It takes a team to win, and the sorghum industry has worked hard to build relationships that lead to sorghum champions in the consumer industry. In these pages you will read about the sorghum advocates on our side, spreading the sorghum message and building demand and value for the crop. (Photo from FNCE 2017)

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Sorghum Grower

Fall 2017, Volume 11, Issue 4

CEO’s Desk

Perseverance to Overcome

It is hard to believe it is already fall harvest time here on the plains. This year seems to have flown by. I was always told that the older you get, the faster time passes. I guess I am not as young as I once was. I recently came across a quote that I thought really applied to the year. John Rockefeller said, “I do not think that there is any other quality so essential to success of any kind as the quality of perseverance. It overcomes almost everything, even nature.”

This year has reminded many of our members of the true challenges of farming. Low commodity prices and high input costs have continued to shrink or erode profit margins for many farmers. Additionally, Mother Nature has thrown some curve balls at a lot of our members. The damage by hurricanes to some of our growers was very sad, and it will take years to recover. Additionally, the fires earlier in the year and a freeze in the last month that took out some beautiful, but late, milo for a few unfortunate growers in New Mexico also presented unforeseen circumstances that our growers must work through. Sorghum producers are tenacious, though, and I know these hard working men and women will make it through.

This year has proven to be a challenging year for the association, as well. Our top policy priority for the industry this year was to get sorghum oil registered through the Environmental Protection Agency by harvest this fall so the ethanol industry could pay more for milo at harvest. Despite the efforts of National Sorghum Producers board directors, Senators, Congressmen and staff, we are not there yet. I promise you this: we will continue to work on the industry’s behalf, persevering to get it done. It is likely costing sorghum farmers and the ethanol plants that utilize sorghum about $25,000 per day every day it is not fixed. This is just one example of why policy matters and how it can impact profitability on the farm.

On a more positive note, wins from three years ago by the association are starting to pay off. In the last few weeks, more than $373 million dollars in sorghum payments have been made to help farms through this year. That, along with another year producing a national average sorghum yield above 72 bushels and strong demand from China, will certainly help many growers this fall.

As the farm bill process heats up in Washington, D.C., I will not try to outguess Congress and predict the timing of the next farm bill. I will tell you that the behind-the-scenes work is in full force, and a new five years of farm policy is right around the corner. Know that NSP producer leaders and staff will continue to be in D.C. working on your behalf so you don’t have to be.

Jennifer Blackburn

SENIOR POLICY ADVISER

Chris Copburn

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS DIRECTOR

John Duft

STRATEGIC BUSINESS DIRECTOR

Mollie Dykes

COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR

Christi Stulp

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EXPANDING
Sorghum’s Foodservice Footprint with InHarvest

By Shalin Pinkerton

With opportunity to reach 50 million customers in school lunch programs and another 20 million customers through colleges and universities alone, sorghum advocates are working hard to expand sorghum’s slice of the foodservice marketplace. Sorghum packs a nutritional punch and adds tremendous versatility to the kitchen, and two chefs in particular are taking measures to put sorghum in the food industry spotlight for these very reasons.

Jason Ziobrowski and Michael Holleman, also known as Chef Jay Z and Chef Mike, represent InHarvest, a company dedicated to supplying the foodservice, industrial and retail sectors with high-quality, unique ingredients. Chef Mike is the director of culinary development—a role that allows him to work with growers, procurers, suppliers and distributors to create the best product for every market segment InHarvest serves.

The InHarvest team searches the globe for distinctive grains and legumes that add flavor, texture and versatility to any menu. InHarvest offers unique quality products in a plethora of grain blends. Among the various blends InHarvest offers, sorghum has emerged as a new key ingredient.

“Chefs always like new ingredients in the kitchen and grains have exploded because of the whole grain movement,” Chef Mike said. “I think sorghum has a wonderful flavor and nutty flavor yet is still mild enough to be a blank canvas for a restaurant's recipe development. Chefs automatically gravitate toward stuff like that because they can impart any flavors they want into it.”

“We’ve been hearing about sorghum for a while and receiving requests from chefs over time,” he said. “That led us to picking up samples and working on a new blend to incorporate it.”

Before a new ingredient makes it into an InHarvest blend or product, it undergoes significant internal testing. Chef Mike said InHarvest’s quality assurance (QA) department conducts both typical and blind taste tests. Once a product is identified, their QA department writes a specification based on raw ingredient qualities as well as cooked characteristics. Raw ingredient qualities comprise of moisture levels, foreign material, percentage of broken and color variation. Cooked characteristics comprise of both flavor and aroma.

Upon the completion of testing, InHarvest incorporates sorghum into their Naked, Wild & Free blend, which contains both red and white sorghum, naked oats and wild rice. The blend creates a spotlight for sorghum and is touted as a great mixture for breakfast porridge, hearty soup and pilaf recipes.

“We have gotten huge reception on the sorghum blend and are more current with food trends and are generally more out of stock because it has been moving so well for us.”

As sorghum awareness increases, so does user familiarity and adoption. InHarvest Chefs Mike and Jay Z are advancing sorghum and expressed their desire to fully establish sorghum in the foodservice industry.

“Sorghum is becoming a very trendy food,” Chef Jay Z added, “and we want to train the public to become familiar with it.”

The InHarvest team is continually searching for new ways to utilize sorghum and has already created recipes that have boosted consumers’ exposure to the grain. InHarvest’s recipes to date include Thai Sorghum Pilaf, Sorghum Porridge with Tomato and Goat Cheese; Cheddar, Beer and Broccoli Soup; and Spiced Salad with Fried Cheese. Chefs Mike and Jay Z see many more opportunities for sorghum in the future and continue to seek those out.

“I am proud to be working with sorghum and finding new ways to be creative with it,” Chef Mike said.

“Sorghum is different from other grains because of its unique texture, and because sorghum is a whole grain, it has nutrients that are great for you. I recently served it to a group of chefs in a sorghum gumbo as a substitute for rice and it was a hit. Additionally, we have used it in a classic meat sauce as a protein substitute with other lentils.”

To further expand sorghum’s footprint in the foodservice industry, InHarvest’s plan consists of introducing sorghum to new industries and markets based on several factors. One strategy is to evaluate a target group based on age and then market sorghum accordingly.

In nursing homes, the older generation prefers tradition; therefore, InHarvest introduces new ingredients more slowly than they would as a college or university. Students are more current with food trends and are generally more open to trying new ingredients. Tactics such as this provide opportunity for sorghum to become mainstream and can broaden adoption of sorghum in the foodservice industry.

“We already have sorghum in healthcare, colleges and universities and corporate dining, but once we get it into a private-label package and it is on a grocery store shelf, then that is the next important step to achieve,” Chef Mike said. “We are constantly looking to break into new seg-

by way of increased exposure, unlike other grains such as quinoa and millet, sorghum’s foodservice adoption is moving at a steady pace. With increased exposure, chefs and culinary directors will find a product that can impart any flavors they want into it.”

“Sorghum is so different from any other grain because of its ability to be popped and sets itself apart with the multiple varieties and colors,” Chef Mike said. “It is definitely overlooked and underused in the U.S. as a nutritional powerhouse. We are slowly changing the way Americans eat, and grains like sorghum are an essential part of that.”

InHarvest is driven to advocate for and promote whole grains such as sorghum and educate people about the benefits they have to offer. InHarvest is focused on increased sorghum adoption and continued education and awareness.

“Although sorghum has a longer cook time, that can be an advantage for operations that are not cooking or heating to order such as catering,” he said. “Sorghum can be hold in an oven for an hour or more without the integrity of the grain diminishing.”

InHarvest is dedicated to sustainability.
By Faith Smith, Sorghum Checkoff

While you are dressed to the nines savoring an exquisite meal at a five star restaurant or frantically running through the drive-thru on your way out of town to take food back to the field, there is a chance you may encounter a new ingredient on the menu—sorghum.

A relatively recent ingredient to the restaurant scene, Datassential's 2016 Trending Grains Report indicates sorghum is now included on 1.7 percent of menus across the nation. Considering the National Restaurant Association reports there are more than one million restaurant locations throughout the U.S., sorghum's growing inclusion is making an impact. In fact, sorghum has grown 256 percent on menus over the last four years alone.

Why are restaurants looking to sorghum? Cathy Nash Holley, publisher and editor-in-chief of Flavor and the Menu, a media brand focused on communicating culinary trends, said they identified sorghum as a trend with attributes to consumers, health and southern halo that is inspiring culinary innovations.

The United States is the largest producer of sorghum in the world. While consumption of sorghum as a whole grain and flour is more common over the last 5-10 years, sorghum syrup has been a staple throughout the south, dating back to World War II.

“Versatility in product form and its usage are also really unique to sorghum. Few ingredients have the versatility that sorghum has,” Holley said.

From fine dining and cafes to fast food and delivery, the many forms of sorghum can be found in all types of culinary creations. Find sorghum flour on the breakfast menu as a pancake or as a cake batter on the dessert menu. Discover sorghum syrup in mixology or used in a protein marinade. Spot whole grain sorghum in a grain bowl or in a savory soup. Happen upon an appetizer or salad garnished with popped sorghum. With various applications, Holley said there is a big opportunity for chefs to utilize sorghum in creative ways.

“Sorghum has culinary champions promoting its use like Shaun Brock and Ed Lee,” Holley said. “These are high profile chefs that tend to bring attention to lesser-known ingredients.”

Exploring menu offerings across America, one can find restaurants of all sorts coast to coast serving up delicious dishes made with sorghum. From a fast-food perspective, sorghum recently made its debut on menus, making it available nationwide. Chick-fil-A announced the countrywide addition of a gluten-free bun on their menu during summer 2017.

The bun, which is made of sorghum, quinoa and amaranth flour and is lightly sweetened with molasses and raisins, comes individually packaged and can be ordered with any of the chain’s sandwich offerings. The texture resembles the bun’s multi-grain bulk.

After successfully beta-testing the product in five metropolitan areas, Papa John’s has introduced a new, naturally gluten-free pizza crust to the popular pizza chain over the last four years alone.

“Versatility in product form and its usage are also really unique to sorghum because of its low water usage, sustainable qualities, versatility and price.”

“It’s part of our gluten-free flour mix,” Kaplan said. “We buy whole grain sorghum and grind it ourselves.”

Jumping over to the east coast, sorghum has landed a spot on the Benjamin Bar and Lounge’s menu inside the Trump International Hotel in Washington, D.C. Executive Chef Oliver Beckert said the restaurant has utilized both popped sorghum and sorghum syrup in dishes.

“Chefs are looking for newer restaurant ingredient that the Jackson family has other unconventional roles in the restaurant and foodservice industry.

Sorghum bran, an ingredient rich in antioxidants and fiber, currently serves the food preparation industry as a meat extender and preservative to replace traditional chemical preservatives. Sorghum syrup can also be utilized as a flavor modifier to enhance taste benefits to specific food types. Both of those out-of-the-box uses can easily be transferred to meet specific needs of the restaurant industry.

Next time you find yourself scanning a menu for a delicious bite to eat—be it a fast food or full-service restaurant—be on the lookout for sorghum for a one-of-a-kind dining experience.
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Uncooked

Cooked

1 cup

3 cups

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3 cups

UNLOCK THE COOKING POTENTIAL OF SORGHUM
Creating Demand One Shot at a Time

by Taylor Dodson

The smell hits you first—a distinct, yet sweet smell that clings to the inside of your nose. Before even opening the doors, you know you are at a Chinese liquor distillery. Visiting the distillery feels like stepping back in time due to the rich history of the liquor being produced. For more than 5,000 years, the unique distilling process has stayed the same. The process begins in a room where the air, the workers stir the mixture of grains to keep the liquid form that is being produced. The liquid is then sent off to its destined place depending on the quality of the batch.

The result is China’s most popular spirit, a clear liquor that tastes unlike any other with a burning sensation at first followed by the smooth, grainy flavor the incredible ingredients give it.

The result is baijiu. Baijiu, pronounced bye Joe, is the drink of China. There are many different types and flavors, but they all have one thing in common—sorghum is one of the top ingredients.

In China, baijiu is a traditional spirit consumed on special occasions or holidays.

Different sorghums are utilized to make baijiu, meeting the needs of all household income levels. From standard No. 2 sorghum to waxy sorghums and high-quality white sorghum, there are many opportunities for producers to meet Chinese baijiu production needs.

Jim Massey, a Sorghum Checkoff board director and sorghum producer from Robstown, Texas, recently traveled to China with Sorghum Checkoff Executive Director Florentino Lopez to explore baijiu market opportunities.

“The baijiu market for sorghum in China is so large,” Massey said. “It could potentially use up the entire current U.S. sorghum crop if it wanted to.”

An estimated 17 billion liters or 4.49 billion gallons of baijiu were produced in 2016. The amount of total grain needed to produce this amount of baijiu would exceed 1.3 billion bushels, which is four times the current U.S. sorghum crop.

Acting on this opportunity, the Sorghum Checkoff has partnered with the U.S. Grains Council (USGC) to further market expansion of U.S. sorghum.

“The opportunity to pursue this market is very large,” Massey said. “It would be foolish for U.S. farmers to not take advantage of it.”

Together, the Sorghum Checkoff and USGC are working on a project that highlights the value of U.S. sorghum in baijiu while also maintaining the larger, existing China program that works in all markets to further enhance export opportunities for U.S. sorghum as well as other grains and grain products. USGC China headquarters is in Beijing, creating a reliable market relationship between baijiu companies, suppliers and U.S. sorghum producers.

The Sorghum Checkoff set a strategic goal in 2016 to reach China for U.S. sorghum, beyond Asia, as well. “We are taking the steps to a blooming product,” Cordero said. “That will go from being a domestic market in China to a global market.”

Massey’s trip to China resulted in favorable visits with importers and end-users who are pleased with the quality of U.S. sorghum. Sustaining these relationships is key to increased demand and realized potential in the baijiu market.
Food sorghum is a consumer demanded, rapidly growing market poised to create a paradigm shift in the sorghum industry. It is no longer a fad. Consumers are learning and understanding the value sorghum brings to their plate, and it is happening not only on tables in the United States but around the world. Gone are the days sorghum is considered a low-cost livestock feed ingredient. Instead, a valuable opportunity for U.S. farmers is heating up.

Peter Guidry with Guidry Liaison International, Inc., a bulk and processed products food supplier, said the sorghum industry needs to think beyond its commodity label. “You are a commodity,” he said, “but you do not have to get paid like a commodity seller.”

Farm Economics

Sorghum farmers with the ability to decide where to sell and when to sell place price power in their own hands. As of May 2017, the average price received for sorghum by producers who market directly is $3.11 per bushel compared to an average merchandiser price of $2.66 per bushel.

If the entire U.S. sorghum crop were direct marketed, the $0.45 per bushel increase can equate to an approximate $208 million additional value to the entire U.S. sorghum crop. Moving more bushels that are marketed by merchandisers to being directly marketed by producers stands to benefit the industry overall.

Most sorghum utilized for food is direct marketed, and when analyzing all domestic use marketplace values in the sorghum industry, it is no surprise the value for food sorghum tops the charts at an average of $5.11 per bushel. Industrial use is second at $4.48 per bushel, followed by exports, pet food then poultry.

Considering food products currently only make up 3 percent of U.S. sorghum demand, it is easy to label food as a niche market, but unseen demand says otherwise. Remember the days before Certified Angus Beef® became popular? Sorghum has that same opportunity. What once started as a niche is the new normal.

Consumers Want Sorghum

“The future is now,” Guidry says. “Scale up, produce the [type of sorghum] the market wants, and [farmers] will make money.”

Guidry has been in the food business since 1990, working now with custom sorghum blender AgVanced Enterprises in New Cambria, Kansas, and feels sorghum is a truly unique crop with exactly the attributes the industry is searching for today. He says the key is to not try to be everything to everyone but to focus on what consumers are demanding.

Brian Forster, general manager for Archer Daniels Midland (ADM), said sorghum stands out as an ancient grain that is gluten-free while readily available and reasonably priced. “Sorghum meets a wide variety of the wants we hear from our customers,” he said. “Sustainability is very important to many customers today, and sorghum meets this requirement due to the sorghum plant’s efficient conversion of water and nutrients into starch and protein.”

“When selecting the proper varieties, sorghum has flavor, color and texture that our customers require. It is readily available from domestic growers, and ADM Milling has the processing capabilities to serve a growing market,” Forster said.

ADM sees continued growth for sorghum in cereals, baked goods and sweet products, but exponential growth in the next five years is expected in the snack and beverage industry segments—a vision shared by United Sorghum Checkoff Program market development strategists, as well.

Sorghum Checkoff Investments

From 2012-2017, the Sorghum Checkoff invested almost $1.7 million in consumer market development and marketing efforts. Education and awareness have been key efforts along with establishing critical relationships with influential industry players and major entities in the food space. The Sorghum Checkoff funded a study this year with the Agribusiness, Food, and Consumer Economics Research Center to analyze sorghum farmers’ return on investment in sorghum research, promotion, and information.

The report indicates that since the 2002/2003 marketing year, food, seed and industrial use is up from 1 percent to 19 percent. It also states that as a non-GMO, gluten-free grain, sorghum is favored in markets sensitive to these issues both domestically and abroad.

The report also points to a 2017 U.S. Department of Agriculture Economic Research Services study on advertisements of new food and beverage products in the United States. It found that in 2009, a total of 1,121 new products claimed to be gluten-free. By 2016, that number had grown to 6,123 new gluten-free products—a 466 percent increase in seven years.

> **THE AVERAGE PRICE FOR FOOD tops marketplace values in the sorghum industry at $5.11 per bushel as of May 31, 2017, according to Sorghum Checkoff assessment data.**

While ADM has been engaged in sorghum processing for industrial applications for many years, Forster said the company introduced Harvest Pearl sorghum flours in 2011, specifically in response to growing demand for high quality gluten-free flours.

Forster said ADM believes the industry needs to look for new ways to reach target audiences, and farmers educating food companies and consumers on the benefits of sorghum as a food ingredient will be key. He also expects enhanced international opportunities as customers become more aware of sorghums benefits.

**Marketplace Value as of May 31, 2017**

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> **You are a commodity, but you do not have to get paid like a commodity seller.”**

International Demand Rising

As health-conscious consumers around the world look at U.S. food trends, interest for sorghum in international food marketplaces is already expanding.

“The world is looking for sorghum,” Guidry said, further explaining it is no longer just white sorghum consumers are demanding. Markets exist for red, black and yellow sorghums, as well.

Tetsuo Hamamoto, Japan director for the U.S. Grains Council, said Japanese consumers are seeking health oriented food ingredients, and sorghum is one of them. While white sorghum is currently the predominant market in Japan, he said colored sorghums are being sought by some companies in their food ingredients, but supply is tight.

Japanese businesses want to know how they can source white sorghum in a stable manner,” Hamamoto said. “We tell them, and it is true, the U.S. is the only stable source of white sorghum, but we need more.”

Hamamoto and his staff in Japan have been focusing on sorghum expansion in Japan for close to five years now, successfully hosting multiple cooking demonstrations among other endeavors. The most recent demonstration included 60 chefs in western Japan. They plan to host a similar event in Tokyo in preparation for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics and will approach hotels that directly interact with tourists.

“That will be an even greater, bigger market,” Hamamoto said. “For the Olympics, we only have a couple years, so we are accelerating our efforts to promote food sorghum to the Japanese food industry.”

Whether it is a whole grain dish in Japan, an elite spirit in China, a flour ingredient in a foodservice kitchen or a popped seed in a snack bar, sorghum’s expansion into food and beverage industries across the globe has created astonishing awareness for a crop once considered as a low-cost cattle feed.

“There’s money there for everybody,” Guidry said. “[The sorghum industry] just needs to get there first and hold onto it.”
Leverage your field-by-field knowledge and experience to higher productivity and profits when you select hybrids you want, the way you want them.

Ask for new Aphix® sorghum hybrids delivering highest levels of tolerance to sugarcane aphids.

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SimplySorghum.com
The Sorghum Draw
Whether it is the craving for another creative whole grain option, the desire for easy, healthy meals or the need for something that will fit into a well-balanced diet, nutritionists all around are drawn to sorghum. Lauren Harris-Pincus, MS, RDN, founder and owner of Nutrition Starring YOU, LLC, had just begun working as a consultant for a company who uses sorghum in their products when she came across the Sorghum Checkoff booth at the annual Food and Nutrition Conference and Expo (FNCE) in 2014. Until this point, she said she had barely heard of sorghum, but it was during that initial meeting that she became interested in the grain and started to see how it fit into her work focus on weight and diabetes management.

“T
he internet is inundated with messages about what to eat, which is healthy and what is not. From a marketing standpoint, it can be a struggle to get a new product noticed and from a consumer standpoint, it can be hard to know who to trust when making these decisions. Insert nutritionists.

When it comes to promoting sorghum as a food product, several nutritionists have become the sorghum industry’s boots on the ground. Through blogs, cooking demonstrations, social media and grassroots conversations, these nutritionists have been able to promote sorghum as more than just a trendy food. Using their influence and expertise, they have successfully put sorghum in front of groups who may have been unreachable otherwise. These individuals see the value of sorghum and promote it on a daily basis as part of their personal mission to help consumers choose healthy whole grain products.

I say to patients, ‘when you are going to eat something, ask yourself, does my body need this? and ‘Is there something in this that is going to give my body the fuel and the nutrition it needs to help me be healthier and prevent disease?’” Harris-Pincus said. “Sorghum absolutely answers those questions.”

Kathy Siegel, MS, RDN, CDN, and Tracee Yablon Brenner, RD, CHHC, managing partners at Triad to Wellness, are both working moms and quickly discovered sorghum is an easy and healthy option for this demographic.

“We are very passionate about sorghum for many reasons, including the health benefits and its versatility. It takes on the flavor of what it is cooked with and is great for one-pot meals that working moms like us love. We are now working hard on getting people to understand the benefits of it and the many applications it can be used in,” Siegel and Brenner said.

Sharon Palmer, RDN, a nationally recognized nutrition expert who is also known as The Plant-Powered Dietician, focuses primarily on plant-based eating. She notes that people are regularly seeking new ingredients and flavors to include in their diets.

“They are always looking for new alternatives, so that it is not the same old thing every time,” Palmer said. “I love that sorghum is very nutrient rich, it is grown in the United States and it is sustainable. It fits well into what I recommend, which is having at least three servings of whole grains a day and not just in whole grain breads, but also consuming in-tact whole grains, such as sorghum.”

Putting Sorghum on the Map
In marketing, there is a rule called the Rule of 7, which states a prospect needs to hear or see a message at least seven times before they will take action to buy a product or service. These nutritionists are employing a variety of methods to achieve the Rule of 7 and make sorghum more of a household name. Recipes are the number one searched item on the internet, which is why emphasis is being placed on recipe development in the Rule of 7 plan. Each of these nutritionists have developed sorghum recipes or taken popular recipes and incorporated sorghum to display its versatility, many of which can be found in the Sorghum Checkoff’s consumer brand, Sorghum: Nature’s Super Grain®, materials. They are all taking it a step further, though, by using those recipes as an educational tool.

“We like to educate through cooking,” Siegel of Triad to Wellness said. “When [consumers] are finding the different recipes that incorporate sorghum into their favorite dishes, Tracee and I use that opportunity to educate them about the health benefits and how it is a sustainable grain.”

Social media has become a hub for sharing recipes, particularly recipe videos, and serves as a medium for educating the masses. From Facebook to Twitter and Instagram to Pinterest, social media is allowing these nutritionists to connect with consumers in new ways. They are sharing the recipes they have developed and answering one of the most important questions, “What do I do with it?” which is one question Palmer said she gets frequently.

Cooking demonstrations have also been key to answering this question, at conferences and expos such as FNCE, the Sorghum Checkoff partners with nutritionists to promote sorghum and perform cooking demonstrations. As a result, viewers are able to not only learn its health benefits and how to cook the grain, but also how it’s grown and about the growers producing it. Palmer says demonstrations always spark in-depth conversations, particularly with other nutritionists who are then able to share with their own networks, creating a snowball effect of increased awareness.

“I think allowing people to see sorghum close up and to taste it helps them buy into [sorghum],” Palmer, The Plant-Powered Dietician, said. “A lot of people have never heard of it, but they always love sorghum at the end.”

I think health professionals working closely with farmers to help spread that message and educate the public is so important. When transparency is provided, demand for the grain grows. “

By Mollie Dikes

Harris-Pincus said she does whatever she can on every level when it comes to promoting sorghum. One method that has proven successful for her is keeping a large bag of sorghum in her office to give clients a sample to take home and cook. She provides cooking instructions and directs them to the Sorghum Checkoff consumer-focused website www.SimplySorghum.com for recipe ideas. She sees it as an easy way for clients to experience the product without personal risk or investment and as a way to encourage them to seek out sorghum next time they go grocery shopping.

These nutritionists are also taking a grassroots approach by connecting with restaurants and supermarkets. They are providing businesses with sorghum samples and discussing the many benefits sorghum offers hoping they will begin incorporating sorghum into recipes and stocking their shelves with sorghum and sorghum products.

“Having them taste the sorghum is the most important thing,” Brenner and Siegel said. “They need to taste it to understand how versatile and delicious it is.”

Sorghum Grower Relationship
Through their efforts, these nutritionists are helping sorghum growers build high-value demand for their harvested crop. They are promoting the many health benefits, the efficiency of the crop and its versatility to chefs, grocery stores and consumers, and they are able to tell the sorghum story and provide the transparency of the crop so many of today’s consumers desire.

“Transparency with a commodity is so important,” Siegel said. “I think health professionals working closely with farmers to help spread that message and educate the public is so important. When transparency is provided, demand for the grain grows. “

On the flip side, sorghum growers are providing nutritionists with a sustainable, healthy grain that aligns with their mission as nutritionists. This relationship works both ways and as long as nutritionists continue to be the boots on the ground for the industry, sorghum will be more than just a trend.

“I don’t think it’s trendy,” Harris-Pincus of Nutrition Starring YOU said. “I think it’s going to be one of those things that once people realize how good it is not only for you, but also for our farmers, our country, our economy and our environment, people will start to eat it more.”

Siegel added, “Trends come and go. Sorghum is not a trend.”

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SORGHUM Grower Fall 2017

SORGHUM Grower Fall 2017
To Sorghum and Back Again

By Christi Stulp

I t has been a few years since I last wrote to you in this magazine. I was blessed to help start in 2008. I took almost a decade off to have two kids, establish a new farm in southeast Colorado with my husband and pursue some other fun career opportunities.

Like most other farm families in this great country of ours, we are producing below the cost of production, and we are trying to pay for land, equipment and inputs—challenges you know all too well. This led to a decision to email my former boss, Tim Lust.

I left National Sorghum Producers in 2008, a few months shy of becoming fully vested in a retirement plan, and since my husband and I threw our combined pre-comings-back-to-farming-as-a-way-of-life savings at the farm this year, I figured it might be a good time to start back to work again, as in gainfully employed and not just working the long, hard hours required of all of us in farming.

Tim happened to follow up to my email with a call at the wrong time, which in the end was lucky for my husband and I. I told him we could talk back to work again, as in gainfully employed and not just working the long, hard hours required of all of us in farming.

The lure back was real, and I am through the sorghum yield contest. I was looking to get back closer to home after studying and working in agriculture in the southeastern United States. I was also a Texas Tech Red Raider, so returning to Lubbock was a perk.

Team Sorghum, as we call ourselves now, dropped to five full-time staff at its leanest and was fully engaged in urging bureaucrats and industry alike to increase their investment in sorghum and treat the drought-tolerant crop equally as well as corn. We encouraged sorghum use in ethanol, feed and food production and crisscrossed the back roads obtaining letters of support for the enactment of the United Sorghum Checkoff Program.

I went on the road from South Texas to South Dakota touting the virtues of NSP’s work in the 2002 Farm Bill that increased the national loan rate. I was a budget hawk and as a traveling, single, career woman, I stayed in many dives with worn-out carpet and the like. However, my travels introduced me to some of the finest people across the Sorghum Belt, and the work challenged me in new and interesting ways.

The lure back was real, and I am grateful for the opportunity to foster relationships with partners and members once again across the Sorghum Belt.

From farmer to a farmer, thank you for investing in sorghum. Every penny you invest gets you dollars back in benefits. I look forward to working again on your behalf and getting caught up on what you have been doing the last decade on your farm and in your business.

CHRISTI STULP BEGAN her position with National Sorghum Producers in September as Relationship Manager. She will lead efforts of the Industry Partner and Elevator-Member programs.

Sorghum and Back Again

Five Steps for Managing Sugarcane Aphid Without Sacrificing Yield or Agronomics

HYBRID SELECTION REMAINS YOUR MOST IMPORTANT MANAGEMENT DECISION

Sugarcane aphid was first observed in grain sorghum fields in 2013. Since then, the pest has spread rapidly across Kansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma and Texas. The sugarcane aphid reproduces exponentially on sorghum in a matter of days, severely stressing plants by sucking moisture out of leaves and depositing sticky honeydew that causes mold to grow, reducing photosynthesis.

As you look ahead to your 2018 crop, remember these five steps for managing sugarcane aphids:

1. SELECT THE RIGHT HYBRIDS When making sorghum hybrid decisions, remember the most important considerations to help maximize yield potential:
   a. Placing the right product on the right acre — and managing fertility and planting rates accordingly
   b. Selecting hybrids for important agronomics like standability, head exsertion, disease resistance and drought tolerance
   c. No sorghum hybrid is “aphid proof” but Pioneer brand hybrids are available in a range of maturities, and several have demonstrated tolerance to sugarcane aphid.

2. CONTROL VOLUNTEER SORGHUM AND WEEDS AFTER HARVEST Sugarcane aphid can overwinter on volunteer sorghum plants and weeds such as Johnsongrass, setting up the following year’s sorghum crop for an early infestation.

3. HAVE A PLANTING PLAN Aphids tend to become more active as temperatures increase. They seek out the newest sorghum plants. Planting early can give seedlings a head start before aphid populations multiply; planting too late can make the field more of a target for hungry aphids.

4. SCOUT EARLY AND OFTEN Sugarcane aphid nymphs are yellow; winged adults develop stripes and green wings. In high numbers, both can cause significant yield loss. Scout for aphids once a week after emergence and at least twice a week after aphids appear. Aphids tend to feed first on the underside of leaves and then move to all plant surfaces.

5. APPLY INSECTICIDE AT THE RIGHT TIME An insecticide seed treatment can provide early protection from aphids without harming beneficial predators. During the growing season, consider spraying an insecticide when thresholds reach 50 to 125 aphids per plant on 25 percent of plants in a field. Spraying earlier could result in problematic aphid infestations before harvest. Avoid spraying pyrethroid insecticides, which are harmful to beneficial insects.

Ask your local Pioneer sales representative about the best sugarcane aphid-tolerant sorghum hybrids for your acres in 2018.

Learn more about sugarcane aphid biology and management at bit.ly/PioneerSCA.

DUPONT PIONEER: INDUSTRY-LEADING SORGHUM RESEARCH

DuPont Pioneer researchers are continually developing new sorghum hybrids from our elite germplasm with enhanced sugarcane aphid tolerance traits. They go well beyond field observations to help ensure yield potential under aphid pressure.

• Cutting-edge breeding program is focused on identifying aphid-tolerant markers
• More than 60,000 data points have been collected on aphid tolerance in the last three years
• Aphid tolerance screening is conducted at three dedicated nurseries and in dozens of on-farm trials
• Our entomologists screen up to 400 hybrids per month for aphid tolerance

DUPONT PIONEER: TECHNICAL PRODUCT MANAGER

DUPONT PIONEER: TECHNICAL PRODUCT MANAGER

GRANT GROENE, MS

DUPONT PIONEER: TECHNICAL PRODUCT MANAGER

INDUSTRY-LEADING SORGHUM RESEARCH

DuPont Pioneer

PIONEER

Four years ago, we asked our growers to dominate the field with the best sugarcane aphid-tolerant sorghum hybrids in 2014. Today, we are proud to announce that we have continued to lead the industry in developing and offering hybrid lines resistant to sugarcane aphid. This year, we are showcasing our latest line of sugarcane aphid-resistant hybrids at the National Field Days.

Ask your local Pioneer sales representative about the best sugarcane aphid-tolerant sorghum hybrids for your acres in 2018. Learn more about sugarcane aphid biology and management at bit.ly/PioneerSCA.
Sorghum Update

The Kansas Grain Sorghum Commission (KGSC) is committed to ensuring grain sorghum is a long-lasting, profitable crop for Kansas. Research investments have always been a priority and continue to lead the portfolio. Market development activities ramp-up to meet the demand.

“The Commission invests heavily in research and is encouraged by development in programs, especially when we can leverage investments and see results in the field,” said Kansas Grain Sorghum Commission Executive Director Jesse McCurry. “Kansas farmers want to see results in the seed bag. We are all focused on not only that priority, but also the need for markets.”

Key 2017-2018 Kansas Grain Sorghum Commission Research Investments:

- Germplasm screening and lodging resilience for stalk rot diseases
- Improving early-season cold and drought tolerance with genomics
- Development of sorghum parental lines with enhanced drought and cold tolerance
- Breeding sorghum for improved dryland productivity and utilization
- Mechanism of tolerance to mesotrione (HPPD-tolerant sorghum)
- Sorghum doubled haploid technology for Kansas farmers

The board approved nearly $700,000 in research. The KGSC will fund the above listed projects October 1, 2017, through September 30, 2018. Additionally, the KGSC continues its important investment with USDA-ARS in Lubbock, Texas. That proposed work will center on sugarcane aphid research, a priority defined by the KGSC.

Market development was also identified as a growing priority. The KGSC is becoming increasingly involved with partners to develop additional market opportunities, including the U.S. Grains Council and International Grains Program (IGP) Institute. The KGSC frequently supports in-bound trade teams and recently initiated seminars on the project of container shipments of sorghum from Kansas.

The KGSC is a major funder and sits on the advisory board of The Collaborative Sorghum Investment Program housed at Kansas State University. Together, we are working to enhance sorghum yield, demand and value.

The KGSC invests in Kansas Farm Food Connection (KFFC), a joint effort of eight Kansas agriculture organizations who seek to be a resource on how farmers raise food and why they grow it the way they do. You can follow KFFC on Facebook at @kansasfarmfoodconnection.

For more information about the Kansas Grain Sorghum Commission, visit our website at www.ksgrainsorghum.org, or contact your commissioner. District 1 – Lonnie Wilson, Colby; District 2 – Greg Graff, Mariental; District 3 – Mike O’Brate, Ingalls; District 4 – Stephen Bigge, Stockton, Chairman; District 5 – Clayton Short, Assaria, Vice-chairman; District 6 – Jay Zimmerman, South Haven; District 7 – Nathan Larson, Riley, Secretary/Treasurer; District 8 – Kevin Kniebel, White City; District 9 – Gary Kilgore, Chanute, or contact KGSC staff at 785-477-9474.

Sorghum Recipe

THANKSGIVING SORGHUM STUFFING

WHAT YOU’LL NEED:

- 2 cups sweet potato, peeled, chopped
- 1 – 8 ounce package mushrooms, sliced
- 1 large green apple, cored, chopped
- 1 large red apple, cored, chopped
- 1 cup carrots, peeled, chopped
- 1 cup celery, chopped
- 1 bunch kale, torn
- 1 large red onion, sliced into thin wedges
- 1 lemon, sliced
- 2 sprigs fresh rosemary
- 2 springs fresh thyme
- 1 stick butter, cut into 8 pieces
- 3 tbsp olive oil
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 8 cups cooked whole grain sorghum
- 2 tbsp fresh parsley, snipped
- 2 tsp fresh sage, snipped
- 1 cup toasted pecans, chopped
- 8 cups cooked whole grain sorghum
- 2 sprigs fresh thyme
- 1 lemon, sliced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- Salt and pepper to taste

Lemon-Garlic Dressing:

- 1/2 cup olive oil
- 3 tbsp lemon juice
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- Salt and pepper to taste

DIRECTIONS:

1. Preheat oven to 400 F. Line a 15x10x1-inch baking pan with foil.
2. Spread squash, mushrooms, apples, carrots, celery, kale, onions, lemon, rosemary and thyme over foil.
3. Meanwhile, in a small bowl whisk together ½ cup olive oil, lemon juice, garlic, salt and pepper. Roast vegetables for 25-30 minutes or until tender, tossing occasionally.
4. In a large serving bowl, combine roasted vegetables, sorghum, parsley, sage and pecans. Drizzle with lemon-garlic dressing.

For this recipe and more, visit: SimplySorghum.com
The Sorghum Checkoff is in the process of developing a new technology that will accelerate the breeding process for new sorghum hybrids. The Sorghum Checkoff is collaborating with DuPont Pioneer to continue these efforts for sorghum by licensing the recently discovered doubled haploid inducer lines and developing a full breeding system for the crop. These two processes will continue the efforts made by the Sorghum Checkoff to bring highly desired traits and sorghum hybrids to farmers’ fields faster.

Earlier this year, the Sorghum Checkoff and DuPont Pioneer announced the discovery of two sorghum haploid inducer lines. At the time the patent-pending and a first-of-its-kind in sorghum, these haploid lines were a crucial step in cultivating a breeding process for sorghum with a reduction in the time traditionally spent on new hybrid development. Now, DuPont Pioneer has placed these inducer lines up for licensing to both private and public domestic sorghum breeders. Under a licensing agreement via DuPont Pioneer, breeders would be able to purchase inducer lines to accelerate the breeding process in search of desired traits such as sugarcane aphid tolerance, standability and increased yield. In some instances, the process that used to take five years to produce finished parental lines may now take only one year.

“Bandwidth is crucial in any plant breeding system,” said Justin Weinheimer, Ph.D., Sorghum Checkoff crop improvement director. “The Sorghum Checkoff recognized that an increase in sorghum breeding bandwidth, or the capacity to study the crop, was one way to achieve higher performing hybrids that producers want and need.”

In addition to the licensing agreement for the doubled haploid inducer lines, the Sorghum Checkoff and DuPont Pioneer collaborated together to finish the development of a full doubled haploid breeding system for sorghum. This summer, the Sorghum Checkoff board of directors approved a $1.7 million project to finalize the breeding system using DuPont Pioneer’s in-house technology. The project also will allow for the drone-screening of sorghum in the field to measure breeding conditions and yield projections of developing hybrids. This is the largest research investment made by the Sorghum Checkoff, and it is projected to have a tangible, positive effect in the long run for farmers.

“This is an opportunity to take a look at more material for breeding, looking at a number of different crosses to create better sorghum hybrids for our farms,” sai...
Sorghum Checkoff staff represented Sorghum, Nature’s Super Grain™ at the 2017 Food & Nutrition Conference & Expo (FNCE) in Chicago, Illinois, in October. During the 100th anniversary of the show, sorghum was on display for more than 12,000 dietitians, nutritionists, policy makers, health-care providers, foodservice professionals and students to learn about the health benefits, versatility and production of the whole grain. This was the checkoff’s most successful outreach in promotion efforts for sorghum within the consumer food market.

With an inviting atmosphere, attendees received the full sorghum experience at the Sorghum Checkoff tradeshow booth. Upon entering, guests sat at picnic tables decorated with sorghum floral arrangements and sorghum grain, flour and popped kernels, and they enjoyed numerous sorghum recipe samples, educational material and conversation with sorghum staff, dietitians and chefs.

InHarvest, a company who provides support to the foodservice industry through products and recipes, utilized sorghum in their grain medley with nattoed oats and wild rice, serving attendees quesadillas, Thai bowls, barbecue plats and smoothies made to order as they sat inside the sorghum booth.

“Nutrition has become front and center for all segments of the food industry, and attending this conference on behalf of sorghum is an opportunity to bring key players in this industry like Sodexo to our booth and learn about sorghum,” said Michael Holleman, InHarvest director of culinary development. “We are seeing not just individuals, but colleges and universities, business and industry, and healthcare all talking about nutritional content and creativity in meal portions, and sorghum is a great fit in these segments.”

Triad to Wellness, a nutrition communications consulting company, also promoted sorghum at the booth. Registered Dietitians Kathy Siegel and Tracey Yablon Brenner shared sorghum’s nutritional portfolio, demonstrating that it is not only a tasty grain but also a healthy one. Sorghum is considered an excellent source of fiber, phosphorous and vitamin B6 in addition to being considered a good source of protein, magnesium, niacin, iron, potassium and selenium. These nutritional qualities promote the health benefits of eating sorghum, such as help with digestive health regulation, immune system enhancement and improved blood circulation.

Registered Dietitian Sharon Palmer served up her original sorghum recipes to attendees and shared her experience and love for sorghum. Palmer conducted a cooking demonstration where she served a stir-fried Thai sorghum bowl, spicy avocado do sorghum salad and a berry sorghum breakfast porridge. Along with receiving samples and educational information, attendees talked one-on-one with industry experts and learned more about why they utilize sorghum.

"A lot of people may not have tried sorghum before or realize that this is an alternative whole grain that they can recommend to clients," Palmer said. "It is really important that they are able to taste the grain, learn how to use it in different recipes, learn what its nutritional content is and talk to people who have worked with sorghum before.”

The sorghum booth was constantly filled with attendees requesting samples and information on how to utilize sorghum in their cooking and how to share it with clients. FNCE was a highly successful trip for the Sorghum Checkoff as it provided additional information to numerous dietitians, nutritionists and other professionals in the foodservice industry who already have a small but growing awareness of sorghum’s uses. This was a major opportunity for staff, chefs and registered dietitians to share sorghum’s story with others in the consumer food industry and continue to build understanding of sorghum’s benefits. The relationships cultivated at this event will move on to create connections and opportunity for sorghum in the consumer food industry, allowing producers another option to consider when marketing their sorghum.

McCuistion Joins Sorghum Checkoff as Animal Nutrition Director

The Sorghum Checkoff recently named Kim McCuistion, Ph.D., as the organization’s animal nutrition director. In this role, McCuistion will assist with efforts relating to animal nutrition, market development and end-user relations.

McCuistion has worked closely with the sorghum industry over the years, utilizing sorghum products in grazing, feedlot and dairy cattle diets. Her dissertation work focused on forage sorghum in cattle diets, which was incorporated into decision support tools for beef and forage producers in the Texas Panhandle. McCuistion also served as a member of the High Value Markets Committee in 2011-2017 and traveled to several international meetings on behalf of the U.S. Grains Council and Texas Grain Sorghum Producers.

"This is an exciting time to join the team at the Sorghum Checkoff," McCuistion said. "I hope my efforts will lead to greater end-user demand for sorghum by highlighting how well it can fit in animal diets, and I hope to target high-value animal feed markets, sharing the benefits sorghum can bring to their operations."

McCuistion comes to the Sorghum Checkoff from her position as the Interim Dean of the Honors College at Texas A&M University - Kingsville where she also served as a faculty member in the Department of Animal, Rangeland and Wildlife Sciences and the King Ranch Institute for Ranch Management. The Sorghum Checkoff is excited to welcome McCuistion to the team and believes she will be a valuable resource in promoting sorghum and educating the industry on sorghum’s nutritional benefits for use in animal nutrition programs.

Contact Us

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Sorghum Checkoff Mission

To efficiently invest checkoff dollars to increase producer profitability and enhance the sorghum industry.
The Sorghum PAC Difference

By Terry Swanson

With another farm bill debate underway, farmers must keep in mind the connection between good policy and political engagement. While discussing political contributions and active involvement in elections is not always a comfortable topic for some farmers, the fact is campaigns are expensive and time-consuming, and anti-agriculture groups are growing more influential by the day. Our elected representatives want to remain in a position where they can help us, but measures to get reelected can necessitate spending less time where they would like to be, helping farmers fend off attacks. The more we can do to help alleviate these situations, the more effective U.S. farm programs will be.

National Sorghum Producers has spent more than 60 years cultivating relationships in Washington, D.C. The Sorghum PAC started in 2010 to further these relationships and support candidates and promote federal legislation positively affecting sorghum farmers. Contributions have steadily grown from $9,175 during the 2009-2010 election cycle to $120,456 during the 2015-2016 election cycle. While this growth is very positive, the Sorghum PAC must continue growing for two reasons.

As mentioned, political campaigns are expensive and consume an increasing amount of elected representatives’ time. An average campaign for a Member of the House of Representatives costs $1.7 million, so contributions to Senators must total almost $30,000 each day the chamber is in session.

Unbelievable as this might sound, some representatives actually spend 2-4 hours per day combing through donor lists and personally soliciting contributions via phone. The Republican and Democratic National Committees have gone as far as setting up call centers in party offices to facilitate these calls when the House of Representatives is in session.

Helping alleviate this fundraising burden is an important role for committees like the Sorghum PAC, and the support shown by our contributions gives sorghum farmers a direct relationship with these representatives. It is evident now more than ever that if farmer groups do not cultivate these relationships, other groups assuredly will.

The second reason the Sorghum PAC must continue growing is anti-agriculture forces are increasingly defining agriculture in America not on farmers’ terms but on their own, often politically-driven terms. Traditional farm trade associations have spent decades fighting for traditional farm policies often worth $40 per acre. While farm programs are still the most important aspect of any commodity’s policy strategy, American agriculture must think differently. American agriculture must think even bigger—take pesticide approvals for example and the challenges we have recently had getting those though. The Sorghum PAC must build on the successes of the last three election cycles. With farm bill discussions underway and attacks coming at an increasingly rapid pace, the elected representatives telling the sorghum story need support now more than ever.

TERRY SWANSON is a sorghum farmer from southeast Colorado near the town of Walsh. He has lived there his entire life and currently raises 300 head of cattle on 10,000 acres of ranchland and farms grain sorghum, wheat and corn on close to 7,500 acres. He is a past chairman of the National Sorghum Producers board and currently serves on the Sorghum PAC board.

Established in 1996, Commodity Classic is America’s largest farmer-led, farmer-focused convention and trade show, produced by the National Corn Growers Association, American Soybean Association, National Association of Wheat Growers, National Sorghum Producers and Association of Equipment Manufacturers. Sign up for email updates at: CommodityClassic.com
Sorghum Shortcuts

National Sorghum Producers and BASF Scholarship DEADLINE SOON

The National Sorghum Producers and BASF have partnered for a second year to create a joint scholarship program for two students seeking an undergraduate or graduate degree in an agriculturally related curriculum. Students must be a child or grandchild of a NSP member, and undergraduates must be entering at least their second year of study by the 2018-2019 academic year. The scholarship opened to students for application August 1, 2017, for the 2018-2019 academic year. The scholarship will include an award for tuition as well as cover the recipients’ cost to attend the 2018 Commod-ity Classic in Anaheim, California. Interested students can apply at SorghumGrowers.com/sorghum-foundation by Dec. 1, 2017. For questions or to submit materials, contact Debra Lloyd at debral@ sorghumgrowers.com or 800-658-9808.

The 2016 winners for the NSP and BASF joint scholarship were Abigail Arthaud of Oklahoma State University and Cody Nedbalek of Texas A&M University.

Don’t Forget! Yield Contest Forms Required by Dec. 1

Did you enter the National Sorghum Producers Yield Contest? Don’t forget all forms must be received in the office no later than Dec. 1, 2017. The NSP Yield Contest provides sorghum farmers with the opportunity to showcase your sorghum crop, competing with farmers across the Sorghum Belt. This contest allows our industry to recognize some of the best growers in the U.S. and helps farmers to grow and learn from one another.

NSP Yield Contest winners are recognized each year at an awards banquet in conjunction with Commodity Classic, to be held next year in Anaheim, California. They are also recognized in the spring edition of Sorghum Grower magazine, NSP’s weekly e-newsletter Sorghum Notes and on the NSP website.

We Need You!

Do you grow sorghum for food uses? Whether it is food-grade sorghum, waxy, high antioxidant, organic or best varieties for popped sorghum, we want to get to know you. Connecting farmers with consumers and end-users who are seeking sorghum is crucial to our success as an industry. With growing interests from companies such as Walmart, PepsiCo, Nestle and other business-to-business entities, we want to connect our farmer growers to game-changing opportunities.

We are also taking a proactive approach to telling the sorghum story, showcasing good stewardship practices and successes that ensure a sustainable future with this critical food a fuel crop. Building profiles of our hard growers, their families and farms is important to this story. If you are interested in being a part of this or want to know more, email faiths@sorghumcheckoff.com.

KANSAS FARMER Jeff Zortman on display at a Taste Sorghum event in New York, New York, where dietitians, chefs and food bloggers sampled sorghum.

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Every bag of Pioneer® brand sorghum is packed with locally tested, high yield potential genetics and industry-leading agronomics and defensive characteristics. You also get an unmatched team of local experts who can steer you toward higher yield potential, this season and beyond.