

PROVIDING FOR  
THOSE IN NEED | p. 8

FOOD-GRADE  
SORGHUM Q&A | p. 22

SOUTHERN  
SPIRITS | p. 30



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# SORGHUM *Grower*

FALL 2015



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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### FEATURES

- 8** **Providing for Those in Need**  
*Sorghum is the second largest U.S. commodity used for international food aid in countries around the world.*
- 22** **Food Grade Q&A**  
*Learn what makes food-grade sorghum food grade from NuLife Market's Earl Roemer.*
- 30** **Southern Spirits**  
*Craft distillers stand out with sorghum.*

### DEPARTMENTS

- 5** **CEO's Desk**
- 6** **Capitol Hill**
- 11** **From the Field**
- 16** **Sorgonomics™**
- 19** **Sorghum Abroad**
- 28** **Sorghum Markets**



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**SORGHUM**  
*Grower*

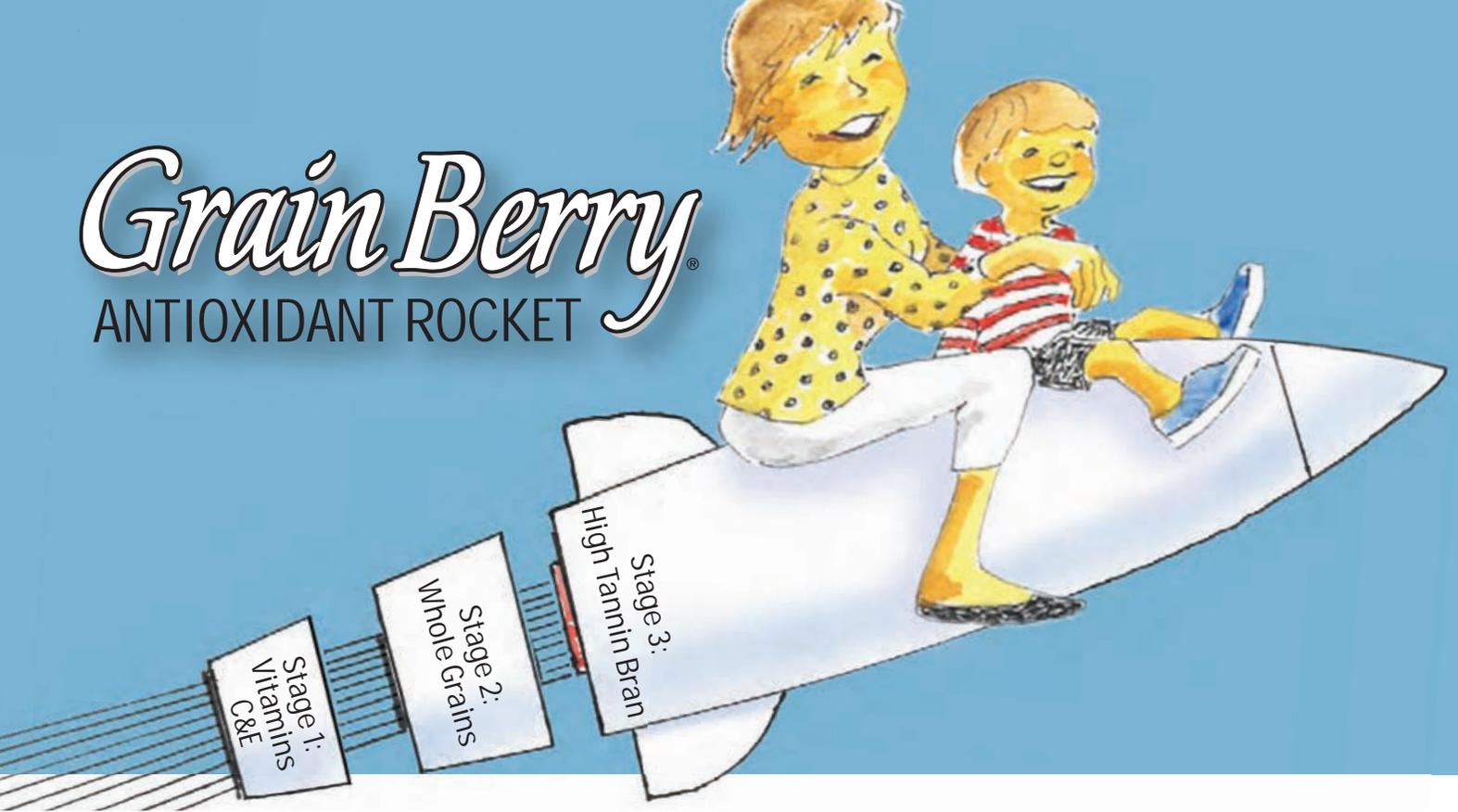
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ON THE COVER: The consumer food market is rapidly growing and its uses expanding. Consumers everywhere are discovering the versatility and health attributes sorghum contains either at their kitchen table or for their pets.

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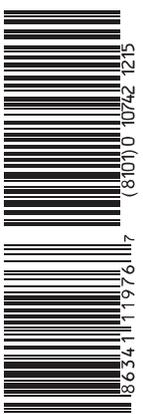
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4201 North Interstate 27  
Lubbock, Texas 79403  
806-749-3478 (phone)  
800-658-9808 (toll free)  
806-749-9002 (fax)  
[www.SorghumGrowers.com](http://www.SorghumGrowers.com)

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## CEO's Desk

### *Support NSP, Support Sorghum on the Shelves*



**A**s fall is upon us and the combines are running across much of the U.S., we were reminded the last few days of October why it is important for growers to support trade associations such as National Sorghum Producers and political action committees such as the Sorghum PAC and why strong leadership is critical. The budget agreement was negotiated in an extremely short period of time by a very small group of people and could have totally unraveled how crop insurance is managed in this country. While I won't go into this issue here, I do want to say I am very proud to be a part of the sorghum and agriculture team that worked along with growers like you to make our voices known and to help find a resolution to the problem. House Agriculture Committee Chairman Michael Conaway certainly came through this first test and showed his strong leadership skills at a critical time. There will be more in future issues on this topic.

On a completely different note, as you read this magazine, I hope you enjoy the focus on food. Sorghum has not traditionally stood out in this market, but I am extremely excited about the direction the sorghum food industry is headed. While it is not a huge portion of our industry today, it continues to grow rapidly, and I hope you enjoy the content on individual successes in this vastly growing market. Today, it is common for staff discussions to include names like Kellogg's, General Mills, Panera, Costco and KIND. And while those names are certainly front and center in many discussions today, it is pioneer farmer growers that really took huge risks in the early days to start this industry moving forward. Now, suppliers like NuLife Market, ADM and Ardent Mills are continuing to grow that demand. From Grain Berry, to Bob's Red Mill products to Wonder Grain, the number of in-store products containing sorghum has exploded. You can read more about these products in *Sorghum Shortcuts* (page 34). I encourage you to look this winter at all of the options available to consumers today and to help continue to support the growth of this segment of our industry! Taste sorghum.

Tim Lust  
NSP CEO

## Food for Peace Isn't Always Peaceful

By Kelli Fulkerson

**A** political battle has been heating up in Washington over Food for Peace (FFP) legislation, leaving concern about a long debate and the possibility of a less than peaceful outcome.

U.S. Senators Bob Corker (R-TN) and Chris Coons (D-DE.), members of the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, introduced legislation in 2014 known as the Food for Peace Reform Act to reform the United States global food assistance programs. The proposed legislation would entirely change the way aid is delivered and distributed to developing and disaster-stricken countries.

This reform would remove in-kind international food assistance and move to an entirely cash-based program. In-kind food aid is the sale of food commodities purchased, shipped and branded from American producers and processors.

“You have a situation where you’re actually selling U.S. products,” said U.S. Senator John Boozman (R-AR). “You’ve got shippers, you’ve got farmers, you have a constituency, and it all works together. It is good for the countries involved, and it’s good for Americans.”

The proposed legislation has faced significant opposition from commodity organizations like the National Sorghum Producers, maritime industry representatives, humanitarian organizations and leaders of the House and Senate Agriculture Committees. The proposed changes

would open the door for more fraud and abuse while the 2014 U.S. Farm Bill would be required to be reopened — a move NSP has and will continue to strongly oppose.

“If you remove FFP from the Farm Bill, you lose the framework that was set in place for the whole FFP program,” NSP CEO Tim Lust said. “The mission to help starving people and promote resilient, democratic societies while advancing United States security and prosperity would be replaced with a quick and easy handout of cash.”

If in-kind deliveries were no longer being made there would be more than just a hungry world population. The FFP helps facilitate educational opportunities, promotes global health, protects human rights, supports clean water and helps develop economic growth to name a few.

James Born, West Texas sorghum producer and NSP board chairman, said this proposal completely transforms the objective of FFP.

“The Food for Peace Program was created as a grass-roots initiative for the United States of America to help other countries in times of need,” Born said. “Six generations of American farmers have taken great pride in being able to provide the fruits of their labor to not only save lives but also educate and rebuild local communities. It would be a shame to see this American humanitarian effort fall by the wayside.”

The Food for Peace Program (FFP) has been delivering hope to countries in need for over 60 years, reaching more than 3 billion hungry people around the world. FFP was signed into law on July 10, 1954, by President Eisenhower after the second World War. The legislation helped to secure our allies and assured our enemies the fighting was over, all while helping rebuild nations in need. Currently, the U.S. is the single largest food aid donor in the world and supplies more than half of the world’s global food aid efforts.

## U.S. Food Aid Commodities Share of Production and Exports

| Product       | Food Aid Tonnage | Food Aid Share of U.S. Production | Food Aid Share of U.S. Exports |
|---------------|------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Corn          | 27,192           | 0.09%                             | 0.55%                          |
| Wheat         | 1,066,334        | 1.80%                             | 3.80%                          |
| Sorghum       | 516,500          | 5.80%                             | 12.70%                         |
| Rice          | 101,695          | 0.97%                             | 2.69%                          |
| Soybean       | 10,010           | 0.01%                             | 0.03%                          |
| Soybean Meal  | 46,426           | 0.12%                             | 0.55%                          |
| Vegetable Oil | 158,879          | 1.58%                             | 6.10%                          |
| Pulse Crops   | 194,924          | 8.70%                             | 18.70%                         |

▲ SORGHUM has played an essential role in U.S. food assistance and development programs and is currently the second largest food aid commodity exported. Data provided by USAID and USDA NASS and FAS.



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# Providing for those in need

by Michelle Hochstein

**A**s an excellent source of nutrition, sorghum has proven its worth as a source of food aid and is the second largest utilized grain in foreign countries suffering from food insecurities.

In 2010, the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization estimated 925 million people worldwide are undernourished, of whom 88 percent live in Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. Pregnant and lactating women and children under the age of two are among the most vulnerable groups at risk of undernourishment.

Since September 2009, more than 22 million bushels of sorghum have been utilized for food aid. A majority of the sorghum is sent to Africa, feeding villages in Chad, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Somalia, Sudan and Zimbabwe.

Packed with proteins, carbohydrates, vitamins and minerals, sorghum performs well as a blended food ingredient.

Researchers at Kansas State University realized this and are currently working to develop novel, extruded, high-protein, sorghum-based micronutrient fortified blended foods that can be used for nutritional aid programs for infants and young children in Tanzania as a part of the USDA Foreign Agricultural

Service Micronutrient Fortified Food Aid Products Pilot (MFFAPP) program.

Project Director Sajid Alavi, Ph.D., a professor in the Department of Grain Science and Industry at KSU, said one of the fortified foods, a sorghum and cowpea blend or porridge mix, is a complete food for infants.

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“Sorghum is an important carrier for micronutrients and a great source for calories.”

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“Sorghum is an important carrier for micronutrients and a great source for calories, and the cowpeas supply a substantial amount of protein,” he said. “The goal is to reach 18 grams of protein per 100 grams of product, which is the recommended value by USDA.”

According to the U.S. Agency for International Development data, 25-33 percent of U.S. food aid

◀ SOUTHERN Sudanese women carry sacks of sorghum distributed by the World Food Programme (WFP) in Juba, Sudan. Sorghum may be used as part of a general household ration along with a pulse and oil. Sorghum is also provided in Food for Assets, Food for Work, Food for Training, Vulnerable Group Feeding and Food for Education programs.

commodities are enriched, blended or fortified with micronutrients annually, comprising a minimum of 25 percent of the total tonnage of food aid commodities utilized for emergencies.

The nutritional value of sorghum is not the only thing Alavi and his team considered when picking this crop for the study. Both the drought-resistant and fungal-resistant qualities of sorghum made it a valuable choice.

“While other crops might be fungal susceptible, sorghum is not,” he said. “It is resistant. It is a great quality of sorghum, which made it very attractive to us.”

As a preferred staple grain in the region surrounding Tanzania, sorghum has been utilized as a major food ingredient for hundreds of years.

“They like that taste,” he said. “It is a local crop. It is used in Africa. They are familiar with it, and in the long run, the goal of any U.S. aid is to make the country self-sustainable. Eventually, they will have the resources needed for it to grow locally.”

The project, which began in 2012, is set to be complete this coming summer. If everything goes as planned, Alavi said the final portion, a feeding trial, will begin in late November to early January and will last five months.

Currently, the team is working with Project Concern International and local health officials to screen 20,000 children ages six months to five years to participate in the trial.

“The screening process takes a lot of time as well as people,” Alavi said. “We test them for different nutritional status indicators, including health and weight and also Vitamin A and iron deficiencies. Based on that, we will select 2,000 mildly-deficient children to work with.”

With assistance from U.S. sorghum farmers, the Sorghum Checkoff and the Kansas Grain Sorghum Commission, Alavi said his team of researchers at KSU were able to get the initial data for this study, which in turn ensured USDA funding for the project.

“Sorghum is not used as much for food as the potential suggests, so one other reason we selected it is because we want to help sorghum farmers in the U.S. – all sorghum farmers,” he said. “If we find applications for sorghum that are food oriented, then it will make it a high-value application. Farmers will get higher prices for it and it boils down to benefits for our farmers while also helping those in need.”

## nsp's Industry Partner Program

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Find out more about NSP's Industry Partner Program at [www.SorghumGrowers.com/industry-partners](http://www.SorghumGrowers.com/industry-partners)

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# From the Field

## **Joe Pennington, 65** *Raymondville, Texas*



### **1. What markets exist for your sorghum? How do you market your sorghum?**

Being in deep South Texas, along the Mexican border, we have been fortunate to be able to take advantage of sorghum sales into Mexico. The last couple of years we have also sold sorghum that went to foreign markets through the Port of Corpus Christi. This sorghum is generally contracted to local elevators at various times prior to planting and throughout the growing season.

### **2. What challenges do you deal with at harvest?**

At harvest we are always watching the Gulf for tropical storms. Also at the peak of harvest we see our country elevators backed up with sorghum deliveries which causes trucking issues.

### **3. Do you utilize on-farm storage for your sorghum? Why or why not?**

For the past 20 years we have not used any on-farm storage. Forward contracting at acceptable prices has made delivery to local elevators our preferred method of selling our crop.

### **4. How did the 2015 crop yield? Any surprises?**

Because of the extremely wet spring of 2015, our planting season was quite lengthy. Our earliest planting was our best, and our yields declined the later we planted.

### **5. How did you manage risk for your sorghum?**

When prices were the highest, we sold as much sorghum as we felt we could comfortably deliver. Managing market risks is a difficult task.

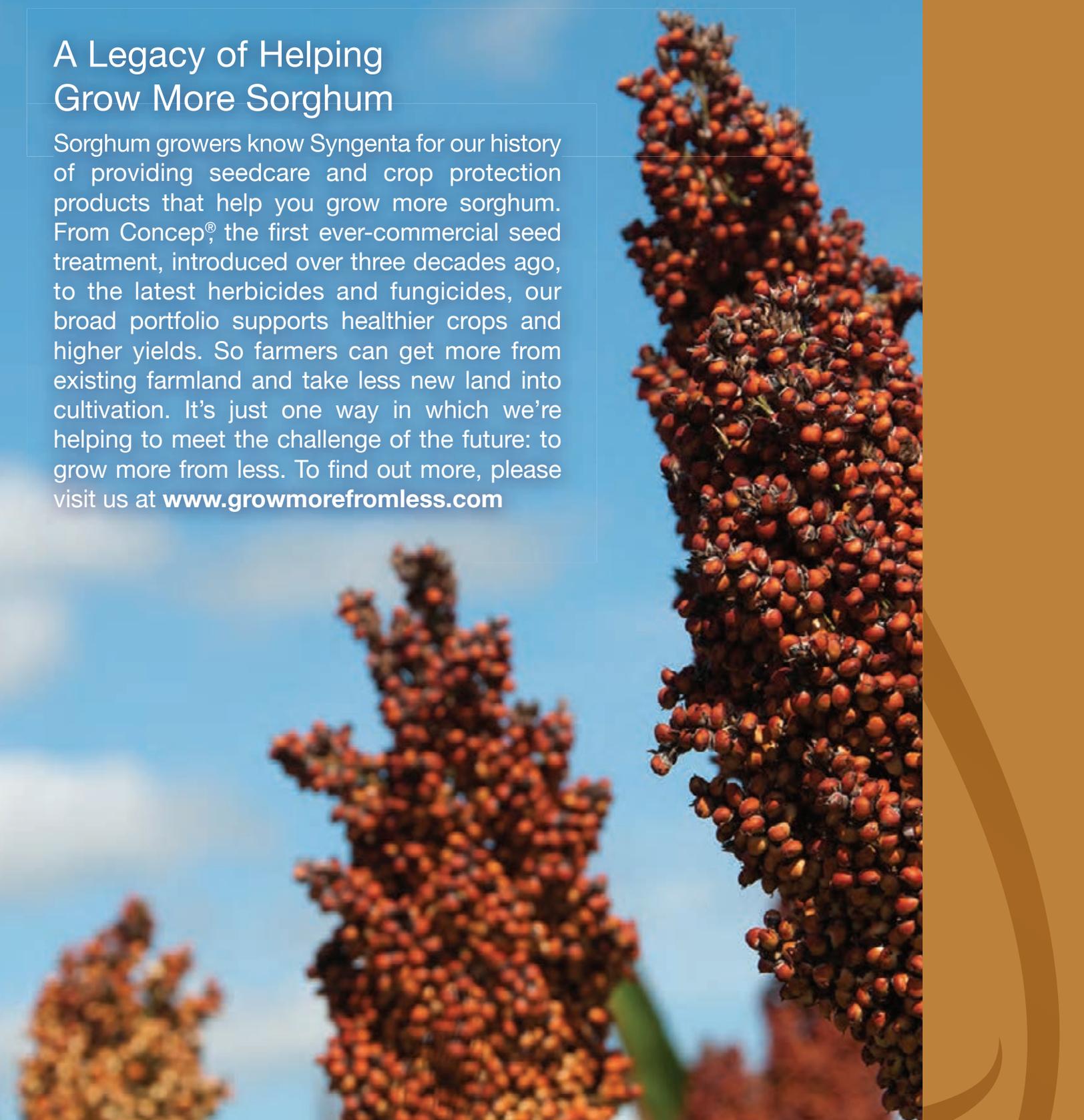
### **5. Did you encounter the sugarcane aphid this growing season? If so, how did it affect your crop?**

Yes, our later planted sorghum had the sugarcane aphid at levels that required treatment. About 35-40 percent of our acreage was successfully treated.

Because we were scouting our sorghum acreage, I believe we held damage to a minor amount. Overall, I think we were fortunate considering the amount of late planted sorghum.

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A close-up photograph of several sorghum panicles, showing the dense clusters of small, reddish-brown grains. The background is a clear blue sky. The image is partially obscured by a dark brown vertical bar on the right side of the page.

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# From the Field

## Shane Beckman, 33 Seldon, Kansas

### 1. What markets exist for your sorghum? How do you market your sorghum?

My dad and I market the grain. The closest market we have is Western Plains Ethanol, which is about 25 miles from our farm headquarters. If sorghum has a strong export program we market our grain through Cargill in WaKeeney, which is an hour and ten minutes from farm headquarters. The bulk of marketing tools we use are basis contracts and hedging up to 70 percent of expected production on the board.

### 2. What challenges do you deal with at harvest?

The biggest harvest challenge is crop dry down or lodging if we get a wind storm. I do not think we will have any harvest issues this year, the crop finished nicely. I never have defoliated, while an option, I have always been concerned about giving up that last bit of grain yield.

### 3. Do you utilize on-farm storage for your sorghum? Why or why not?

Oh yes, we use on farm storage. We put 80 plus percent in the bin. My father started using on-farm storage and we have

continued to add to our storage in my 15 years of farming. On-farm storage has always been a part of our operation, on average we get 20-30 cents a bushel by storing to April.

### 4. How did the 2015 crop yield? Any surprises?

Our dryland yield is better than average. With the dry, hot August and September we lost about 10-15 percent off the top of our yield potential. We averaged 100 bushels to the acre for dryland, which is our yield goal. Our irrigated sorghum is the best that I have ever seen. What we have cut at the time of press for this magazine, we are seeing anywhere from 180-200 bushel sorghum and still have the good sorghum to cut. I am really excited about it.

### 5. How did you manage risk for your sorghum?

Unfortunately, I didn't lock in basis this spring. For risk management, we carry 70 percent insurance for our sorghum and complement with a hail policy.

### 6. Did you encounter the sugarcane aphid this growing season? If so, how did it affect your crop?

I didn't see sugarcane aphids.



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## Scates Family *Shawneetown, Illinois*

### **1. What markets exist for your sorghum? How do you market your sorghum?**

We have to haul our sorghum about 30 miles away. There are very few locations in our local area. Bunge is a big elevator, but they don't accept it because there is just not enough grown. We haul it to Cargill or CGB. We just sell it on the open market. We don't really make a futures contract or anything like that because we don't have enough to make a big enough sale to where we can gain a lot. Unless we see the basis moving in a positive direction or a negative, we might lock it in or wait just a bit to set the basis. In the past, we've used sorghum to offset our corn contracts if we have a flood we can use sorghum to offset those contracts when we don't have enough corn.

### **2. What challenges do you deal with at harvest?**

If we get delayed in planting our sorghum, it doesn't dry down, especially if we get an early frost. The moisture is high and tends to stay high for a while sometimes because we plant near the rivers. Like soybeans, it takes until 12-1 o'clock some days to harvest if you don't want to take a hit at the elevator on too high moisture. Those are primarily our biggest challenges when it comes to harvest time.

### **3. Do you utilize on-farm storage for your sorghum? Why or why not?**

We do not because in the past it has been difficult to get out

of the bin, and we don't raise enough to need to put it in a storage bin. Our grain driers are set up for corn, so we get them set right, and we don't like to change the calibration. The guys that do get a premium for it.

### **4. How did the 2015 crop yield? Any surprises?**

It didn't yield nearly as well as we hoped for or planned, but I understand why. We had super heavy rains right after planting all the way through June. There were three rivers in our area that all flooded. Some sorghum was under water three different times.

I guess I am surprised by it because it did survive. It was hardy, and we actually got a decent crop—130 bushel on a crop that was completely under rain water three different times. We were very disappointed in the growing season but not sorghum itself. It is just what was thrown at us. It was just not good year for corn, beans or wheat in our area.

### **5. Did you encounter the sugarcane aphid this growing season? If so, how did it affect your crop?**

No, we did not see it, and I did not notice it. I did hear our neighbor to the north did, so I plan to be more vigilant in scouting next year and see if we notice it.

## Negotiating Cash Rents. Is it Time?

By John Duff

**F**arming is a business. And just like any other business, it has assets and liabilities such as land. While most farmers see land as an asset, it is important to realize it can also be a liability.

Having the difficult discussions about land and how it's working for (or against) the producer isn't often fun, but it is essential for the financial health of the operation.

About 40 percent of farmland in the central Sorghum Belt is leased. This number is much higher in the Mississippi Delta where farmland in many areas is over 60 percent leased. Much like land they own, farmers often view their leases and rental agreements as assets that can never cost them money.

According to southwest Kansas sorghum farmer Jim Sipes, that isn't the case though. Sipes recently renegotiated

his crop share leases with a success rate of more than 70 percent. Still, he had to walk away from some of his land because it wasn't performing as he needed it to.

"I look at each farm as if it is an investment," Sipes said. "Would you keep a stock that's losing 10 percent each year, or would you replace it with a stock with a better return?"

This isn't an easy decision for farmers whose lives are devoted to caring for the land. Although it shouldn't be taken lightly, the option of walking away must be on the table.

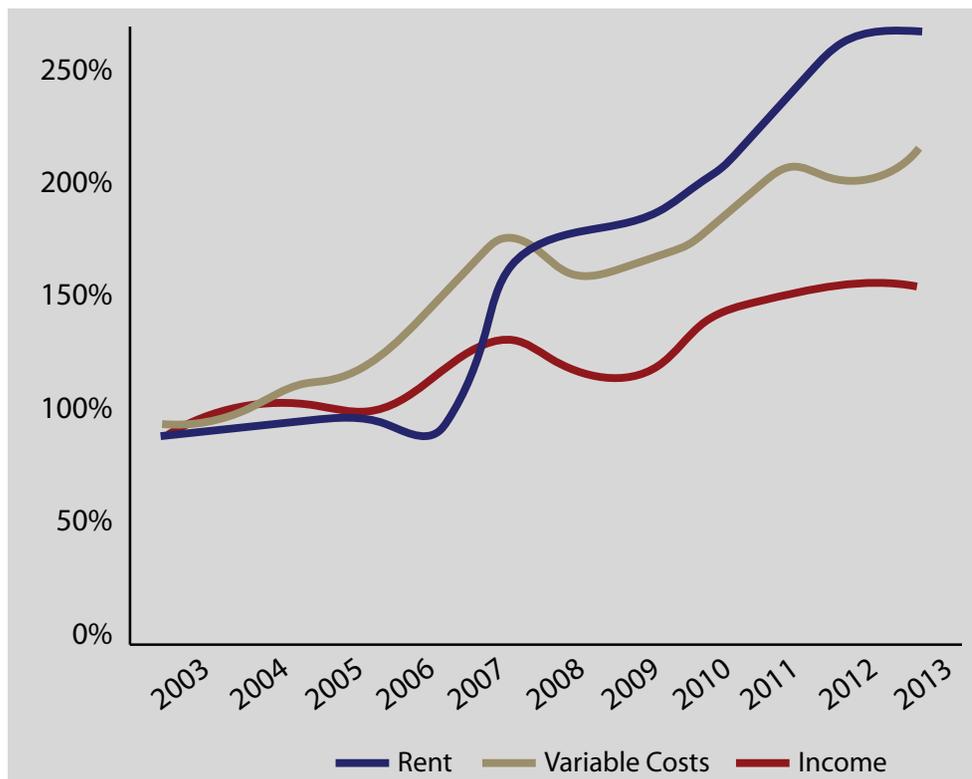
For farmers who keep land solely for per acre fixed-cost management, high variable costs and poor yields on those acres can take a toll on equity.

"Rented ground that provides you no opportunity for profit often costs you more than just time," Sipes said. "Equity can be at stake."

Farmers must be realistic about multi-year losses and the potential for recovering those costs. Many farmers aren't comfortable walking away from land that has accrued significant losses over time, but doing so can help minimize the chances of serious financial distress later.

"When we looked at our chances to recover losses, we found them to be very low," Sipes said. "That's when we decided the leases would have to change or we would need to consider cutting our losses."

Structuring new leases can be challenging. In most cases Sipes negotiated for a modest cash lease with a



◀ INDEXED COST AND INCOME show large discrepancies between what farmers in the Sorghum Belt are spending and what is being taken in. Data provided by USDA NASS.

profit-sharing mechanism. In others, landlords agreed to share a few more expenses.

Both of these options helped bring the cost of land for Sipes back into line with profit potential while leaving upside opportunity in place for landlords.

Farmers looking to renegotiate should do their homework before winter meetings with landlords. West Texas landowner and banker Todd Pope always urges farmers to be sympathetic to their landlords' financial situations.

"Are any costs being shared? Sometimes adequate risk-sharing is already occurring," Pope said.

"Relative to comparable investments,

land has to perform for landowners. Property taxes and repair expenses are real obligations that must be met, and these eat into capitalization rate potential."

Though he stresses caution, Pope has been on both sides of the discussion and knows the importance of a good tenant.

"Good farmers make a difference," Pope said. "As a landowner you want a good capitalization rate, but if you aren't willing to let your tenant do what it takes to stay in business, you risk driving him away.

"If his replacement does a poor job you'll soon find yourself in worse shape than you were before."

Sipes said farmers should look at the opportunity and risk associated with each leased farm on an annual basis.

"Don't let your leased ground put your owned ground in jeopardy during tough times," he said.

With weak commodity prices and rapidly increasing input prices, Sipes contends farmers can't afford to not

look at what their land is costing them and evaluate their options related to these costs.

"Watch farms that don't provide much opportunity for profit closely," Sipes said. "Spend time looking at your true costs—costs of land and operations. It will be eye-opening."

“That’s when we decided the leases would have to change or we would need to consider cutting our losses.”

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## Sorghum Pet Food Attracts European Interest

By Megan Skiles

**P**et owners are becoming more health conscious than ever, choosing ingredients with nutritional benefits for their pets similar to their own and not just in America.

As pet ownership in Europe remains high and more Europeans make the shift toward purchasing small-breed animals, the need to address obesity and diabetic conditions is creating a unique opportunity for sorghum within the European pet food market because of its digestibility and lower glycemic index.

“Sorghum has the potential to be a key player in this market because of its health benefits, digestibility and palatability,” said Doug Bice, high value markets director for the Sorghum Checkoff. “Sorghum is a smart choice for addressing pet health in Europe just as it is here in the U.S.”

Researchers in the Department of Grain Science and Industry at Kansas State University have been working extensively on studies focusing on the use of sorghum in pet food. The results of these studies will be released within the next year and are expected to provide information that has the potential to add more value to sorghum in the pet food market in Europe.

Dr. Greg Aldrich, research associate professor for KSU, is a leader in pet food research and said there are important factors in regard to these studies that are building awareness both in the U.S. and abroad.

“Some people are reluctant to use certain ingredients if they don’t know anything about them,” he said. “If we can break down that barrier for sorghum, there will be a greater opportunity for its use within this market.”

With added emphasis on both health and convenience, the pet treat market in Europe has grown tremendously within the last

year. Through the research and testing processes at KSU, Dr. Greg Aldrich and his team were able to develop a sorghum crisp that can be used as an aggregate to add structure to pet treat products much like a granola bar.

“The treat market is growing 10-12 percent each year, which is double to triple the growth rate of the regular pet food market,” Dr. Aldrich said. “With the rate of growth in this market and obesity becoming a major concern in pets, treats need to be low calorie. Sorghum fits into that category perfectly.”

As sorghum continues to make its way into pet food formulations for large companies like IAMS and Ukanuba, the opportunities for its use within international markets increase.

“The more recognizable sorghum is within the pet food industry as a whole,” Bice said, “the more potential it has of becoming a key ingredient for both large-scale and private label pet food companies in Europe.”

As additional research is conducted and more information is released beyond what is already known, industry leaders will be able to go forward and advance sorghum’s presence within this market.

“There is not much sorghum grown in Europe, and we welcome the opportunities that it has within the European pet food market,” Bice said. “In order for us to fully seize these opportunities, we have to make sure people are informed of the products and know why utilizing sorghum for pet food is so beneficial.”

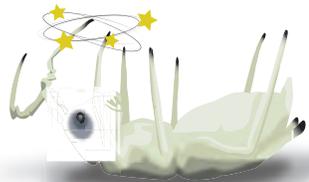


◀ SMALL BREED dogs and cats are becoming more popular for companion animals in Europe, and owners are seeking healthy food options like sorghum.



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# Sorghum Update

Brought to you by the Kansas Grain Sorghum Commission

## Information and Research UPDATE - Fall 2015

**T**he Kansas Grain Sorghum Commission (KGSC) vision is focused on increasing grain sorghum profitability and being recognized as a valuable asset by the Kansas grain sorghum producer. The KGSC directs the investment of funds generated by the grain sorghum checkoff to enhance the profitability of the grain sorghum producer. Since the inception of the United Sorghum Checkoff, KGSC has invested more than three million dollars in research. Below is a listing of the projects that KGSC will be funding beginning October 1, 2015, through September 30, 2016. For more information about these projects, please contact the KGSC administrator.

Responding to farmers' need for new technologies, the Commission invested in applied management tools and the pipeline for new genetic technologies. The Commission invests in a cooperative set of disciplines at Kansas State all geared towards delivering new genetic traits for commercialization in farmers' fields. These disciplines include: genetics, two sorghum breeding programs, physiology and plant pathology. The Commission values applied management projects and focused this year on evaluating

currently available herbicides, sorghum's response to varying irrigation levels and best management for top yields.

KGSC approved funding of over \$760,000 worth of research with Kansas State University, USDA-ARS, and Heartland Plant Innovations. Kansas Grain Sorghum Commission Chairman, Stephen Bigge, stated, "The commission has invested \$2.2 million dollars of grower's checkoff dollars on research projects in the last three years. We have been using these investments to fund research focused on priorities like standability, drought tolerance, yield, and weed control. We believe funding research in these areas will help to enhance producer profitability both today and in the future."

For more information about the Kansas Grain Sorghum Commission, check out our website at [www.ksgrainsorghum.org](http://www.ksgrainsorghum.org) or contact your commissioner. District 1—Lonnie Wilson, Colby; District 2 - Greg Graff, Leoti; District 3—Mike O'Brate, Ingalls; District 4 – Stephen Bigge, Stockton, Chairman; District 5 – Clayton Short, Assaria, Vice-chairperson; District 6 – Jay Zimmerman, South Haven; District 7 –Nathan Larson, Riley, Secretary / Treasurer ;District 8 - Jeff Casten, Quenemo; District 9 - Gary Kilgore, Chanute.

### Key 2015-2016 Kansas Grain Sorghum Commission Research Investments

Best Management Practices for Top-Yields in Sorghum

Sorghum Yield and Profitability Response to Water Supply and Irrigation Management

Physiological and Genetic Characterization of Grain Sorghum for Enhancing Terminal Heat and Drought Stress

Efficacy of Atrazine, Huskie and Diacamba on Palmer Amaranth under Temperature Stress

Evaluating on Sorghum Germ plasm for Herbicide Tolerance

Germplasm Screening Host-Plant Interactions and Inoculation Techniques for Sorghum Stalk Rot Diseases in Kansas

Improved Genomic Mapping and Marker-Assisted Selection for Cold Tolerance in Grain Sorghum

Evaluating Nitrogen and Iron Use Efficiency in Advance Sorghum Lines

Development of sorghum parental (A/B and R) lines with enhanced drought and cold tolerance

Breeding Sorghum for Improved Production and Utilization

Sorghum Response to Post emergence Applied Huskie Following Preemergence Applied Lexar EZ, Lumaz EZ or Zemax

Development of Long-Term USDA ARS PSGD Sorghum Breeding Presence in Kansas

Sorghum Double Haploid Technology for Kansas Farmers

SDH Technology: Analysis and Enhancement of Haploid Inducing Sorghum Lines

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(785) 477-9474, [www.ksgrainsorghum.org](http://www.ksgrainsorghum.org)



# What makes Food-Grade Sorghum Food?

## Q&A with Earl Roemer - President, Nu Life Market

*Question:* Is color an indication of food-grade sorghum?

*Answer:* The sorghum species is Sorghum bicolor. The two sub-species of sorghum plants are referred to as purple plant and tan plant. An easy way to identify which plant is purple or tan is by looking at the glume that surrounds the grain when it is ripe. The glume will be dark purple if it is a purple plant and tan if it is a tan plant. Most often in the United States a white or crème colored grain that is produced by a tan plant sorghum is referred to as a food-grade sorghum. This sorghum grain is very bland

in flavor and may be milled into a very nice white flour for gluten free food applications. The purple plant sorghums that produce white, red, bronze, or black colored grain may also be consumed as a food. The pigmented grains contain very unique phenolic compounds or antioxidants that are being researched for their possible health benefits and their use as natural food colorants.

*Question:* Does the milling quality matter?

*Answer:* Sorghum may be milled with standard grain milling equipment as

long as this equipment has the capability of producing a flour specification that is required by the end user. The specifications of the flour references the particle size, particle size distribution, and starch damage necessary for producing a cooked or baked food product with the texture most desired by the consumer. The product range is endless, from gluten free extruded snacks and Ready to Eat (RTE) cereals to gluten free baked pastries.

*Question:* What items from a nutrition standpoint constitute food-grade suitability or are more preferred for its use?

*Answer:* Even though purple plant sorghums produce grain with some possible nutritional health benefits from these pigments, they also may develop compounds with some bitter or astringent flavors that may not be as attractive to the consumer because of taste. Consumers in recent years are eating more whole grains that do contain some of these stronger flavors and many consumers have become accustomed to these products and are associating dark pigmented foods with greater health benefits. This is an excellent attribute of sorghum and an opportunity for its use in the functional food and beverage industry. The diversity of colors contained in different sorghum grains and increasing demand by consumers for this

category of food product could be very beneficial to the industry.

*Question:* Does farmer management play a role in determining food-grade sorghum?

*Answer:* The sorghum producer will manage the production of the food-grade grain very similar to that of other standard sorghum grains. If this grain is produced for use in gluten-free food products, it will be under a very strict management, traceability, and identity preservation program dictated by the processor of the sorghum grain in order to prevent cross contamination of gluten-containing grains. Most often, food type sorghum grain is produced after direct communication with the food processor.

*Question:* What changes are on the horizon for the type of sorghum consumers use?

*Answer:* The expanding demand for sorghum grain in the food industry is directly correlated with the unique attributes it contains. Consumers are demanding more ancient grain based food products that are also non-GMO, gluten-free, offer potential health benefits, and are more environmentally friendly. These sorghum containing attributes bode very well for its increased use in the food industry. The launch of many sorghum containing products by national known food companies are providing an exciting future and new use for this industry. 🍌



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## Sorghum: A Prize Winner in the Kitchen

**W**hole grain, pearly, popped, flour, syrup—sorghum’s versatility was put on display in the first ever Sorghum Recipe Showdown, and three culinary enthusiasts were named champions.

Hosted throughout the month of July by the Sorghum Checkoff, the contest challenged individuals across the country to produce original recipes showcasing sorghum in its many forms.

“This contest gave people the opportunity to explore the benefits and versatility of using sorghum in their own kitchens,” said Doug Bice, Sorghum Checkoff high value markets director. “The winning recipes embodied the limitless possibilities of using sorghum in culinary masterpieces.”

Triple Sorghum Granola won over the judges’ taste buds, earning Pam Correll of Brockport, Pennsylvania, the first place prize of \$500. Brenda Watts of Gaffney, South Carolina, received second place, winning a Dutch oven with her Sorghum Pecan Praline Cheesecake. Chicken, Leek and Sorghum Soup took third place, winning Fiona Green of Keller, Texas, a Sorghum: The Smart Choice® apron.

Recipes were evaluated on taste, presentation and use of sorghum by a sorghum farmer, registered dietitian, chef, consumer and Doug Bice.

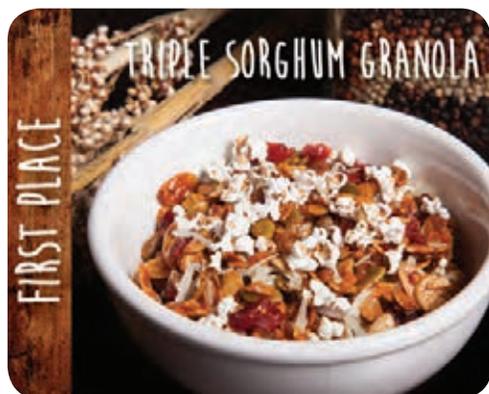
Grand-prize winner Pam Correll said cooking with sorghum was a new venture for her, and she found it to be extremely adaptable.

“You can use it for most anything—breakfast, lunch, supper, snacks—any time of day,” Correll said.

Inspired by sorghum’s diverse applications, Correll said she has already begun sharing her new-found excitement with her friends and family. She said she encourages others to find sorghum and experiment with various dishes in their own kitchens.

“I really think sorghum is on the cusp of becoming popular and trendy if we can get enough people to find out about it,” Correll said. “There’s no doubt sorghum will be a staple in my house from now on.”

To view the winning recipes and download the 2015 Sorghum Showdown Recipe book, visit [SorghumShowdown.com](http://SorghumShowdown.com). Find additional sorghum cooking inspiration as well as nutritional information at [HealthySorghum.com](http://HealthySorghum.com). ✓



## Sweet Sorghum—From Stalk to Syrup

**S**orghum syrup — most widely known for being poured over hot biscuits circa the mid-twentieth century — is undergoing a resurgence. As chefs, product developers and home cooks have taken a keen interest in the nostalgic product, many are taking a closer look at how it gets from stalk to syrup.

Matt Heckemeyer, a farmer from Sikeston, Missouri, eats, breathes and lives sweet sorghum. While his family farm has grown sweet sorghum as silage for cattle feed over a number of years, he has spent the last five years perfecting their production methods for food consumption.

Sorghum syrup, made by essentially evaporating the water from extracted juice from sweet sorghum stalks, is nothing new to the United States.

“We have been handling sweet sorghum and boiling it down as a sugar for more than 200 years,” Heckemeyer said. “It was a standard sugar back before World War II. It has been a novelty for the last 50 years, and now, it’s coming back.”

Among a number of reasons, Heckemeyer began growing sweet sorghum because of its tough nature. Sweet sorghum is comparable to grain sorghum in the fact that it can grow in the same droughty, more harsh climates while yielding well. Unlike sugarcane, sweet sorghum has the ability to grow outside tropical climates, providing Heckemeyer another means of increasing his profitability by contributing a unique product for a growing marketplace.

From the time sweet sorghum is harvested from the field to when it becomes a tasty syrup, Heckemeyer said it is a fast and complex process. Due to this complexity, his years of research and experimentation have helped him refine the process and equipment down to a fine art.

“On our farm, sweet sorghum becomes syrup between 12 to 20 hours after harvest,” he said. “We handle it quickly because otherwise it will ferment.”



Harvest is timed critically around sugar composition, also known as brix, which are optimal around the soft dough stage of growth. Sweet sorghum is generally harvested either by a cane harvester or by hand. Once harvested, the stalks are ran through a roller mill, resulting in the extracted juice as well as a coproduct known as bagasse.

The juice is then filtered and placed into a settling tank where specific retention times are required to remove impurities before being transferred to an evaporator. Upon removal of excess water, sugars are then concentrated into sorghum syrup.

*Continued on p. 4 of USCP Newsletter*

## Japanese Consumers Find Culinary Inspiration in Sorghum

**F**ood grade sorghum is making a splash as a specialty, high-end product in Japan where health is often more important to consumers than price. But it hasn't always been that way.

This growing marketplace was merely a concept in the early 2000s and has since begun to take off due to the efforts of the U.S. Grains Council Japan and the Sorghum Checkoff. Tommy Hamamoto, director of U.S. Grains Council Japan, said Japanese consumers became more health conscious in 2010 and began looking for new alternatives. That's when the Council knew it was the right time to promote food grade sorghum.

"In our first phase of efforts we needed to increase people's awareness of food grade sorghum," Hamamoto said. "We created a short TV program based on our first trip to Texas and Kansas where we were introduced to research, visited a sorghum farm and watched a cooking demonstration."

To accompany awareness efforts, U.S. Grains Council Japan began participating in industry targeted food shows to gain interest from food companies. Elevating efforts even further, the Council hosted their first sorghum food focused program and invited sorghum leadership to jumpstart initiatives.

The program included various speakers, a celebrity chef and a recipe contest that ended in success. Florentino Lopez, Sorghum Checkoff executive director, said the effort was targeted

and began the process of sharing the potential of sorghum as a healthy food ingredient.

"Sorghum Checkoff leadership saw the Japanese marketplace as a potential opportunity that could lead to success long term and producer profitability," Lopez said. "So we partnered with the Council to help share more of sorghum's story. Markets evolve over time but we knew a long-term commitment, robust plan, steady pressure and out-of-the-box thinking would help establish demand for sorghum."

Now in the second phase of efforts, U.S. Grains Council Japan has created a sorghum specific food website —[www.sorghum.jp](http://www.sorghum.jp), gained Erica Angyal as a spokesperson of Healthy Sorghum Life and established an extensive campaign to bring sorghum to Japanese consumers.

"Products from pancakes to pasta are becoming a reality. We are also seeing creative alternatives to common foods like salmon rice balls using sorghum," Lopez said. "Sorghum is seen as a healthy, fresh alternative that provides a wealth of attributes from high fiber to beneficial antioxidants."

With sorghum's uses now expanding to numerous product lines and recipes using flour and grain, chefs in Japan are also taking notice of its versatility.

"When chefs fry something using sorghum flour, it makes it crispy and has a pleasant texture," Hamamoto said. "Grain sorghum is very puffy but soft when you cook it, and it is very unique. Those characteristics stimulate food professionals."



*Continued on p. 4 of USCP Newsletter*

## From Stalk to Syrup, Continued

For Heckemeyer, his typical 200 acres of sweet sorghum will yield approximately 200 gallons of syrup per acre in average growing conditions, and upwards of 300 and beyond in a good year. Looking to achieve an industrial level, Heckemeyer said he has the capacity to bottle or sell by truck load, giving him the option to service a number of markets.

While he is striving for large-scale production, flavor and quality are not compromised. Heckemeyer said he eats sorghum syrup every day and enjoys its unique taste.

“Sorghum syrup’s flavor is not harsh, it’s not smooth - it has an aroma and taste that is more earthy,” he said. “I’m addicted to it.”

Due to sorghum syrup’s one-of-a-kind essence, it’s gaining interest. Heckemeyer said he has had contact

from soy sauce producers, cookie manufacturers, those interested in its use as a table syrup, and many others. However, due to the immense fermentability of sorghum syrup, the most popular request is from craft distilleries for use in premium spirits. Heckemeyer said he is also investigating sweet sorghum’s use in green chemicals.

Inclusion of sorghum syrup expands common boundaries and is also a great addition to barbecue marinades, salad dressings, granolas and so much more. Plus sorghum syrup is lower in fructose levels than other sweeteners and is high in potassium.

Heckemeyer said sorghum syrup is a wonderful sugar that can provide for a variety of needs.

“Sorghum syrup speaks for itself,” Heckemeyer said. “It is a very distinct sugar, and it isn’t something that can be copied. In the food world, the sky is the limit.” ✓

4

## Japanese Consumers, Continued

Initially, the market was very limited and Hamamoto said it was difficult for Japanese consumers to find sorghum products. Awareness of sorghum and its unique health attributes was also low, but things are beginning to change.

“Now we ask consumers about it, and they say ‘ah, I heard about it, I saw sorghum somewhere,’” Hamamoto said. “Now I think it is important to provide even more information about sorghum so that consumers would take the second step and try it for themselves.”

While Japanese shoppers are currently consuming several hundred tons of food grade sorghum per year, Hamamoto said he hopes the market will expand 5-10 times in the future. To achieve this goal, he said they will continue targeting their two main segments—those with celiac disease and those seeking healthy products.

Given Japanese food trends, consumers are always looking for something new and innovative to satisfy their palettes. Lopez said Grains Council Japan has captivated these consumers by promoting sorghum in unique ways that have proven to be helpful in more ways than one.

“Japan’s experiences in promoting sorghum as the smart choice has given us insight in developing our own unique push for sorghum into the U.S. food industry,” Lopez said. “While we are still some time away from saying efforts in Japan have been a total success, we can say it has and will impact the future of sorghum.” ✓

### Sorghum Industry Events

December 8-10 — Sorghum Checkoff Board Meeting  
Lubbock, Texas

December 9-10 — Leadership Sorghum Graduation  
Lubbock, Texas

December 24-25 — Christmas Holiday  
Office closed

December 31-January 1 — New Years Holiday  
Office Closed

### SORGHUM CHECKOFF MISSION:

USCP commits to efficiently invest checkoff dollars to increase producer profitability and enhance the sorghum industry.

### CONTACT US:

Faith Jurek

Communications Director

(877) 643-8727

faithj@sorghumcheckoff.com

## Sorghum's Unique Journey in Today's Food Industry

By Kelli Fulkerson

**W**hen asking someone in the United States, “Do you know what sorghum is?” The typical response is, “Oh yeah, that’s the stuff you feed to cattle.” Others may say it’s a major export grain or is used in ethanol production. However, it’s rare to hear someone say, “It’s the grain we ate last night for dinner.”

While traditionally the food industry has only made up a small percent of the sorghum market, interest in sorghum as an ancient whole grain is gaining serious popularity.

The Sorghum Checkoff has been hard at work to keep up with the tremendous momentum from culinary institutes and restaurants as well as institutional food sector groups like the U.S. Department of Defense. Even food bloggers and grocery market shoppers are starting to request sorghum as a food option.

### Clear Navigation Derives from Direction

Sorghum Checkoff High Value Markets Director Doug Bice said there have been strategic steps taken by the Checkoff in recent years, helping to lead to the demand seen today.

“There were many ways the Checkoff could have approached the market,” Bice said. “Our board of directors felt it was vitally important to get people in the food industry focused on everything sorghum — its versatility, health benefits and sustainability. This focus began a public awareness campaign.”

The campaign was launched by sending sorghum-sampling kits to targeted restaurants, chefs, influential food critics and bloggers. The kits illustrate the various ways sorghum can fit into different food products while helping the individuals to better understand the versatility sorghum has to offer.

Sorghum Checkoff Executive Director Florentino Lopez said the Checkoff’s mission is to efficiently invest farmer dollars to increase producer profitability while enhancing the sorghum industry.

“This is the mentality the staff and consultants had when creating an awareness campaign,” Lopez said. “We didn’t want to be known as this year’s super food and never be seen again.”

### Facilitation of Fame

The Checkoff took the momentum it had gained from the initial sampling kits and pushed it a step further by getting out and in front of people directly involved in the food industry. In 2014 there were sorghum booths at the Food and Nutrition Conference and Exposition, the annual meeting for Institute of Food Technologists and regional food expositions.

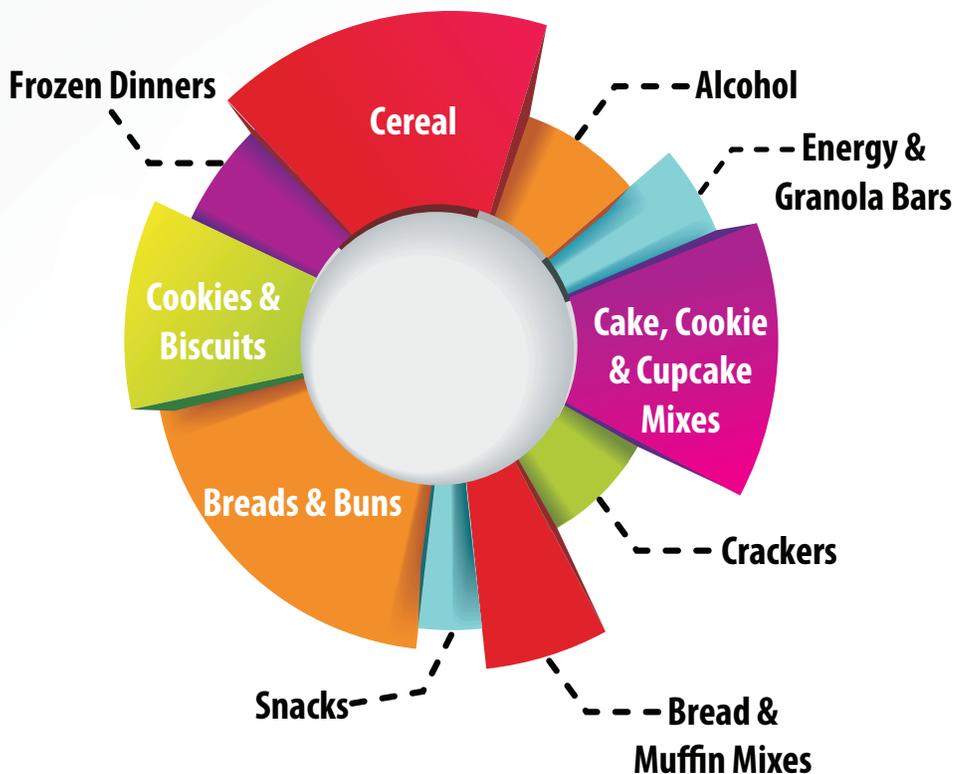
During the Institute of Food Technologists Annual Meeting, the Checkoff hosted an event called Sorghum 360. The event was an opportunity to bring together food

companies, manufacturers, processors, formulators and research institutions. Attendees experienced educational panels about sorghum and a cooking demonstration where lunch was prepared by chef and restaurateur Marc Forgione, season three winner of the hit Food Network television show *The Next Iron Chef*.

“As soon as I tasted sorghum for the first time it turned me on, and I have been playing with its versatility every since,” Forgione said. “We do everything with sorghum — from popcorn, to polenta, we make salads, soups even risottos. Once you start working with sorghum, you realize the possibilities are limitless.”

“We do everything with sorghum- from popcorn to polenta, we make salads, soups even risottos. Once you start working with sorghum you realize the possibilities are endless.”

# Products Containing Sorghum



▲ DATA PROVIDED BY Label Insight, which collects data on 165,000+ products on U.S. grocery store shelves, including private label products.

Forgione's New York City restaurants have been using sorghum for almost three years now. His passion for sorghum derived from its versatility and inclusion in his own dietary needs. He began working with the Checkoff in early 2014 and has become a positive voice for sorghum and its place in today's food industry.

Sorghum can now be found on menus across the nation. The largest catering company in New York City, Great Performances, has included sorghum as a regular item on its catering menu. Hugo's, a 30-year favorite Los Angeles restaurant, has made sorghum a preferred side dish option for its customers. The restaurant Merchants in Nashville, Tennessee incorporates sorghum syrup in various menu items to provide a unique dining experience.

Sorghum has also been talked about on numerous radio stations like the Food Startup Podcasts hosted by Matt Aaron.

This year sorghum appeared in Southwest Airlines' *Southwest The Magazine*. Checkoff staff created artwork for food-focused advertisements touting sorghum's versatility. Placed in the backseat pocket of every Southwest plane in America during the months of July and August, the advertisements reach millions of people.

As 2015 has progressed, more dietitians have contacted the Checkoff requesting nutritional information. To meet this need, an online nutritional database was created and organized into four different samples of food components to include glycemic index testing.

To date, sorghum is now being incorporated into approximately 300 different food products.

"It's amazing how public exposure can influence and help drive a commodities marketplace in the food sector," Lopez said.

## Stakeholder Buy-in

All of the effort put forth to establish a viable food market for sorghum has led to significant stakeholder buy-in and a continued push for further research and development.

"The outreach we've seen from private industry and research institutes has blown myself and the board of directors away," Bice said. "The Checkoff has been contacted by at least 30 research institutions to conduct research on health-related items alone."

Bice and Checkoff consultant Nancy Turner, Ph.D., began collaboration discussions with renowned cardiovascular researcher Jay Zweier, Ph.D., from The Ohio State University for evaluating the heart-related health benefits of sorghum. These areas could involve factors such as hypertension, ischemia, diabetes, stroke or other human health issues.

Taking research one step further, Archer Daniel Mills is conducting research on the topic of sprouted grains. More specifically ADM is looking at the transition period from seed to grain. The company has found unique enzymes are being captured during the transition period, and ADM has a specific interest in sorghum.

Sorghum is also considered as a protein isolate. Many energy and protein bar companies are looking at the value of concentrating and isolating proteins from sorghum's natural sources and fortifying them to higher levels.

"I believe we are just getting started in the food world. Sorghum has tremendous value for both consumers and producers," Bice said. "The Checkoff is working hard to ensure dollars are invested strategically to deliver value to sorghum farmers across the nation." 🍌

# SOUTHERN SPIRITS

## *Craft Distillers Standout with Sorghum*

by Jennifer Blackburn

**E**volving, innovative and premium, the distilled spirits industry is seeking new players with new flavor. Cultural transformations in the distilled spirits and brewing industries are taking place across America, and it has some distillers honing in on a familiar, southern taste—sorghum.

Its flavor and fermentability make sweet sorghum unique, and it is quickly becoming a standout ingredient for many whiskey and rum producers.

“Distillers are doing everything they can to distinguish themselves from others,” said Bill Owens, founder and president of the American Distilling Institute. “If people want to be different and have different flavor, they can use sorghum.”

Ann Marshall co-founder of High-Wire Distilling Co. in Charleston, South Carolina, said she and her husband Scott previously owned a bakery where they used sorghum in cookie and brownie dough and knew it was the best candidate for their new distilling business given its rich history in the south.

“Sorghum whiskey was the third product we ever made,” Ann said. “It’s an incredibly rich and complex spirit that has become quite the cult classic around the country. We can hardly keep it in stock!”

High-Wire Distilling’s award-winning New Southern Revival brand sorghum whiskey is made from Tennessee-grown sweet sorghum. It is a single source product Ann said is a distinguishing characteristic because the farm harvests and juices the whole sweet sorghum plant, stalk and grain, in the field as one process. The grain component qualifies it as a whiskey.

“Because of this specialized, whole plant process,” she said, “[the farm’s] sorghum syrup is the most unique we have ever encountered, and we have been unable to source anything else quite like it.”

Jerod Smith of Wilderness Trail Distillery in Danville, Kentucky, produces a 100 percent Kentucky-made rum from sorghum molasses aged in bourbon barrels. He said all great rums are made from sugarcane, and while few are made from sorghum, he prefers its unique flavor.

“You really get all the flavors from the sorghum molasses,” Smith said. “It’s so much more flavorful than regular sugarcane.”

Smith said sweet sorghum is the perfect base for rum partly because the glucose found in sweet sorghum stalks is an incredibly fermentable sugar.

“Our grower is a third-generation sorghum farmer,” Smith said. “It’s in his bloodlines to grow sorghum, and he really has that know-how to grow and harvest sorghum and produce the juice that he boils down to generate that really good sugar we turn into rum.”

David Weglarz, founder of Still 630, has been chasing his American dream as a craft distiller since 2011 and said he tried to distill everything he could at first, then sweet sorghum came to his attention through the man who built his still.

“I started looking for new and interesting products,” he said, “and I was told about it, and I said ‘yeah, send me five gallons of it, and we will see what happens.’”

Weglarz said his experiment batch lead to several more five gallon buckets and a bigger batch of whiskey that was aged in small barrels for approximately one year.

“Distillers are doing everything they can to distinguish themselves from others. If they want to be different and have different flavor, they can use sorghum.”

“People are just waking up to its soulful flavor profile, richness and unique adaptive uses. I see sorghum as a growing trend for years to come.”

“When it came out I was blown away. It was just a really neat hybrid spirit that was very different from everything else that was out on the market,” Weglarz said. “We have now ramped up our production and done a lot more this year, getting to a little over 1,000 gallons of [sorghum molasses] to make more sorghum whiskey.”

“It ended up being a big hit with all of our customers,” he said, “and that first batch sold out pretty quickly.”

Since his first batch, Still 630’s S.S. Sorghum Whiskey has won a bronze medal from the American Craft Spirits Association competition.

“The judges really loved the taste; they loved the fruit bouquet,” Weglarz said. “They wanted to see it aged a little longer, but they can’t wait to see what it is like in two years.”

S.S. Sorghum Whiskey was in a catch-all category competing against other types of whiskey, Weglarz said, and is one of the few distilled spirits made from sorghum across the U.S. ADI’s Bill Owens said while there are only a few using sorghum, the industry is growing and expects sorghum use to grow as well.

The craft distilling industry has its share of challenges, though. Getting a still built and running and starting the business can be nearly a two-year process complete with difficult tax regulations and permits.

“Taxing and reporting of our regulations to the government is extremely onerous,” Weglarz said. “They charge us disproportionately more on a per gallon of alcohol basis than they do wine or even beer.”

Weglarz said as a small, start-up craft distiller, all of his capital is tied up in the barrels as it ages and evaporates.

“I can’t see any return on that,” he said, “but I’m taxed

enormously on it as soon as I bottle it whether I sell it or not. I have ongoing reporting, paperwork and tax headache that is a lot of red tape, specifically in the distilling industry, which is unique.”

Despite the challenges, Weglarz said building something from nothing is what he is passionate about and is an endeavor that resonates with consumers and those he interacts with every day.

“They are buying the story behind it,” he said. “They see that it’s this passionate dream, my American dream, and that’s exactly what it is.”

Weglarz said there is more human touch, time and care put into the craft side of the distilling industry that allows him and others to take a hands-on approach.

“I wear the craft badge proudly,” he said. “We take raw ingredients, the grains straight from the field like sorghum, mash it, ferment it, distill it, age it, and bottle it all right here in the distillery, which is the true definition of craft.”

Owens has seen a lot of change since the inception of the American Distilling Institute and said 10 years ago there was no craft distilling industry, and five years ago there were only about 400.

“Today there are just under 1,000 craft distillers,” he said. “It’s that revolution in America where we’re going back to the basics, back to the farm.”

As the industry continues to grow, Ann Marshall also feels there is exceptional opportunity for sorghum.

“People are just waking up to its soulful flavor profile, richness and unique adaptive uses,” she said. “I see [sorghum] as a growing trend for years to come.”



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# Sorghum Shortcuts

## Commodity Classic is where America's Farmers Meet with Success

Commodity Classic is just around the corner. Have you considered registering? Commodity Classic is open to all friends of sorghum, corn, soybeans, and wheat—from growers to member associations to agribusiness to farm media. It's a one-of-a-kind convention and trade show—farmer-focused and farmer-led.

You're guaranteed to walk away with ideas and energy that will have a profound and profitable impact on your farm. That's why growers from across the nation come back year after year after year.

Commodity Classic has worked diligently with the hotels in New Orleans to establish room blocks for attendees and exhibitors.

Housing opens Nov. 18 at 10:00 a.m. CST. Housing reservations are made only through Experient as the official Commodity Classic housing company through the Commodity Classic website [www.commodityclassic.com](http://www.commodityclassic.com). Book your trip today! 📅



▲ WATCH the video "Why Sorghum Producers should attend Commodity Classic" on National Sorghum Producers YouTube channel: [www.youtube.com/sorghumgrowers](http://www.youtube.com/sorghumgrowers).

## Sorghum Food Products on Store Shelves Increasing

Recent market research documented close to 350 products now made from sorghum in the market today, and National Sorghum Producers and Sorghum Checkoff staff are aware of many more that are not documented or will be on the market in the next few months as new crop supplies allow adequate inventories to launch new products.

LableInsight.com lists many of these products, and hopefully you were able to visualize in Sorghum Markets (page 28-29) the relative quantities in various categories including cereal, snacks, mixes and more.

Look for sorghum on the shelves your next trip the grocery store! 🛒





# A better shoe to help you put your best foot forward



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