid from returning in 2014. Not only did it return, but it spread quickly to other states with South Carolina being the latest addition to the list.

The good news is growers have control options.

In the short-term, Dow AgroScience's Transform WG has been the proven method of control on the aphid when applied properly. In 2014 with the help of National Sorghum Producers, the Sorghum Checkoff, state sorghum organizations and state extension, a total of nine states received Section 18 emergency exemptions to spray Transform WG on sorghum.

Because those exemptions were for the crop year only, Tim Lust, NSP CEO, said it is likely states will have to go through the Section 18 process once again in 2015.

"Transform has proven to be a good control method for the aphid," Lust said. "In preparation for the 2015

crop year, the exemption process has already started."

Dr. Justin Weinheimer, crop improvement director for the Sorghum Checkoff, said Transform WG applications should be tailored to each region's unique environments for maximum effectiveness.

"For the chemical to really work the best, it needs to be applied where it can get good coverage on the plant at the right time," Weinheimer said. "This includes ensuring the correct amount of both chemical and water mixture per acre."

Growers in states with Section 18 approvals have used both aerial and ground application methods. The decision on which method to use depends on plant populations and overall thickness of the canopy.

"In the lower yielding scenarios, the ground rig worked really well," Sayes said. "But in the higher yielding areas, my ground rig wouldn't pass

through the field effectively so aerial [application] worked best.”

Sayes said he and a handful of neighbors began a scouting network and shared information as each farmer found aphid infestations in their fields. He initially treated all 540 acres of his sorghum when aphid populations were at 50 bugs per leaf. Two and a half weeks later he sprayed Transform once the populations had reached 200 bugs per leaf.

“We managed hard and didn’t see any yield loss,” Sayes said. “We still averaged between 110 to 140 bushels per acre. The guys who didn’t get out and scout saw significant yield losses.”

Central Texas sorghum grower Josh Birdwell dealt with the sugarcane aphid for the first time this year and learned a lot about how to best control the pest.

“Transform worked really well for us,” Birdwell said. “I got about three weeks of residual, which was great.”

He said timing and aphid population make all the difference on Transform applications.

“We really jumped the gun and sprayed too early,” Birdwell said. “We only had one or two aphids per leaf, and the populations need to be much more than that before you spray.”

It is recommended growers should start spraying once they average 100 aphids per leaf in a 20-leaf sample.

Birdwell sprayed Transform two times at 1.5 ounces per acre each time. Under the Texas Section 18 exemption, the total allowed Transform application amount was 3 ounces per acre.

► This map represents sugarcane aphid detection in significant colonies, but does NOT illustrate counties with economic losses as a result of the sugarcane aphid.

“I would have been better off waiting until the populations were higher before I sprayed,” Birdwell said.

By the time he had used up his allowed 3 ounces per acre, his harvest was delayed by cool, wet weather al-

“We managed hard and didn’t see any yield loss. We still averaged between 110 and 140 bu/ac.”

lowing time for a second infestation. He took the advice of South Texas growers who had dealt with the aphid and tried a second line of defense.

“We used Roundup to dry down the plant for harvest, and what we found was as the plant dried up, it took away the aphid’s food source.”

Birdwell said he was warned the aphid might move into the grain head

once the leaves dried up. However, seven to 10 days following the Roundup application, the aphid was gone and he was able to successfully harvest.

“We still had above average yields for our area,” Birdwell said. “We probably lost some yield due to harvest loss from the combine, but loss was much less where we used Roundup to dry down the plant.”

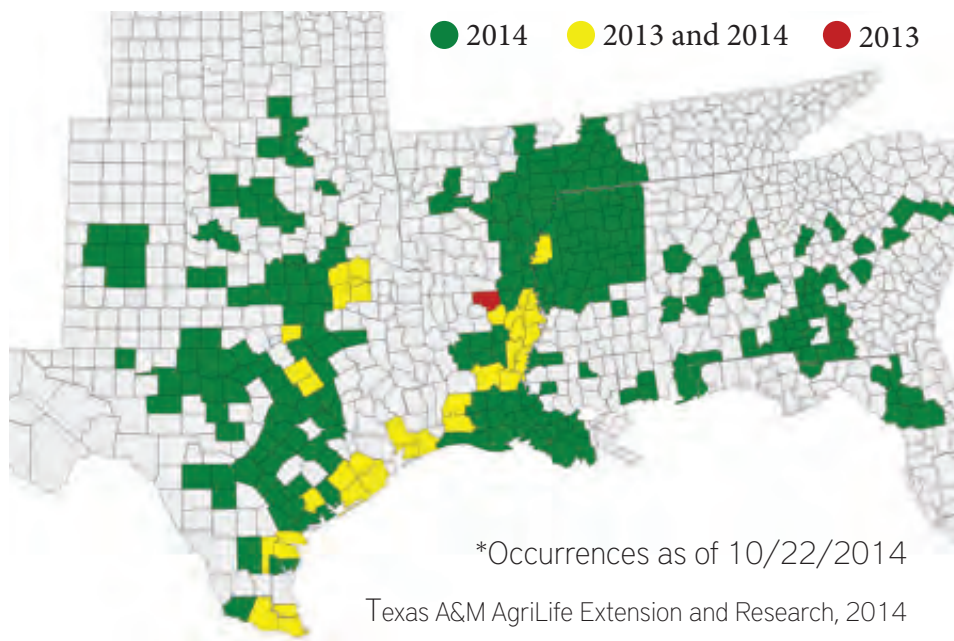
Will the aphid keep him from planting sorghum next year?

“I’m still going to plant milo next year,” Birdwell said. “It’s just been too good for us. Transform worked really well, and we learned a lot from this year to better handle the sugarcane aphid in the future.”

The long-term solution for aphid control will come in the form of resistant hybrids, which Sayes said will dramatically help in central Louisiana.

“I think a lot of growers would be willing to tolerate a small yield decrease if we can have the resistant hybrids,” Sayes said. “But in the meantime, we will continue to plant grain sorghum where it fits best in our rotation.”

White Sugarcane Aphid Occurrence in Sorghum*



Sorghum's Genetic Pipeline Stocked with Potential

Sorghum is on the rise. There's no doubt about that. An increase in productivity and interest in creative markets both domestically and internationally have boosted demand for the crop. While demand is steadfast, supply is no longer meeting the growing various market needs of sorghum.

One way to meet demand and achieve producer profitability is by placing a key emphasis on enhancing sorghum genetics. The Sorghum Checkoff is leveraging valuable research through collaborative and strategic investments with public and private entities across the U.S. to unlock the genetic potential of sorghum to ultimately bring new and improved traits to growers' fields.

In 2013 alone, the Sorghum Checkoff invested \$3.9 million toward crop improvement.

"Devoting efforts to broad areas of seed innovation such as harvestable yield, drought tolerance, and breeding technologies are key in the advancement of grain sorghum genetics," said Justin Weinheimer, crop improvement program director for the Sorghum Checkoff.

Although advancing sorghum genetics is no easy task, breeders are now utilizing techniques such as DNA sequencing, marker-assisted breeding and gene identification to help with efficiency and success.

Unlike years past, advancements and technologies developed in other commodities are now being made available to sorghum. Weinheimer said herbicide tolerance has eluded sorghum farmers for many years but that could soon change.

"DuPont Pioneer is currently working toward finalizing the development of a chemical product within the ALS class of herbicides to provide growers with post-emergence grass control," Weinheimer said. "The chemical, which currently does not have approval, Zest, will be used in conjunction with Inzen sorghum genetics, originally developed by Kansas State University."

Hybrids with ALS tolerance are expected to be available to growers as early as 2016 with limited possibilities in 2015. Weinheimer said this naturally occurring, non-transgenic herbicide tolerance will bring a new age of farm-level management to growers.

Diversity in sorghum genetics adds tremendous value for sorghum breeders. The USDA Agricultural Research Service center in Lubbock, Texas, with support from the Sorghum Checkoff has explored this diversity and has discovered some unique genetics in some sorghums, including a genetic line known as multiseed.

Continued on USCP Newsletter p.4



Iowa Farmer Setting a Trend with Sorghum

Sorghum is not a typical crop you will find in a field in Centerville, Iowa. In fact, Joel Spring said his friends and neighbors thought he was crazy when he started growing this new crop. But after a couple years of successfully growing and marketing grain sorghum, Spring's neighbors are now showing an interest in his off-the-wall crop.

"They want to know the right management practices so when they raise it the first year everything will be done right," Spring said.

In southern Iowa, sorghum is becoming more popular because of its drought tolerance. Spring began growing sorghum two years ago and said it withstands harsh weather much better than other crops typically grown in the area.

"Sorghum can take the heat and drought stress, hang in there a while longer and still maintain yield," he said.

In addition to withstanding drought conditions, the market for sorghum in the area has recently expanded. Spring said grain sorghum is gaining popularity in Southern Iowa, especially with the help of Murphy Brown LLC and the Sorghum Checkoff along with an increase in local educational field days.

"Murphy Brown said they could take enough sorghum to cover 50,000 acres in southern Iowa and northern Missouri," Spring said. "I think it's a crop that will really take off here in the next five-10 years"

Spring said he sees a promising future for sorghum in Iowa from an economic standpoint. He is making \$80-100 more per acre growing sorghum than other crops he has previously grown.

To accompany his sorghum, Spring raises 1,600 hogs annually in his swine operation. He is solely using a sorghum feed ration and finds it beneficial in many ways.

"We did nutritional samples and we weren't losing anything on feed value or feed efficiency by switching to sorghum. With the economics being behind it, it just makes



sense on our farm to be feeding our hogs grain sorghum," Spring said.

Considering Spring is fairly new to the sorghum industry, he said his unique opportunity to be a member of Leadership Sorghum Class II helped him learn new ways to improve his operation and find best management practices for his region.

"We use different production practices," he said, "What works in [my classmates' areas] may be things to try here, just because sorghum is such a new crop for us."

Spring said he is anxious to learn more about sorghum and what the crop has to offer in the upcoming Leadership Sorghum session in November.

"The biggest things I will try to bring back from my participation in the Leadership Sorghum program is the knowledge and expertise to expand this crop in our area and what it takes to make sorghum a popular and viable crop," Spring said. "You'll be very impressed with what sorghum will do on your farm if you'll treat it like you do any crop." ✓

Strong Export Demand Continues

U.S. sorghum export demand has skyrocketed within the last year. While demand is growing overall from a global standpoint, China's newfound interest in U.S. grain sorghum led to a record-breaking year for sorghum exports.

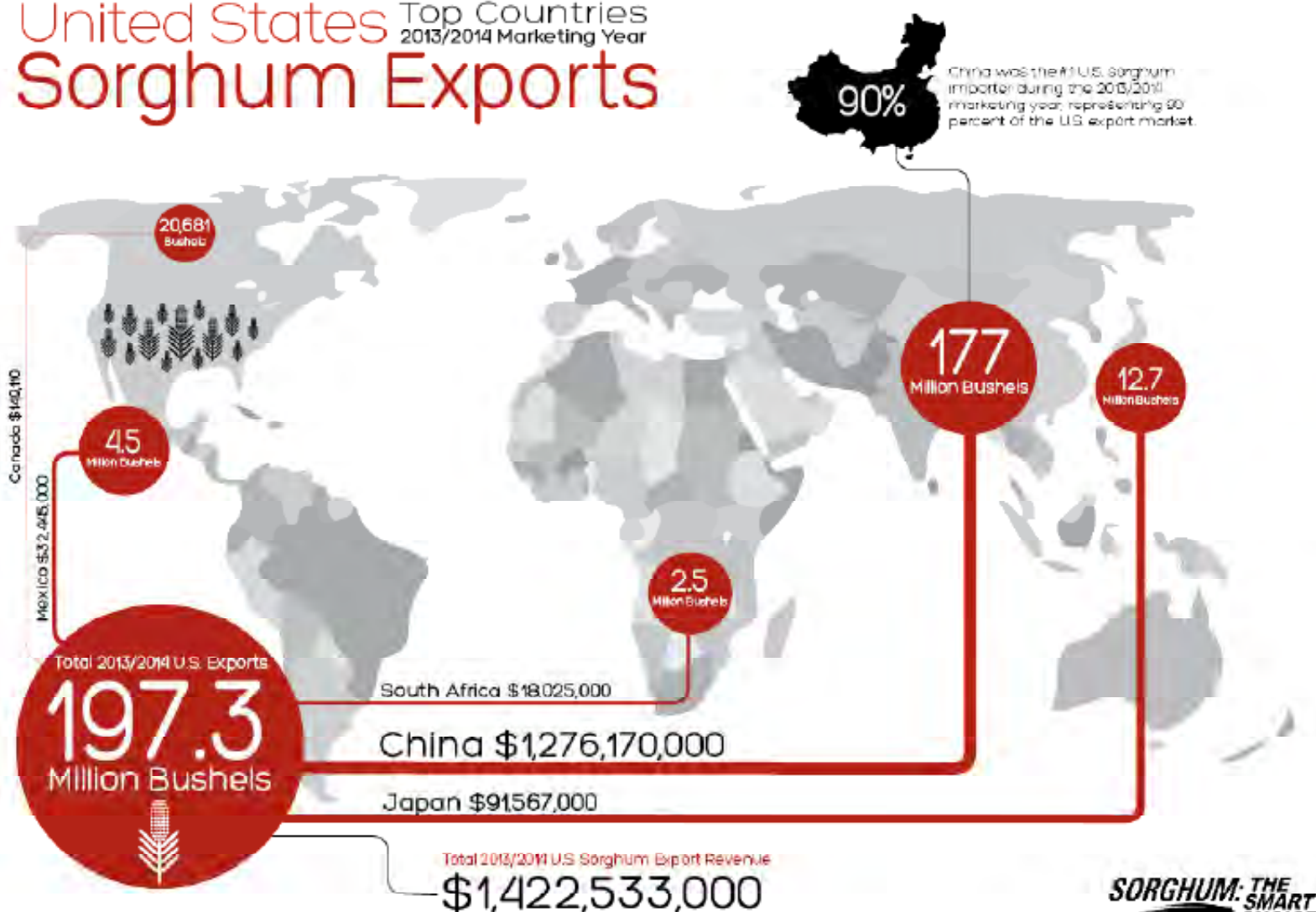
marketing year have reached 2.8 million metric tons, equating to 111.7 million bushels. Of the current total, China represents 88 percent with 98.7 million bushels, already 55.7 percent of China's total amount purchased last year.

Florentino Lopez, Sorghum Checkoff executive director, said the export market has improved basis and added value for sorghum growers

"The future of the sorghum export market is unknown," Lopez said. "However, after speaking with several grain buyers from China, Japan and others, the future appears to be promising. The main question now is whether supply will be able to keep up with the growing demand both internationally and domestically." ✓

Extending into the 2014/2015 marketing year beginning Sept. 1, 2014, export demand has remained steadfast. At the end of October, total commitments for the current

United States Top Countries Sorghum Exports 2013/2014 Marketing Year



SORGHUM: THE SMART CHOICE

*Total expected revenue based on Foreign Agricultural Service's world average price (\$7.29) on sold U.S. sorghum as of June 2014

Secretary Vilsack Announces Sorghum Board Appointments

The Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack announced Oct. 3, 2014 the appointments of five members to serve on the United Sorghum Checkoff Program board of directors. Members will serve three-year terms.

The growers appointed to the board include:

- Adam Baldwin of Moundridge, Kan.
- John L. Dvoracek of Farwell, Neb.
- Dale Murden of Monte Alto, Texas
- Carlton Bridgeforth of Tanner, Ala., at-large
- Verity C. Ulibarri of McAlister, N.M., at-large

The board is structured so that the state with the largest production is allocated five positions. The

state with the second largest production is allocated three positions and the third largest production state is allocated one. There are four at-large positions for which at least two representatives must be appointed from states other than the three top sorghum producing states.

The 13-member board is authorized by the Commodity Promotion, Research, and Information Act of 1996. The U.S. Secretary of Agriculture selected the appointees from sorghum producers nominated by certified producer organizations.

For more information regarding the board and their responsibilities, visit www.SorghumCheckoff.com. ✓

Sorghum Genetic Pipeline, Continued

Weinheimer said multiseed offers an unprecedented opportunity for yield.

known as double haploid. This technology is common in other predominant crops and essentially allows plant breeders to shave years off of their breeding programs.

“There is a high correlation between grain yield and the number of seeds on a sorghum head,” Weinheimer said. “Multiseed can generate up to three times as many seeds in a sorghum head.”

“If successful, this technology would allow sorghum breeders to incorporate ideal genetics into sorghum by as much as three years faster,” Weinheimer said. “With- in the fast-paced plant genetics community, this would allow sorghum to bring better hybrids to market faster.”

While the full impact of multiseed is currently unknown, Weinheimer said it certainly offers plant breeders an opportunity to integrate a new platform of genetics with the potential for increasing yield that will be visibly seen in the field.

The horizon for sorghum genetics is bright. With accelerated emphasis on the advancement of seed genetics, the pipeline of available tools continues to grow and

Advancing sorghum genetics is a numbers game and can take upwards of seven to 10 years to land in the hands of growers. The Sorghum Checkoff recently partnered with DuPont Pioneer to develop a plant breeding tool

Sorghum Industry Events

Nov. 19-20 — Kansas Agribusiness Expo
Wichita, Kan.

Nov. 27-28 — Thanksgiving Holiday (Office Closed)
Lubbock, Texas

Dec. 6-8 — Texas Farm Bureau Meeting
Corpus Christi, Texas

Dec. 9-11 — USCP Board of Directors Meeting
Lubbock, Texas

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Could Sorghum Help California's Water Woes?

By Yasmin Rey

MANY STATES THROUGHOUT THE SORGHUM Belt are no strangers to drought. And it is no coincidence grain and forage sorghum is grown in these areas because of the crop's drought resilience and heat tolerant characteristics.

Although California may not be located in the Sorghum Belt, it has certainly seen its fair share of droughts.

This year was one the driest years on record since California began keeping rainfall data in 1849. Below average snowfall in the mountain regions in recent years has created a climbing runoff deficit in the Golden State. As of Oct. 7, 2014, the United States Drought Monitor deemed that a majority of the state had moved to extreme or exceptional drought conditions.

While most of California's rain and snowfall occur in the northern half of the state, the majority of its water use occurs in the central and southern half amid populous cities and the San Joaquin Valley—a region that produces the

majority of California's agricultural production. The runoff water from the northern mountains is stored in a complex system of dams and reservoirs and a series of canals and aqueducts that move water to the rest of the state.

With approximately three-quarters of the state's water being used by irrigated agriculture, California has several of the nation's largest irrigation districts. As the most populous state in the country, California also has roughly 38 million people and is estimated to gain 4.2 million more people by 2020. The rapidly rising population and scorching drought are creating the perfect storm for pressures on agricultural water use.

A perfect fit for California?

Sorghum is not a new crop to California and has been grown in the state since the 1800s. In fact, California farmers planted 451,000 acres of grain sorghum in 1967 when acreage peaked in the state. Now, total acreage is closer to 48,000 total acres of grain and forage sorghum.

However, as the declining availability of irrigation water and saline soils pressures corn production, grain sorghum may be poised for a resurgence in California.

John Duff, Sorghum Checkoff renewables program director, says the Central Valley's limited rainfall and increasing population will con-

◀ **DRYING UP.** Water stored in the San Luis Reservoir in Merced County, Calif., supplies farm irrigation throughout the Central Valley. The reservoir is at approximately 17 percent of its 2 million acre feet capacity.



tinue to limit California farmers from putting the same amount of irrigation water on other grain crops as they have in the past.

“Dairies still need the forage and ethanol plants still need grain, so sorghum could be a key crop and a great fit for California,” Duff said.

Chromatin Inc., a sorghum seed company, has placed a particular focus on developing the crop’s potential in California. Scott Staggenborg, director of applied feed-stock services for Chromatin Inc., said sorghum is built to withstand the sometimes harsh growing environment of that region.

“California may have some of the greatest potential we will ever realize,” Staggenborg said. “Sorghum will produce high silage yields on less water and handles some of the lower quality and salty water they are forced to use when water is scarce.”

“

“Dairies still need the forage and ethanol plants still need grain, so sorghum could be a key crop and a great fit for California.”

”

Staggenborg said crop rotation would help California farmers reduce resistant weed populations, provide residue on the soil surface to reduce wind erosion in the spring, and improve cotton yields by 10 to 15 percent.

“We will keep discussing the positive attributes of sorghum,” Staggenborg said, “and know that if we keep the message strong and consistent, we will help people understand the benefits.”

Dr. Jeff Dahlberg, director of the Kearney Agricultural Research and Extension Center in Parlier, Calif., is heading up an effort called *Sorghum for California*, which aims to increase the use of sorghum as a multi-purpose, low-input crop for California.

Dahlberg said in order to understand sorghum in California, you first need to understand California.

“Water has been an issue in California for over 100 years,” Dahlberg said. “Over 350 commodity crops are grown in

the state. We must convince farmers that sorghum can be just as high value. Efforts will be made to encourage farmers to rotate their crops – cotton and tomatoes one year, then sorghum the next.”

Dahlberg said he sees the biggest potential for sorghum forage replacing corn forage for California’s \$6.9 billion dairy industry. However, another industry may place even more demand for the crop.

California ethanol production

California’s ethanol industry currently transports a majority of their corn from the Midwest. However, as the state begins to recognize sorghum’s water savings potential, officials are investigating the crop’s value as a state-produced alternative to the railed-in Midwest corn.

In late July, the California Energy Commission announced ethanol producers Aemetis Inc., Calgren Renewable Fuels and Pacific Ethanol LLC each would receive \$3 million to develop grain sorghum as a feedstock for their operations.

“The California ethanol producers like sorghum,” Duff said. “They see sorghum as a smart choice and want to source as much sorghum locally as they possibly can, while relying on the rails that wind up and around the Rockies and back down into the Sorghum Belt for the rest.”

Duff said while no one expects sorghum to meet the demands of California ethanol producers by tomorrow, the three previously stated plants do represent more than 80 million bushels of annual demand.

“If they jump even halfway into the sorghum market, they’re collectively one of the few largest end users on the planet,” Duff said.

Political Pressures

California politics have taken note of the impact of the drought and the water wars that may be on the horizon. Water will very likely be at the center of local, state and national elections in 2016.

The water debate is igniting fears among farmers who depend on irrigation for their livelihoods that federal officials may seize water they set aside in the San Luis Reservoir on the west side of the San Joaquin Valley.

All of these variables—drought, market demand and the state’s political environment—could set the stage for sorghum to make a comeback in California’s parched agricultural regions.



Sorghum Shortcuts

NSP Names 2015 Legislative Committee Members

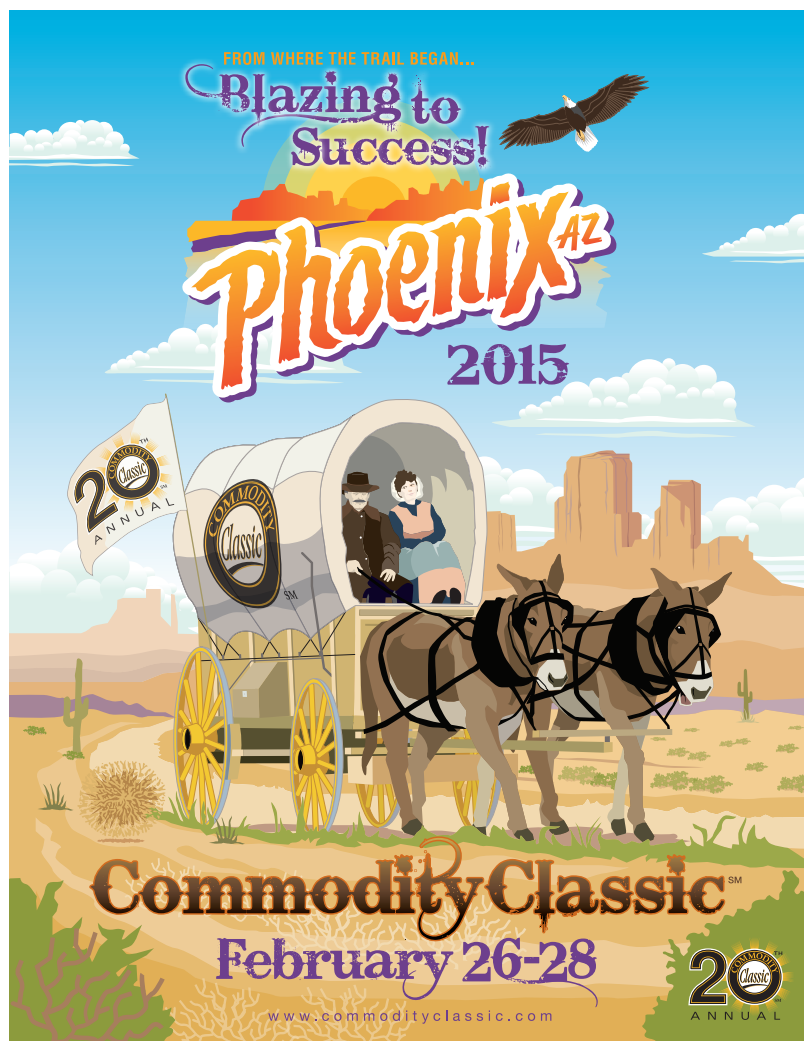
National Sorghum Producers board of directors Chairman J.B. Stewart has appointed four new members to the NSP Legislative Committee. These members include: Kent Winter of Kansas, Danny Beyer of Texas, Ethan Branscum of Arkansas, and Jordan Shearer of Oklahoma.

Beginning fiscal year 2015, these producers and 13 existing committee members will serve the sorghum industry, shaping future policy and guiding the organization on legislative matters in accordance with NSP's mission to improve the sorghum industry through advocacy and leadership.

The 2015 National Sorghum Producers Legislative Committee members are: Chairman James Born of Perryton, Texas, Danny Beyer of Odem, Texas, Stephen Bigge of Stockton, Kan., Don Bloss of Pawnee, Neb., Ethan Branscum of Little Rock, Ark., Stan Fury of Broadview, N.M., Jason Frantz of Perryton, Texas, Lance Herndon of Parkton, N.C., Jim Massey of Robstown, Texas, Earl Roemer of Healy, Kan., Luke Sayes of Deville, La., Burl Scherler of Sheridan Lake, Colo., Adam Schindler of Reliance, S.D., Jordan Shearer of Slapout, Okla., Greg Stone of Garden City, Kan., John Williams of McLeansboro, Ill., and Kent Winter of Mount Hope, Kan.

Join us in Phoenix for Classic '15

Join National Sorghum Producers, National Corn Growers Association, National Association of Wheat Growers, American Soybean Association and the Ag equipment Manufacturers for the 20th Annual Com-



modity Classic in Phoenix, Ariz., Feb. 26-28, 2015, at the Phoenix Convention Center.

During Classic, NSP will host its annual Sorghum General Session on Thursday, Feb. 26 and will honor the winners of the NSP Yield Contest on Friday, Feb. 27. NSP Chairman J.B. Stewart will once again participate in the annual Presidents Roundtable during the Classic General Session. Learn more about Classic registration and the agenda at www.CommodityClassic.com



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Locally tested Pioneer® brand sorghum can give your yield potential a boost.

Matching Pioneer sorghum hybrids and traits to your fields is a surefire way to hit higher yields. And with Pioneer Premium Seed Treatment, you can be confident your crop will realize its full potential. Ask your local Pioneer sales professional about your sorghum options.



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