NATIONAL SORGHUM PRODUCERS

SORGHUM Grower

Spring 2011

Special Section: Sorghum Checkoff pullout newsletter

Bin Busters

Growers show just what sorghum can do

Kansas farmers find success with air seeding

Clearing a path for sorghum ethanol in California

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Congratulations to the winners of the 2010 National Sorghum Yield and Management Contest. National honors went to **14** growers, including a Bin Buster Award, planting Pioneer® brand sorghum hybrids. In addition, **64** state winners and **78** county winners also planted Pioneer sorghum hybrids. For details on all winners visit us at www. pioneer.com/nsp/, then click on State Winners - 2010 NSP Yield and Management Contest for state yield results.

NATIONAL WINNERS

RANK/ENTRANT NAME	State	County	Co. Avg (bu/a)	Yield (bu/a)	Score (bu/a)	Pioneer® brand hybrid
REDUCED-TILL IRRIGATED						
1st Sunland Enterprises Inc.	Colorado	Baca	68.2	180.28	112.08	84G62
2nd John Scates	Illinois	White	84.5	186.40	101.90	84G62
3rd Ki Gamble	Kansas	Kiowa	106.7	184.29	77.59	84G62
NO-TILL NON-IRRIGATED						
1st Courtright Farms	Nebraska	Furnas	75.3	174.29	98.99	84G62
2nd Levin Farms Inc.	Kansas	Phillips	80.5	170.98	90.48	85G46
3rd Phil Scott	Indiana	Gibson	69.2	142.52	73.32	87G57
MULCH-TILL NON-IRRIGATED						
1st John M Scates	Illinois	Gallatin	95.0	171.22	76.22	84G62
3rd D&M Farms	Arkansas	Jackson	85.0	154.49	69.49	84G62
CONVENTIONAL-TILL NON-IRRIGATED						
2nd Raymond J & Larry A Wiatrek	Texas	Wilson	47.9	116.52	68.62	84G62
3rd Will Scott	Indiana	Gibson	69.2	137.16	67.96	87G57
CONVENTIONAL-TILL IRRIGATED						
1st Jeff Scates	Illinois	White	84.5	181.37	96.87	84G62
2nd Bill Wright	Colorado	Baca	68.2	156.53	88.33	84G62
3rd Galen Berning	Kansas	Wichita	91.5	175.50	84.00	84G62
IRRIGATED BIN BUSTER AWARD						
John Scates	Illinois	White	84.5	186.40	101.90	84G62

Thank you to all the growers who planted Pioneer® brand hybrids in the 2010 National Sorghum Producers Yield and Management Contest. See your Pioneer sales professional about planting a powerful package of Pioneer hybrids on your acres this spring and JOIN THE WINNERS!

To learn more about 2010 Pioneer performance in your area, go to www.pioneer.com/products

National winners selected from state 1st place winners.

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FEATURES

Yielding Achievement 6
Winners of the 2010 Yield & Management Contest

Bin Busters 12
Illinois, Kentucky farmers show what sorghum can do

Air Seeding Success 22
Kansas farmers find success with seeding method

DEPARTMENTS

Editor's Desk: We have a story to tell 5

Sorgonomics™: It's time to take sorghum seriously 18

E-Member Spotlight: Adapting to customer needs 20

Sorghum Markets: Niche sorghum markets add value 21

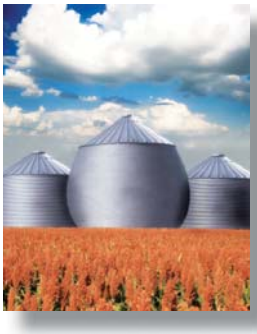
Capitol Hill: New NSP lobby firm, Lipps heads to D.C. 25

NSP Update: Commodity Classic wrap up 26

Lab to Cab: Clearing a pathway for sorghum ethanol 28

Sorghum Shortcuts: Sorghum production webinars 30

on the cover



Bin buster winners of the 2010 NSP Yield and Management Contest explain how sorghum has improved their farming operations and their bottom lines. Read about Illinois farmer John Scates on p. 13 and Kentucky farmer Chris Robinson on p. 15.

Cover art by Lindsay Kennedy

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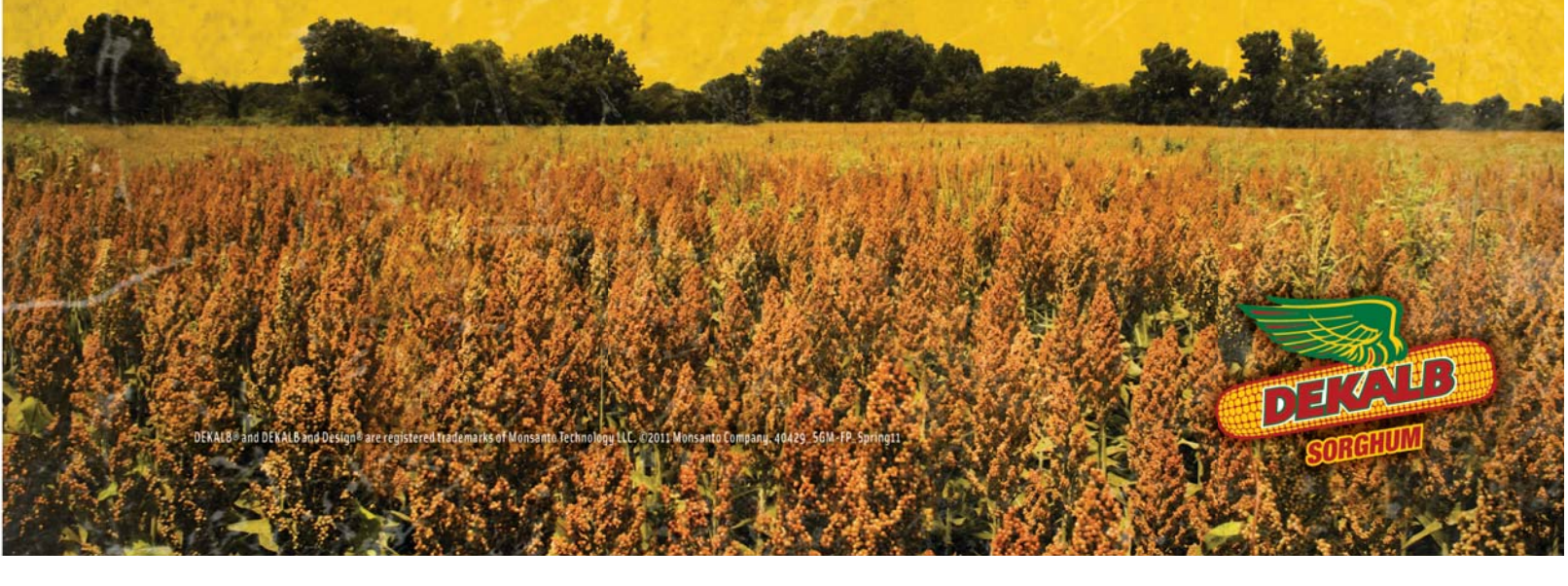


We have a story to tell

Like everyone else in the National Sorghum Producers office, I am a farm kid.

My twin sister and I were the fifth generation to be raised on my family's farm in Arkansas. I've logged my fair share of hours in a tractor seat, hauling hay and caring for livestock. Agriculture always has been and always will be an important part of my life.

The rest of the NSP staff are third, fourth and fifth generation farm kids, too, from Texas, New Mexico and Kansas. All of us have a deep seeded understanding of what you do everyday as a sorghum farmer.

Your lifestyle is important to us – not only because it's our job, but because we appreciate the farming way of life and we work everyday to preserve that.

We in agriculture have an important story to tell. Unfortunately, there are plenty of people out there who are more than eager to tell it for us regardless if they've ever set foot on a farm. They don't have a clue about the risks involved with running a farming business or what it takes to produce a crop.

Activists have successfully painted a negative and incorrect picture to the public about agriculture. They think all farmers are irresponsible when it comes to managing the land and raising livestock. Now, you and I know that's as far from the truth as one can get, but not everyone understands that.

Everyone expects a safe, abundant food supply. But, as the people of our country become further disconnected from the farm and the rural lifestyle, the more they take for granted how fortunate we are to live in a country that can efficiently feed, fuel and clothe itself. Furthermore, that misunderstanding of your way of life has certainly found a home on Capitol Hill. As farm policy continues to find itself on the chopping block, your voice as a farmer and sorghum grower needs to be heard in Washington, D.C.

If you haven't already, I encourage you to become a member of NSP. Not only does your membership support an organization that works tirelessly for a better sorghum industry, but it gives you a voice as a sorghum grower. We take your concerns, your needs and your priorities as a sorghum grower to policy makers on Capitol Hill to tell your story when you cannot.

The sorghum industry is building momentum. As you will read in this issue of *Sorghum Grower*, we really believe in sorghum's ability to be a profitable part of your farming operation.

Your success matters to us...because we're farm kids, too.

Lindsay Kennedy

Editor, *Sorghum Grower*

2010 National Sorghum Producers Yield and Management Contest

The Winner's Circle

Contest winners share their tips and strategies on harvesting an exceptional crop

John Scates

White County, Illinois

Irrigated Bin Buster

John Scates is just one of the many successful farmers within the Scates family.

The Scates Family Farm captured three first place wins this year in the NSP Yield and Management Contest, and this is only their third year growing grain sorghum.

"Milo is exciting for us," said John, who is a third generation farmer. "We are learning as we go."

The family works together to create new plans and improve their practices. John says sticking to an improved plan was a large part of the crop's success. The earlier planting date, newer planter, row starter and better depth placement helped everything fall into place for a successful crop in 2010.

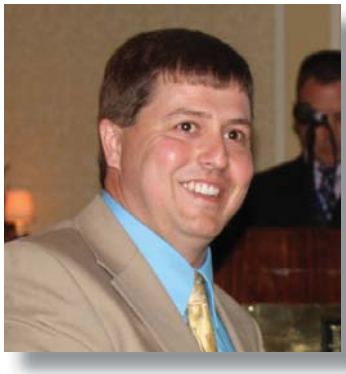
When it comes to the benefits of sorghum, John said it works well in their rotation and has less input costs. He also said it can go later in the season without losing yield.

Score:	101.9
Yield (bu/ac):	186.4
County Average Yield (bu/ac):	84.5
Previous Crop:	Sorghum
Herbicides:	2.2 qt. Degree XTRA® pre-plant 1.3 qt. Syngenta AAtrex® pre-plant
Fertilizer:	207 lbs. NH_3, 170 lbs. N, 100 lbs. P, 250 lbs. Potash
Seed Variety:	Pioneer 84G62
Seeds/Acre:	110,000
Row Spacing:	15"
Estimated Rainfall:	15"
Irrigation:	8" sprinkler
Plant Date:	May 16, 2010
Harvest Date:	Octoboer 8, 2010

Chris Robinson Farms

Crittenden County, Kentucky

Conventional-Till Non-Irrigated Non-Irrigated Bin Buster



Chris Robinson has only been planting grain sorghum for four years, but his bin buster yield of 200.29 bu/ac would make you think differently.

Robinson attributes a combination of things for this year's success. He said they treat their sorghum crop much like they would a corn crop and have been striving to reach the 200-bushel mark since the start. Really good rain at the right time helped as well as "a little bit of luck."

For the most part, Robinson said their management practices stayed the same, but they did a few things differently.

"We kept our population high and split up fertilizer practices," he said.

Robinson said he believes grain sorghum has helped with their crop rotation and performs great on ground were corn doesn't respond well.

Score:	101.79
Yield (bu/ac):	200.29
County Average Yield (bu/ac):	98.5
Previous Crop:	Soybeans
Herbicides:	2 qt. Degree XTRA® pre-emerge
Fertilizer:	135 lbs. NH_3, 20 lbs. N, 40 lbs. P, 60 lbs. Potash
Insecticides:	Poncho® 250 lbs.
Seed Variety:	DEKALB DKS54-03
Seeds/Acre:	142,000
Row Spacing:	30"
Estimated Rainfall:	35"
Plant Date:	May 28, 2010
Harvest Date:	Ocotber 9, 2010

Sunland Enterprises Inc.

Baca County, Colorado

Reduced-Till Irrigated

Perry Jones of Sunland Enterprises Inc. says it's a weird feeling knowing that you are one of the best at what you do. As many farmers will admit, he says it's a lot of luck.

Jones says weed management was one of the contributing factors to the crop's success. He also says they were able to keep the water consistently going to the crop.

In addition to excellent weed management and efficient irrigation, the reduced-till irrigated plot Jones submitted for the contest received increased amounts of nitrogen (150 pounds) and phosphorus (80 pounds). The rest of the field was treated with 120 pounds of nitrogen and 40 pounds of phosphorus.

Jones believes sorghum is a beneficial part of his rotation because it keeps weeds from becoming resistant to chemicals, and it requires less water. Plus, he feels it's a beneficial crop for ethanol production.

Score:	112.08
Yield (bu/ac):	180.28
County Average Yield (bu/ac):	68.2
Previous Crop:	Corn
Herbicides:	2 qt. Syngenta Medal® II AT, 40 oz. GlyStar® AlBaugh, 2 oz. Loveland Rifle®, 1/8 lb. Loveland LV-6
Fertilizer:	150 lbs. NH_3, 30 lbs. N, 80 lbs. P
Seed Variety:	Pioneer 84G62
Seeds/Acre:	28,000
Row Spacing:	30"
Estimated Rainfall:	10"
Irrigation:	21" sprinkler
Plant Date:	May 15, 2010
Harvest Date:	November 15, 2010

Courtright Farms

Furnas County, Nebraska

No-Till Non-Irrigated

Walter C. Courtright has been growing sorghum for the last 25 years.

The self-proclaimed "suitcase farmer"– he lives in New Mexico and farms in Nebraska– says he started participating in the competition three years ago and recently decided to switch seeds to be more competitive. Along with a different seed variety, Courtright credits numerous factors for his abundant crop.

"God let it rain at the right time," says Courtright.

Courtright says he also found no-till sorghum works very well when rotated with wheat. When it comes to knowing how much to plant, he determines his seed population each year by studying the previous year's weather patterns.

Courtright credits Don Broeker of Cargill fertilizer and spray in Arapahoe, Neb., and Furnas County Extension Agent, Noel Mues, for their help in his success.

Score:	98.99
Yield (bu/ac):	174.29
County Average Yield (bu/ac):	75.3
Previous Crop:	Wheat
Herbicides:	2.1 qt. Bicep II Magnum® pre-emerge 22 oz. TOUCHDOWN® pre-emerge 6 oz. Starane® Ultra post-emerge
Fertilizer:	30 lbs. N, 20 lbs. P
Seed Variety:	Pioneer 84G62
Seeds/Acre:	45,000
Row Spacing:	30"
Estimated Rainfall:	26"
Plant Date:	May 3,2010
Harvest Date:	October 20, 2010

Jeff Scates

White County, Illinois

Conventional-Till Irrigated

Like the rest of the Scates family, Jeff Scates found success in 2010 with sorghum on his farm in White County, Ill.

Jeff applied 170 pounds of nitrogen, 207 pounds of anhydrous ammonia, 100 pounds of phosphorus and 250 pounds of potash to achieve his awarding winning 181.37 bushels per acre sorghum yield.

He also applied 2.6 ounces of Warrior insecticide to the field to control pests.

As with the other Scates first place winners, Jeff used a seeding rate of 110,000 seeds per acre.

Combine those inputs with an 8-inch sprinkler irrigation, and you have the 2010 first place conventional-till irrigated division winner.

Score:	96.87
Yield (bu/ac):	181.37
County Average Yield (bu/ac):	84.5
Previous Crop:	Sorghum
Herbicides:	2.2 qt. Monsanto Degree XTRA® pre-plant 1.3 qt. Syngent AAtrex® pre-plant
Fertilizer:	207 lbs. NH_3, 170 lbs. N, 100 lbs. P, 250 lbs. Potash
Seed Variety:	Pioneer 84G62
Seeds/Acre:	110,000
Row Spacing:	30"
Estimated Rainfall:	15"
Irrigation:	8" sprinkler
Plant Date:	May 16, 2010
Harvest Date:	October 18, 2010

John M. Scates

Gallatin County, Illinois

Mulch-Till Non-Irrigated

John M. Scates first grew sorghum in the late 1970s, but with the market and limited advancements within the industry he didn't continue growing sorghum. Now with better hybrids and improved markets, Scates is not only growing sorghum, but is proving to be one of the best.

Scates said his non-irrigated crop was planted in a good quality soil that helped produce quality yields. The mulch-till helped keep moisture in the soil while the sorghum withstood the heat of last summer's growing season.

Compared to the other non-irrigated crops grown by the Scates family in Illinois, the sorghum outperformed non-irrigated corn in the same region.

Scates says sorghum was not only 30 to 40 bushels better than the corn, but it was also a third of the cost to produce.

Score:	76.22
Yield (bu/ac):	171.22
County Average Yield (bu/ac):	95.0
Previous Crop:	Soybeans
Herbicides:	2.2 qts. Monsanto Degree XTRA® 1.3qts. Syngenta AAtrex®
Fertilizer:	207 lbs. NH_3, 170 lbs. N, 100 lbs. P, 250 lbs. Potash
Seed Variety:	Pioneer 84G62
Seeds/Acre:	110,000
Row Spacing:	30"
Estimated Rainfall:	11"
Plant Date:	May 25, 2010
Harvest Date:	October 7, 2010

Mike Fischer

Thayer County, Nebraska

Non-Irrigated National Food Grade Winner

This marks the second year that Nebraska farmer Mike Fischer has produced an award winning crop. Fischer uses sorghum as a rotational crop with wheat and corn and typically plants 70 to 80 acres of sorghum each year. He credits favorable weather as a contributor to his crop's success in 2010.

In terms of production practices, Fischer treats sorghum "just like everything else."

For Fischer, growing sorghum is more about just producing the crop itself, but after harvest, sorghum proves to be a dual-purpose kind of crop.

"We've had milo for years and we like it for pasture for our cattle in the fall," he said. Grazing for cattle isn't the only benefit Fischer sees in a sorghum crop.

"Where we farm there isn't much irrigation, and sorghum still does well."

Score:	30.73
Yield (bu/ac):	127.73
County Average Yield (bu/ac):	97.0
Previous Crop:	Wheat
Herbicides:	2.5 qt. Syngenta Lumax® pre-plant 2/5 pt. Five Star post-emerge 1/2 lb. Atrazine post-emerge
Fertilizer:	115 lbs. NH_3
Seed Variety:	Fontanelle W-1000
Seeds/Acre:	56,000
Row Spacing:	30"
Estimated Rainfall:	30.8"
Plant Date:	May 29, 2010
Harvest Date:	October 18, 2010

Duane Vorderstrasse

Harlan County, Nebraska

Irrigated National Food Grade Winner

Duane Vorderstrasse is no stranger to the sorghum industry.

He has been growing sorghum for the last 35 years, and he's entered the NSP Yield and Management Contest for about 14 of those years.

Vorderstrasse is also no stranger to growing a successful sorghum crop. He says a balanced fertility program and Mother Nature are the most beneficial components in capturing high yields.

He claims to stick the standard procedures when it comes to management.

"We always try to leave as much residue as we can from the year before," Vorderstrasse said.

Farming in an area with limited water, Vorderstrasse sees the benefit of growing sorghum because of its water utilization efficiency.

Score:	17.52
Yield (bu/ac):	142.82
County Average Yield (bu/ac):	125.3
Previous Crop:	Sorghum
Herbicides:	2.12 qt Bicep II Magnum® pre-emerge .93 qt Roundup PowerMAX® pre-emerge
Fertilizer:	120 lbs. N, 34 lbs. P
Seed Variety:	Fontanelle W-1000
Seeds/Acre:	90,000
Row Spacing:	30"
Estimated Rainfall:	26"
Irrigation:	7" furrow
Plant Date:	May 29, 2010
Harvest Date:	October 10, 2010

Sorghum Yield & Management Contest
2011 Entry Form

4201 N Interstate 27 Lubbock, TX 79403 (806)749-3478

OFFICE USE ONLY
I.D.#_____
YCE#_____
E.D. _____

Please read contest rules carefully before completing this entry form.
Information given on this entry form must match information given on all contest forms.

--Entry forms must be filled out completely and postmarked at least 30 days before harvest for "Regular Entry" or at least 10 days before harvest for "Express Entry" of the contest field.
Send "Regular Entry" forms and fees to *National Sorghum Producers, 4201 N Interstate 27, Lubbock, TX 79403.*
Send "Express Entry" form via Overnight Carrier to *National Sorghum Producers, 4201 N Interstate 27, Lubbock, TX 79403.*
"Express Entry" sent via fax or regular U.S. mail will not be accepted.
--A complete set of Contest Rules, a Management Information Form, a Harvest Report Form and a copy of your Entry Form will be mailed to you as soon as we receive your entry.

1. Entry Fees: "Regular Entry" option allows for harvest 30 or more days after entry.
A nonrefundable entry fee of $65 *must accompany each Regular Entry.* Entry fee enclosed: $_____.
"Express Entry" option allows for harvest 10 or more days after entry.
A nonrefundable entry fee of $95 *must accompany each "Express Entry."* Entry fee enclosed: $_____.

2. Membership dues: *Dues of* $60 for a 1-year membership or $150 for a 3-year membership *must be enclosed if you are not a paid NSP member.* Dues enclosed: $_____.
If you are an E-Member, please give us the name and location of your elevator:_____.

3. Contestant: *Print or type the name exactly as you wish it to appear on any awards, news releases, etc. (30 character limit)*

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4. Contact person:_____Phone_____
Address_____City_____St._____Zip_____

5. E-Mail Address:_____

6. Entry number: *If you have more than 1 entry, use a separate entry form for each and number them 1, 2, 3 etc.* _____

7. Division: o Conventional-till Irrigated o Conventional-till Non-irrigated o No-till Non-Irrigated
o Mulch-till Non-Irrigated o Reduced-till Irrigated

8. Seed Brand: _____Variety: _____

Are you entering this variety as a food grade entry? _____

9. Location of Contest Field: State _____County _____

FSA Farm Number_____

10. Total Acres in Contest Field: _____

11. ____I have attached an aerial map with contest field clearly marked. *(*required*)*

12. ____I have attached FSA Form 578 that proves I am the owner/operator of this farm. (required)

13. Agribusiness Sponsor:
If you want your agribusiness dealer to receive information on your entry, fill in his/her name and address below.

Name_____Company_____Phone_____
Address_____City_____St._____Zip_____
Email _____

14 . *I hereby certify the above information given on this entry form to be accurate to the best of my knowledge and believe and agree that all contest information provided by me pursuant to this grain sorghum yield and management contest shall be the property of the National Sorghum Producers and may be used and distributed at the sole discretion of National Sorghum Producers.*

*Signature of Contestant*_____*Date Signed*_____

2011 Contest Rules

Please read contest rules carefully before completing the entry form. Changes are in bold.

Contest Deadlines

Regular Entries must be postmarked at least 30 days prior to harvest of the contest acreage. Express Entries must be sent via **overnight delivery** at least 10 days prior to harvest of the contest acreage.

Harvest Rules, a Harvest Report Form and a Management Information Form will be mailed to the contestant as soon as the entry is received. The forms must be completed and **in the NSP office no later than December 1, 2011**. There will be no extension of deadlines.

Contestant Qualifications

Contestant must be a paid member of NSP at the time of entry and judging. More than one member of a family may enter, but each contestant must have a separate membership.

Contestant must be a certified FSA owner/operator of the entry plot. A copy of FSA Form 578, including farm summary, must be submitted with the contest entry form.

Contestants can enter more than once, but each entry must be on a separate entry form.

Partnerships can enter under the partnership name if the partnership holds a membership.

Contestants must be at least 14 years of age at the time of entry.

NSP directors, employees and spouses are prohibited from entering the contest.

Contest Divisions

Conventional-Till Irrigated

Conventional-Till Non-Irrigated

Reduced-Till Irrigated

No-Till Non-Irrigated

Mulch-Till Non-Irrigated

Conventional: Any management or cultural practice excluding no-till, ridge-till or mulch-till.

No-Till: No-till means the soil is left undisturbed from the harvest of the previous crop to the harvest of the next crop with the exception of the injection of nutrients with knives or coulters, not sweeps.

Reduced-Till: No-Till as defined above OR Ridge-Till OR Strip Till, each as defined here. Ridge-Till: The soil is left undisturbed from harvest to planting except for nutrient injection. Planting is completed in a seedbed prepared on ridges with sweeps, disk openers, coulters, or row cleaners. Residue is left on the surface between ridges. Weed control is accomplished with herbicides and/or cultivation. Ridges are rebuilt during cultivation. Strip Till: The soil is left undisturbed from harvest to planting except for tillage of a strip of soil no more than 10 inches wide (with or without nutrient injection). Planting is completed in the prepared strip. Residue is left on the surface between the strips. Weed control is accomplished with herbicides and/or cultivation.

Mulch-Till: This may include Mulch-till OR Strip Till, each as defined here. Mulch-till: The soil may be disturbed one time prior to planting and will have a minimum of 30% residue remaining. Tillage tools such as chisels, field cultivators, disks, sweeps or blades are used. Weed control is accomplished with herbicides and/or one cultivation. Strip Till: The soil is left undisturbed from harvest to planting except for tillage of a strip of soil no more than 10 inches wide (with or without nutrient injection). Planting is completed in the prepared strip. Residue is left on the surface between the strips. Weed control is accomplished with herbicides and/or cultivation.

Irrigated: Any field receiving any supplemental water since the last harvest or during the current growing season.

Non-irrigated: Any field that has not received any supplemental water since the last harvest or during the current growing season.

Field Qualifications

A complete field of 5 or more continuous acres, planted in the sorghum seed variety named on the entry form, will be designated as the contest field. The contest field must be designated on an aerial map. The aerial map must be included with the entry and the harvest report. Each plot's harvest report will be limited to a single harvest per year. High-tannin sorghum varieties will not be accepted.

Supervisor Qualifications

A qualified supervisor must be present during the entire harvest and weighing. The supervisor must complete and sign the Harvest Report Form. The supervisor must specify the tillage method. Supervisors MUST be from the following list:

* Vocational Agricultural Instructor
* County or Regional Extension Director or Assistant Director
* Senior NRCS staff person
* FSA Office Manager, Field Supervisor or Compliance Technician

Supervisors from the following list will NOT be accepted and the entry will be disqualified:

* Private crop consultants
* Elevator employees
* Officials of commercial banks or other lending agencies
* A company representative of any product used in the contest field
* A relative of the contestant

Harvesting Rules

The supervisor must be present during the entire harvest of the contest plot and must make all field measurements and computations, oversee the weighing, INCLUDING LOADING AND UNLOADING, and moisture testing, verify the date of harvest, and report location of the contest field. The contestant must harvest and report at least five continuous acres from the same contest field that was designated on the entry form. The entire field may be harvested and reported.

A load's gross weight must be determined first, followed by empty or tare weight on the same date. Determination of a load's gross weight must occur before determination of tare weight. If time and date of weighing are not automatically stamped on weight ticket(s), supervisors must note both time and date of both weighings on weight ticket(s).

Detailed rules for measuring, weighing, moisture testing and calculating the yields will be mailed to contestant on receipt of his/her entry.

Reporting Results

Harvest Reports, aerial map, weight tickets and management information are to be completed and sent to the NSP office postmarked no later than 15 days after the date of the final weight ticket on the specific contest plot. All harvest information must be in the NSP office by December 1. Harvest information arriving after close of business on December 1 will not be eligible for competition. NSP is not responsible for contest reports that are lost in the mail. Reports may be mailed by certified mail to ensure delivery.

Judging - UPDATED*

***Irrigated Division: The contestant's score is determined by yield only.**

***Non-Irrigated Division:** The contestant's score will be the amount in bushels by which his yield exceeds the 5-year county average for that division as determined by USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service. (If an entry is received from a county that does not have NASS yields, the average of the NASS yields of all states that are represented in the contest will be used.)

In the event of a tie, the contestant harvesting and reporting the largest acreage will be declared the winner. If a second tie-breaker is needed, the contestant with the longest time between the entry date and the harvest date will be named the winner.

Any entry is subject to further review. Any contestant committing fraud will be barred from the contest for three years.

Contest Winners

The contestant with the highest score in the county will be named the county winner.

First, second and third place state winners in each division will be determined by score. Scores below zero (0) will not be eligible for state and national competition. Only one state award in each division will be given per membership with the entry with the highest score considered for state awards.

The first, second and third place national winners in each division will be named from the first-place state winners based on score. Only one national award will be given per membership, with only the entry with the highest score being considered for national honors.

***Recognition will only be given for the highest dryland yield.**

Two $250 cash awards will be given for the highest irrigated and highest non-irrigated food-grade, tan-glume, tan-plant sorghum scores in the contest.

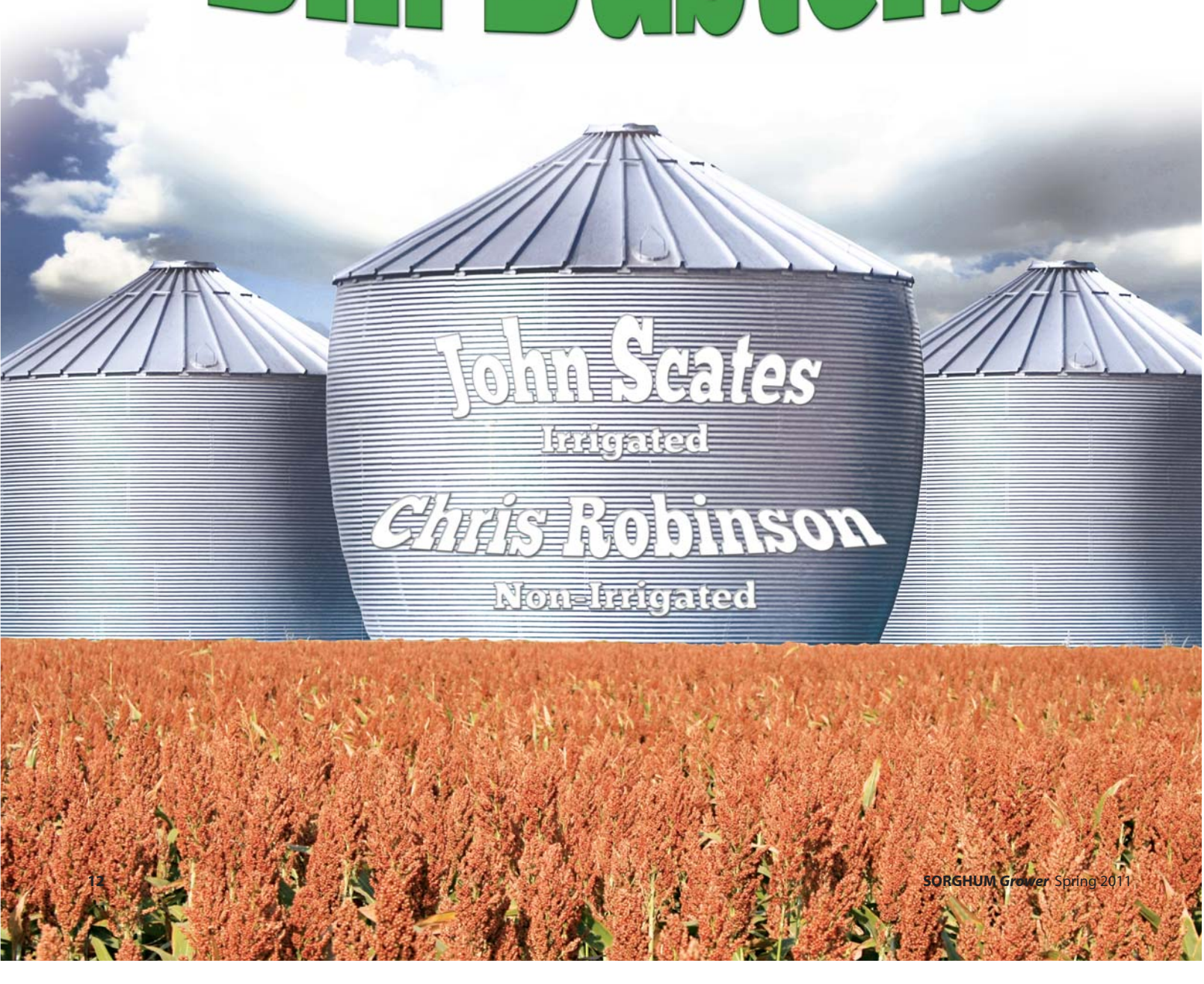
Hall of Fame: Beginning with the 1997 national winners, contestants who win National 1st Place three times in a division will be inducted into the Hall of Fame and will not be eligible to enter that division.

Awards

County and State winners will receive certificates by mail. National winners will receive trophies. Except where noted, no cash awards will be given by NSP.

Illinois and Kentucky sorghum farmers show just what sorghum can do and become the 2010 NSP Yield & Management Contest

Bin Busters



2010 NSP Yield & Management Contest Irrigated Bin Buster 186.4 bu/a

By Shelee Padgett

With only 40,000 acres of grain sorghum planted in the state of Illinois, many Midwestern farmers question the crop's role in the state and its profitability. However, the Scates Family Farm sees the crop as a profitable rotational crop for their operation.

Farming heritage

The Scates Family Farm started in the 1930s and is truly a family affair as the farm employs 12 family members from three generations of Scates. The farm is located in southern Illinois and western Kentucky on the banks of the Little Wabash and the Ohio Rivers. Currently, the family grows grain sorghum, corn, soybeans, wheat, green beans and cucumbers. However, at one point in the operation's history, the Scates also grew a number of additional vegetables as well as tobacco. Today, the only addition to the row crop operation is their Valley Irrigation Pivot dealership in Shawneetown, Ill., which covers all of southern Illinois, western Kentucky and southwest Indiana.

"Grain sorghum is a relatively new crop for the family's operation," says John Scates, a third generation member of the Scates family, who joined the family business after receiving a degree in agronomy from Southern Illinois University at Carbondale.

"We farm in Gallatin and White counties in Illinois as well as Union County in Kentucky, and much of that ground is river bottom, which is a holding area for floodwaters coming from areas north of us. Every year we can potentially lose 3,000 to 4,000 acres of land to floodwater."

A risk management tool

In addition to the challenges every farm faces, the Scates family also needs to manage the yearly potential for flooding. According to John, when the younger generation joined the farm, they were more willing to look for solutions to remedy their flooding problem, which utlimately became a planting problem. The Scates were willing to try something new, and milo fit their rotation, plus they were comfortable marketing the crop.

> "Grain sorghum is a viable crop that helps the producer spread their risk with planting as well as harvesting."

"We needed to break the cycle of planting soybeans on the bottom ground for 15 to 20 years straight," said John. "We use milo as a risk management tool."

John admits planting grain sorghum in an area that is not known for the crop has been a challenge, but through his participation with the National Sorghum Producers' Yield and Management Contest and resources at Southern Illinois University, University of Illinois, and his Pioneer seed representatives, they are learning more and more every year.

Jason Bond specializes in nematology and plant pathology at Southern Illinois University and is one of the many resources the Scates Family Farm looks to for information.

"While grain sorghum in our area is typically used for a backup crop, especially in difficult planting years, the perception is changing," Bond says. "Grain sorghum is a viable crop that helps the producer spread their risk with planting as well as harvesting."

Like with the Scates' operation, Bond says rotation should be a cornerstone to any operation.

"I like to see producers use a third and forth crop because of pathogen pressure."

In fact, Bond believes there could be hidden potential in having grain sorghum in a rotation because of its non-host qualities.

By using efficient and proper management practices, the southern Illinois operation has had success with what is traditionally known as a western crop.

"Our resources from the universities and Pioneer have gone above and beyond to help us increase our yields," says John. "Through the course of the last few years, we have improved our herbicide program and really loaded it up front to combat weed resistance."

A pivotal crop

"Even with increasing our input costs, milo is still a very profitable crop for our operation," he says. The Scates are adjusting the amount of fertilizer they apply to the crop as well as increasing the seed population. While not all of their ground is under pivot, the operation has 80 pivots and more than 9,500 acres of irrigated land. However, they have not only reserved irrigation for their corn and soybeans. In fact, their 2010 NSP Yield and Management Contest entry produced a bin busting 186.4 bushels per acre on irrigated land. Their non-irrigated land produced 171.22 bushels per acre.

"Even with increasing our input costs, milo is still a very profitable crop for our operation."

A family effort

While the family continues to improve their production practices to increase yields, markets in their area have been favorable. According to John, their location on the Ohio River allows them to sell direct to Cargill and Consolidated Grain and Barge Co.

"Last year I was fortunate to be able to meet other national yield contest winners at Commodity Classic," John says. "And I took that opportunity to learn how they were increasing their yields. This helped us formulate ideas on how to improve our production and bottom line."

While the Scates Family Farm has had success with Pioneer's 84G62, they are planning to try a couple new Pioneer hybrids this planting season. Also, John said they are going to plant a portion of their grain sorghum crop in 15-inch split rows while also pushing their seed population up about 10 to 20 percent to try and achieve bigger grain heads.

He also mentioned their success with the crop has even has motivated a handful of their neighbors to stop by for advice on planting grain sorghum.

John notes that although each person at the farm has distinct farm and business roles, all of their decisions are made together.

"This is a family business and we try to incorporate everyone's expertise to make the best decisions for the operation," he says.

Overall, grain sorghum fits well with what the Scates are trying to accomplish

"It is not only profitable but it also allows us to better manage our risk," says John. "Participating in the yield contest and seeing what we can do with this crop has motivated us to try new things to increase our yields and our bottom line."

The Scates family was well represented during NSP's annual Yield and Management Contest Dinner at Commodity Classic, March 4, 2011.

2010 NSP Yield & Management Contest Non-Irrigated Bin Buster

200.29 bu/a

By Lindsay Kennedy

Third generation farmer Chris Robinson had a goal in mind when he first began growing grain sorghum on his farm in northwestern Kentucky four years ago – make 200 bushels per acre.

Although his goal seemed lofty in a county where the average sorghum yield was less than 100 bushels, Chris was determined to reach the 200-bushel mark.

Chris' family has been farming their land near the Ohio River for more than 60 years. Today, the Robinsons run a diversified operation consisting of corn, soybeans, wheat, hay, beef cattle and most recently sorghum.

He decided to give grain sorghum a try in 2006 when seed prices, fertilizer and other input costs began skyrocketing past the point of profitability.

"We needed something other than soybeans and corn to plant on this ground," Chris said. "We have some land that will not raise high bushel corn and we needed another crop option."

Chris began studying grain sorghum and eventually planted his first crop four years ago to see if it was the right fit for his farm.

"At first, we were scared to death to grow grain sorghum, but we have fallen in love with it since then."

> "At first, we were scared to death to grow grain sorghum, but we have fallen in love with it since then."

Reaching his goal

Chris' decision to experiment with sorghum has paid off.

He won the 2010 National Sorghum Producers Yield and Management Contest Non-Irrigated Bin Buster Award with an eye-popping yield of 200.29 bushels per acre using DEKALB DKS54-03 grain sorghum.

Chris came close to hitting his yield goal the previous year when he won NSP's Non-Irrigated Bin Buster award in 2009 with a yield of 196.92 bushels per acre in just his third year of growing grain sorghum.

"Four years ago, I never dreamed we would hit a 200-bushel yield," he admitted. "Every year we've grown a little bit more and achieved a little bit higher yields. We have learned to push the limits to achieve what we want to achieve."

Keys to success

Chris says he treats grain sorghum just like any other crop on his farm.

"It will tolerate the dry times, but it will do really well with water," he said. "Getting good rains at the right time really helped boost yields last year."

Chris said the area he farms in northwestern Kentucky averages between 28 and 33 inches of rainfall a year. However,

his bin buster crop only received an inch and a half of rain from the time it was planted to the time it was harvested.

"We got the rain exactly when we needed it and I was tickled to death. I think luck had a little bit to do with that," Chris laughs.

In addition to using conventional-till practices, Chris plants at a high seeding rate – 142,000 seeds per acre – to achieve his yield goals. Prior to entering the NSP Yield and Management Contest in 2009, Chris was averaging about 130 bushels per acre when he began planting sorghum – not bad for a newcomer to the crop.

"Grain sorghum is just an overall good fit for us, especially during stress years and on harder soils," he said. "It's relatively manageable, and it definitely has a lot of potential."

Overcoming challenges

Achieving high sorghum yields didn't happen overnight. Chris said he had a lot to learn about sorghum before he planted his first crop.

"We heavily relied on Monsanto reps and even talked to some of their people in Texas where they certainly grow a lot of sorghum," Chris said. "There are just not many people around here that grow it, so we just tried to find out anything and everything that we could about it."

Although Chris was able to overcome the learning curve involved with growing a new crop, one more obstacle stood in his way – selling it.

"Grain sorghum is just an overall good fit for us, especially during stress years and on harder soils."

"We have a very limited number of elevators in this area that will take sorghum, and the nearby biofuel refineries are all corn-based," he said. "However, we have been selling our grain to the Peavey Grain Co., and they have been shipping it down river to be made into dog food. We've just got to get more elevators and ethanol plants in our area interested in sorghum."

Raising the bar

Currently, there are less than 13,000 acres of grain sorghum grown in Kentucky, a state where tobacco, forages, corn and soybeans have a stronghold. While Chris is one of the

few farmers in his area that grows grain sorghum, his recent success may just change the way his neighboring farmers feel about the crop.

"Grain sorghum has always been looked at as a last resort crop in this area," he said. "But, since we started to get some of the yields that we've had in the last few years, people are starting to look at it a little differently."

Getting over the fear of the unknown has had its rewards for Chris, and he encourages others to do the same.

"My main piece of advice to anyone interested in sorghum is don't be scared of it," he said. "It is a very, very valuable crop once you learn all of the ins and outs.

"I'm still learning myself, but sorghum is going to be a crop that we're all really going to have to utilize because not every acre out there is going to be able to be planted with soybeans and corn."

And, don't think for a minute that Chris is stopping at the 200-bushel mark. He has his sights set this year on yielding 220-bushel sorghum.

"We're going to keep pushing the limits a little harder and see what happens."

It's Time to Take Sorghum Seriously

By Matt Splitter

It's no secret that many grain sorghum acres have been replaced by other crops over the past few years. Weed control options, improved traits and higher prices for these competing crops have made them attractive to many producers.

Therefore, we've seen U.S. grain sorghum acres dip to around 7 million acres, which contrasts the nearly 10 million acres seen a decade ago.

Granted, sorghum has not had the private industry investment like other crops, and limited weed control options have been a challenge for growers.

However, with post-emergent weed and grass control on the horizon, along with the momentum gained from ethanol markets, sorghum's future keeps looking brighter.

Sorghum can perform, often better than the alternatives.

Yet there remains a mindset that sorghum is only for dry years. Yes, sorghum can be a hardy crop that can stand up to drought, but what if we treated it like the real crop that it is?

Strength in numbers

Data from Kansas State University further proves what the sorghum industry has been saying for years – sorghum can perform, often better than the alternatives.

Alan Schlegel, a K-State soil scientist at the Tribune Experiment Station in western Kansas, has been comparing yields of no-till sorghum to no-till corn for the last four years. Beyond that, he has studied grain sorghum, corn and wheat rotations in a large-scale cropping system since 1995.

Schlegel's study aims to identify cropping systems that enhance and stabilize production in rain-fed systems to optimize economic crop production.

In his research summary, Schlegel notes that when averaged across the past 12 years, sorghum has yielded 18 bushels per acre more than corn when both were planted no-till into wheat stubble. That's a consistent advantage in yield.

Sorghum's advantage

One Kansas farmer put the pen to paper to find out just how much of an advantage the higher sorghum yields provided producers over corn.

Data from Kansas State University shows that sorghum can consistently provide a yield advantage in dryland cropping systems when compared to other crops.

"With a sorghum price of just $3 per bushel, that's a $50 per acre advantage," said Vance Ehmke, a sorghum and wheat farmer from Lane County, Kan. "If you're planting 1,000 acres of sorghum, you will gross an additional $50,000. At a more current price of $5 to $6 per bushel, sorghum's advantage is $85 to $100 an acre. On that same 1,000 acres, you're now grossing an additional $85,000 to $100,000."

Schlegel also found that adding sorghum into a cropping system boosted wheat yields the following year. In one case, wheat yields were 9 bushels per acre greater after sorghum than sunflowers.

Sorghum will perform

Schlegel's 12-year study isn't the only evidence of how sorghum can perform.

"At a more current price of $5 to $6 per bushel, sorghum's advantage is $85 to $100 an acre."

Sorghum farmers from across the country who entered the NSP Yield and Management Contest can speak for themselves – sorghum will perform, and will often far exceed your expectations.

The average yield of last year's contest winners was 159 bushels per acre. The 2010 non-irrigated bin buster winner yielded over 200 bushels.

When you look at the state level yield contest winners from Colorado to Virginia and Texas to South Dakota, yields are consistently well over 100 bushels per acre and often exceed the 150-bushel mark.

It's time to take sorghum seriously. But don't take our word for it, ask the farmers across the country who grow and profit from it.

Matt Splitter is members services director for the National Sorghum Producers and is a fifth generation farmer and sorghum grower in Lyons, Kan. Visit the Western Kansas Agricultural Research Center website at www.wkarc.org for more information about the cropping systems study.

E-Member Spotlight

Adapting to Customer Needs

By Matt Splitter

Agriculture tends to revolve around family. Whether it be a multi-generation, father–son, or a husband and wife farming operation, agriculture is a family venture. The same is true for W.B. Johnston Grain Company Inc. of Enid, Okla.

Since Willis Boyd Johnston established the company in 1893, Johnston's has become the largest privately owned grain elevator company in Oklahoma. They currently own and operate 24 country grain elevators throughout Oklahoma and Texas, including two grain terminals and an 18 million bushel rail terminal in Enid.

Butch Meibergen , president and CEO of Johnston Enterprises, is the fourth generation to operate the business, while his son, Joey Meibergen, vice president, is the fifth generation to work for the company after starting in 2004. Butch says family and great employees are the key to the success of the company.

"The employees have really made our company successful," Meibergen says. "Being able to have a relationship with our producers has been the key to our success."

Customer focus

"The success of the company comes from the ability to adapt to our customer's needs," Meibergen says. "Being a private family-owned company and not having a board, we can react to opportunities faster."

W.B. Johnston's grain website allows customers to offer a bid or contract on their grain. This electronically sends the offer to the corporate office for them to review and react. This technology allows their customers to stay a step ahead and make a timely and informed decision to add to their bottom line.

They have also added the opportunity to receive updates on a cell phone, allowing produces to have up to the minute information.

What sorghum means to the business

Located in a heavy wheat area, the opportunity to handle sorghum is a huge plus to Johnstons. Meibergen mentioned that producers are adopting a more intense rotation including sorghum that allows them to clean fields up from a traditional wheat monoculture.

"The opportunity to handle a high volume crop such as sorghum is a huge benefit," Meibergen says. "Sorghum gives us a commodity to merchandise all year."

He said that they market sorghum clear into the latter part of July, allowing a constant movement of grain. Most of their grain stays domestic, going to local feed mills, or into Texas.

Business scope

Johnston Enterprises, the parent company, does more than own and operate grain elevators. Their company also is an industry leader in specialty seeds. Proprietary Bermuda grasses, buffalo grass, wildflowers, native grasses and wildlife seeds are their primary seeds that are marketed not just locally but also on six continents around the world. Their top selling Bermuda grass was used on ball fields during the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

"Sorghum gives us a commodity to merchandise all year."

In addition to the grain elevators and seed business, Johnston Enterprises also owns and operates several ports in Oklahoma and Louisiana. The first port, Port 33, was purchased in 1983 and handles small and large volumes of grain, fertilizer and other goods. The purchase of Port 33 gave the Johnstons affordable transportation.

"When we bought Port 33 we were able to add more transportation options to our business," Meibergen says. "Times were changing and we needed a cheaper way to move products."

Since the purchase of Port 33, other ports have been bought to further the movement of products for not only them, but also their customers.

What the future holds

Butch says he has seen his share of changes over the years in agriculture. Technology, market alternatives and development are things he attributes to the future success of W.B. Johnston Grain Company.

"Sorghum will be a key to our future," Meibergen says. "It's all about volume and having grain to market."

Niche Sorghum Markets Add Value

By Kirby Carpenter and Lindsay Kennedy

Approximately 31.5 percent of U.S. grown sorghum was used as livestock feed in 2010. In addition, dried distillers grains (DDGs), a byproduct from the sorghum ethanol production process, give value to the crop as they have also been used as a viable feed product for cattle, swine and poultry.

In fact, sorghum is the second most used cereal grain behind corn for commercial growers of broilers, turkeys and egg layers in regions in the U.S.

A 'natural' fit

Companies raising livestock and poultry for niche markets seeking all-natural products, for example, have also found success with grain sorghum.

Buddy's Natural Chicken, a family-owned poultry processor in Gonzales, Texas, has been feeding sorghum for more than 20 years.

The fact that sorghum is GMO-free, environmentally friendly and locally available led company founder Buddy Lindeman to use grain sorghum as part of the poultry operation's grain-based diet.

"I think the protein level is better in grain sorghum, and it offers some qualities that corn does not," said Buddy's son, David Lindeman, who took over the family business in the Texas Hill Country after his father passed away in 2002.

Buddy claimed the grain-based diet was naturally lower in fat and provided superior flavor when compared with traditional poultry diets. David says grain sorghum helps produce an overall more desirable, whiter meat with firmer fat.

"We switched to corn in 2008 because milo wasn't available around here at the time," David said. "But we switched back to milo because the bird quality was not as good when we fed corn."

Feeding guides

In 2010, the Sorghum Checkoff released the publication "Sorghum in Poultry Production Feeding Guide", which further details sorghum's nutrient composition and its feeding value in poultry operations. The poultry guide, as well as guides for beef, dairy and swine, can be found online at SorghumCheckoff.com or a copy may be requested by calling (877) 687-8727.

Not just for livestock

The livestock sector may be a major player within U.S. sorghum market distribution, but cattle, swine and poultry aren't the only animals benefiting from sorghum. Dogs, cats and even fish and shrimp are also becoming consumers of the grain.

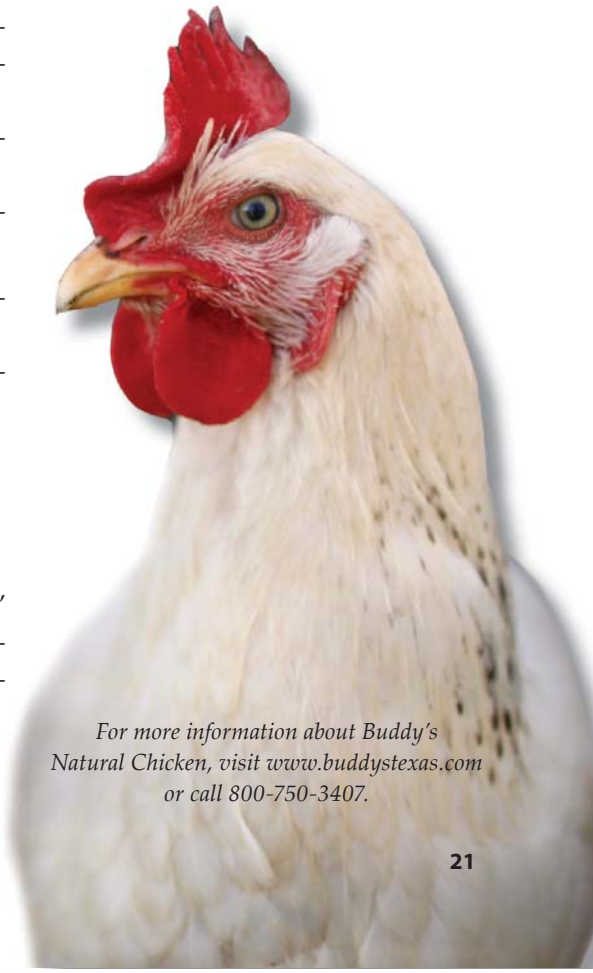
Interest from the pet food and aquaculture industries continues to grow as other sectors learn about the nutritional qualities sorghum offers as a feed.

"These types of animal feed markets are still relatively small compared to the larger livestock markets, but they do add value to the crop and show there is a general increase in sorghum interest," said Florentino Lopez, marketing director for the Sorghum Checkoff. "Sorghum provides a cost competitive feed ingredient, but it also has a lot of other redeeming qualities."

Protein is the single largest expense for aquaculture operations, leading researchers in the South to begin studying the role sorghum and sorghum DDGs can play as a feed ingredient. Currently, there are ongoing feeding trials to determine the nutrient digestibility of sorghum DDGs for catfish and tilapia, while sorghum as a feed option for shrimp is also being investigated.

Meanwhile, pet food companies like IAMS® have been using grain sorghum for carbohydrate blends in dog and cat foods.

Regardless of the animal, sorghum is finding its place as an excellent protein feed source.



For more information about Buddy's Natural Chicken, visit www.buddystexas.com or call 800-750-3407.

AIR SEEDING SUCCESS

By Melissa Pierce

Layout design by Kirby Carpenter

For many years, high costs prohibited Kansas farmers Loren and Corey Johnson from purchasing a drill for their sorghum and wheat.

The father and son combo, who farm near Hill City, Kan., in Graham County, hired out that job to others until five years ago when a government conservation program made it worthwhile to switch to no-till farming.

The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) created by the 2002 Farm Bill, formerly known as the Conservation Security Program, compensates growers for implementing conservation practices on their farms, while growers, in turn, agree to submit soil samples and adhere to set guidelines within the program.

With the money earned from the CSP program, the Johnsons bought a John Deere CCS air drill, which contributes to conservation efforts on their farm.

An air drill, also called an air seeder, allows growers to plant sorghum or wheat seed with one piece of equipment. The air drill is also less expensive than a planter. Since the Johnsons do not grow corn in their rotation, they did not need a planter.

Corey said they chose to use an air drill because the ground can become very hard in a no-till operation, and, along with the plant residue, an air drill can easily get the seed into the ground.

Corey and his father experimented with row placement until they arrived at a plan that worked for them.

"The first year we went with 20-inch spacing and skipped a row," Corey said. "We did that for a few years and then switched to 10-inch spacing, which is what we do today. This allows us to cut it with a straight head, which makes it easier to harvest because you don't have to go down in rows. You can go diagonally or any direction."

Because the rows are so close together, Loren explained, the canopy is broader, which helps decrease weed problems.

The Johnson's rotation includes sorghum, cattle and wheat. By practicing no-till, there is enough sorghum residue for the cattle to feed on for several months. The cattle are then followed by wheat in the rotation.

"We did not see much difference in our crops after the first year of rotation, but every year since then we have seen improvement," Corey said. "The wheat is always better

> "The wheat is always better following sorghum, and our sorghum looked very good last year."

"Last year, our dryland field produced an average of 115 bushels per acre, and the sorghum field was beautiful."

following sorghum, and our sorghum looked very good last year."

The Johnsons planted DEKALB 3707 Gaucho-treated sorghum seed that AgValley blended with Avail-treated 11-52-0 phosphorus. A herbicide with nitrogen was applied to the field one week before planting.

Leonard Long, an agronomist and crop consultant with AgValley Coop in Norton, Kan., helps the Johnsons manage their fertilizer program.

"We blend the milo seed to get the best results," Long explained. "Avail allows phosphorus to get to the plant and not get bonded to other minerals in the soil. The Johnsons also apply 80 lbs. of nitrogen with Nutrisphere per acre. It is a nitrogen stabilizer that drastically slows down the volatilization rate and leaching of nitrogen - without it, 20 to 30 percent of the nitrogen can get lost to volatilization."

With the new practices in place, the Johnsons like the yields they are seeing in their operation.

"I have been farming since I was 14 years old," said the 75-year-old Loren. "Since we switched to no-till and an air drill in combination with our fertility program, I have been pleased with the yields we have seen. Last year, our dryland field produced an average of 115 bushels per acre, and the sorghum field was beautiful."

Loren and Corey Johnson and their crop consultant Leonard Long (far right) have found success using an air drill over no-till sorghum acres. *Photo by Melissa Pierce*

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NSP Names New Lobby Firm

Combest, Sell & Associates now representing NSP in Washington, D.C.

By Lindsay Kennedy

NSP has new representation on Capitol Hill – in more ways than one.

The NSP board of directors announced effective Feb. 1, 2011, Combest Sell & Associates (CS&A) is now consulting and lobbying for the organization.

"The individuals in this firm could not be more qualified, and they come highly recommended with an excellent reputation," said Terry Swanson, chairman of the NSP Legislative Committee. "There has not been a more significant force for good in ag policy over the last 12 years than CS&A, and we are excited to have them representing sorghum growers in Washington, D.C."

The CS&A core team currently consists of partners Larry Combest, former chairman of the House Agriculture Committee, Tom Sell, his former deputy chief of staff, and Jeff Harrison, who previously served as counsel to the House Agriculture Committee.

"We are excited to be working with Combest Sell & Associates, and are confident in the experience and commitment to agriculture that they will bring to sorghum growers," Swanson said.

NSP Legislative Director Hannah Lipps, her husband Brandon, and son Isaiah have relocated to Washington, D.C. She will remain in her role as legislative director and will continue working closely with CS&A to coordinate legislative activities for NSP. Brandon Lipps has started in his new position as counsel for the House Agriculture Committee and as subcommittee director for operations, oversight and credit.

2011 Commodity Classic Wrap Up

By Lindsay Kennedy

It was a record-setting 16th annual Commodity Classic in Tampa, Fla. Total attendance topped 4,820, breaking the previous record set in Nashville three years ago by almost 300 people. More than 1,600 sorghum, corn, wheat and soybean growers were in attendance as well as 126 media.

Commodity Classic is a great opportunity for NSP to tell growers about the latest advancements and important issues in the sorghum industry.

Sorghum General Session

The sorghum general session, which is held each year during Commodity Classic, aims to highlight key issues affecting the industry with a sorghum-specific focus.

National Sorghum Producers' D.C. representative Tom Sell of Combest, Sell and Associates spoke at the sorghum general session and offered key issues that will be important to watch as the writing of the next farm bill approaches. Budget pressure will be enormous, Sell says, but agriculture has cut spending and programs over the last decade and needs to tell that story as the policy options are discussed in 2011 and 2012.

"You should never ever bet against the American farmer because if you do, it's a losing bet."

Sell said there are fewer members of Congress representing significant amounts of agricultural production in their districts than ever before, with only about 75 out of 435 districts now having a farm or ranch presence within their borders.

Americans currently have the safest, most affordable food supply, largely because of agricultural policy, and that is something Americans should make every effort to protect, Sell said.

"If we're going to feed these 9 billion people with increasing appetites, we've got to have the American farmer to do it," he said.

Sara Wyant of Agri-Pulse Communications also discussed the current budget environment on Capitol Hill and the challenges that lie ahead for ag.

Of particular interest at the sorghum general session was a presentation given by Carlos Rionda, president of Southeast Renewable Fuels (SERF) in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., who discussed the energy potential of the emerging sweet sorghum industry sector. SERF is building an advanced biorefinery in Florida that will produce ethanol from sweet sorghum.

NSP Vice Chairman and Colorado sorghum farmer Terry Swanson joined Tom Sell for a farm bill Q&A where they answered questions regarding budget cuts, farm policy priorities, and educating the large number of new House and Senate ag committee members about sorghum.

NSP Strategic Business Director, Chris Cogburn, and Camco Vice President

Secretary Vilsack stopped by the NSP booth to visit with NSP Chairman Gerald Simonsen and other NSP directors during commodity Classic, March 4, 2011.

of Ag, Garth Boyd, led a discussion regarding the new pathway for sorghum established by the California Air Resources Board (CARB). With the help of NSP, CARB's new sorghum pathway opens doors for sorghum ethanol to be sold in California, which adds value to the crop.

Simonsen, far left, answers questions with the leadership of wheat, corn and soybeans during the Commodity Classic General Session.

Inaugural Sorghum PAC Event

The new Sorghum Political Action Committee (PAC), which was formed to further the legislative interests of sorghum producers, held its inaugural silent auction and event during this year's Commodity Classic.

The PAC event raised more than $11,000 from the silent auction and ticket sales, while entertaining the 100-plus who were in attendance with a side-splitting act from ventriloquist Greg Claassen.

Items up for bid at this year's silent auction included a Benelli Super Black Eagle II 12-gauge shotgun donated by the Texas Grain Sorghum Association, an iPad from the Kansas Grain Sorghum Producers, gold and silver coins donated by Dan and Katie Krienke of Perryton, Texas, "The Contract" pewter sculpture donated by the Colorado Sorghum Producers, and much more.

Classic General Session

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack and House Ag Committee Chairman Frank Lucas headlined the 2011 Commodity Classic General Session.

Lucas took the stage first, declaring that the EPA's continual "assault on production agriculture must stop." He said the House Ag Committee has scheduled hearings where EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson will have to answer questions on why the agency continues to question the safety of proven chemicals such as atrazine as well as their decision to limit dust.

Lucas said the 2012 Farm Bill will be the third on which he has worked, and noted that half of his committee is new.

"This farm bill is shaping up to be a doozy," he said. A fresh round of field hearings will be announced by the committee for later this fall.

Secretary Vilsack addressed the important role farmers play in international trade and national security.

"Because American agriculture produces 86 percent of the food we consume, our families spend less at the grocery store compared to consumers in much of the rest of the world. As producers of high-quality products and conscientious stewards of our lands, American farmers and ranchers deserve our gratitude."

Vilsack discussed the importance of biofuels to U.S. national security, and reiterated the administration's focus to expand biofuel use. He received roaring applause from the crowd when he spoke out against those who blame grain-based ethanol for higher food prices, and even called the reoccurring food versus fuel debate "irritating."

"You should never ever bet against the American farmer because if you do, it's a losing bet."

Gerald Simonsen, NSP chairman and sorghum farmer from Ruskin, Neb., took the stage again this year with the leadership of National Corn Growers Association, American Soybean Association and National Association of Wheat Growers during the Classic general session's annual question and answer session. In light of the continual attacks on agriculture from the urban media, Simonsen discussed the importance of being proactive in telling agriculture's message to the masses.

Heading to Nashville next year

Join NSP next year in Nashville, Tenn., for the 17th annual Commodity Classic March 1-3, 2012. Make plans early to attend what is sure to be another fantastic educational and networking opportunity for sorghum, wheat, corn and soybean growers. Stay tuned to www.SorghumGrowers.com for sorghum-specific events at next year's Classic, and visit www.commodityclassic.com for more information.

Clearing a Pathway for Sorghum Ethanol

By Lindsay Kennedy

As environmental pressures and gas prices continue to rise, more and more focus is placed on finding the right fuels and feedstocks to sustainably and efficiently transition our dependence away from foreign oil.

Sorghum can play a critical role as an ethanol feedstock and has a smaller carbon footprint than other grain-based ethanol feedstocks, which is why the California Air Resources Board (CARB) ultimately decided to open the door for sorghum-based ethanol in the Golden State.

Since these kind of doors generally don't open on their own, it took action on the part of the National Sorghum Producers to ensure sorghum didn't miss out on this "golden" opportunity.

California's framework

The term "greenhouse gas emissions"or GHGs has become household lingo over the past few years. As the country works to reduce the impact of GHGs on the atmosphere, states like California have begun taking measures into their own hands to turn the environmental clock backward.

The California State Legislature passed the Global Warming Solutions Act in 2006 (AB 32), which established a goal to reduce GHG emissions to 1990 levels by 2020. In the long term, AB 32 hopes to reduce GHG emissions to 20 percent of the 1990 levels by 2050. Meeting that target requires a set of comprehensive actions.

In early 2007, CARB began analysis of potential measures to establish low carbon fuels standards (LCFS) to meet the GHG goal. A feasibility study was completed by the University of California later that year, which led the air resources board to identify LCFS as a priority in June 2007. The final rule was adopted by CARB in January 2010, reporting began in 2010, and the rule was fully implemented in 2011 to transition the state to lower carbon fuels.

Carbon intensity

The LCFS aims to reduce the carbon intensity of transportation fuels by a minimum of 10 percent by 2020. Reductions will be measured against the 2010 carbon intensity of gasoline and diesel as a baseline as they work to transition to low carbon fuels. The LFCS also encourages the development of technology and increased use of low carbon intensity fuels, including biofuels that meet these standards.

What is carbon intensity?

Carbon intensity of transportation fuels are "the currency of the low carbon fuels standard" according to CARB. Carbon intensity is measured in grams of carbon dioxide equivalent per mega joule of fuel energy. Basically, it encompasses greenhouse gas emissions of carbon dioxide, nitrogen oxides and methane that are released into the atmosphere during production of the fuel.

California records the carbon intensity of a fuel in the state's look-up table, which is the reference point used by providers of transportation fuels to demonstrate compliance with California's LFCS. Fuel pathways, in essence, serve as a bank account of carbon intensities.

The final rule released in 2009 included a controversial decision that considered indirect land use change calculations in its full assessment of ethanol. With the consideration of indirect land use change, corn-based ethanol is rated much higher than the baseline carbon intensity.

Direct vs. indirect

Carbon intensity, according to CARB, essentially has two components – direct and indirect. Direct carbon intensity describes emissions from the actual production of fuel from the field to the wheel, while indirect carbon intensity accounts for emissions from indirect land use change, i.e, changes

that arise through macroeconomic effects of biofuels production.

In order to determine the direct and indirect carbon intensities of fuels, CARB used a different model for each.

The Greenhouse Gases, Regulated Emissions and Energy Use in Transportation (GREET) model is used by CARB to determine direct carbon intensities. This model analyzes individual field-level data such as nitrogen, phosphorous, and potassium applications, fuel usage, insecticide usage and other specific inputs used to produce a biofuel feedstock. In this model, sorghum exists *separately* from other feedstocks including corn.

However, under the Global Trade Analysis Project (GTAP) model from Purdue University, sorghum is *not separate* from corn. CARB uses the GTAP model to determine indirect carbon intensity by looking at many variables from all sorts of sectors.

Because sorghum does not exist separate from corn in terms of indirect land use change in the GTAP model, the crop is put at a disadvantage when being considered by CARB. NSP has been working diliegently to fix this inaccuracy.

Clearing the air

In order for a sorghum pathway to be established in California, NSP had to clear the air in regards to sorghum's actual environmental impact.

NSP Strategic Business Director Chris Cogburn has logged many hours gathering data that accurately represents sorghum.

"We provided CARB with accurate data on sorghum production inputs to get them corrected in the GREET model," Cogburn said. "Beforehand, the model misrepresented certain inputs that did not reflect what actually happens during sorghum production. So, we worked to provide data that correctly shows the carbon footprint of sorghum production from the time it is planted to the time it is harvested."

"This pathway brings value to the ethanol plants that use sorghum."

That hard work will ultimately pay off for sorghum growers marketing their crops to ethanol plants. CARB officially established a fuel pathway for sorghum at the end of 2010, allowing the use of sorghum as an ethanol feedstock in California.

"This pathway brings value to the ethanol plants that use sorghum," Cogburn said. "If they're selling ethanol for more value in California that creates a demand pull for sorghum at the producer level."

Biorefineries can now register with CARB to allow their fuel to be counted toward GHG reduction. Around 150 biofuel facilities worldwide have submitted applications.

While the established pathway for sorghum is a victory for the industry, Cogburn says there is still plenty of work to be done to ensure specific inputs more accurately reflect U.S. sorghum production in the GREET model.

Cogburn said NSP still needs to work to get data in the GTAP model corrected, because it currently puts sorghum in the same category as corn when it comes to indirect land use change, which is not the case in reality.

"Our ultimate goal is to make sure sorghum's carbon intensity is correctly represented across the board."

SORGHUM SHORTCUTS

2011 NSP Yield & Management Contest rule change

A judging rule change has been made for the 2011 NSP Yield and Management Contest.

Contestants' scores in the *Irrigated Division* will now be determined by yield only, instead of the county average as determined by USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service. Contestants entering the *Non-Irrigated Division* will still be scored on the amount in bushels by which their yield exceeds the 5-year county average for that division as determined by USDA-NASS.

For a complete listing of the 2011 contest rules, refer to p. 11.

Production webinars address no-till, weed control

The Sorghum Checkoff and the Plant Management Network have released three new webcasts on sorghum crop management open to all growers.

These webcasts cover weed management practices, no-till grain sorghum production, and a comparison of sorghum and corn's profitability, particularly in stress-prone environments.

"These webcasts present useful and important information that is pertinent to the needs and interests of sorghum farmers," said Bill Kubecka, chairman of the Sorghum Checkoff. "Whether it be utilizing good stewardship practices for the new post-emergent weed and grass control technology, or increasing yields through no-till systems, these webcasts offer something for every sorghum farmer."

To access the webcasts brought to you by the Sorghum Checkoff and the Plant Management Network, visit www.sorghumcheckoff.com/sorghum-webinars.

The Plant Management Network (www.plantmanagementnetwork.org) is a nonprofit online publisher whose mission is to enhance the health, management and production of agricultural and horticultural crops.

Parting Shot: A gluten-free gift

Jill Harrell of Leesburg, Ga., won a cookie bouquet from NSP during Commodity Classic, March 2-4 in Tampa, Fla. In addition to the sugar cookies that were each decorated with the NSP sorghum head logo, were packets of Gluten-Free Essentials™ baking mixes made with 100 percent gluten-free sorghum flour.

NSP held the drawing at the Classic trade show, which was a sell out this year with 871 exhibitors and 222 companies. There were more than 4,826 attendees this year at Classic. Farm families represented over half of the participants with 2,776 attendees, and first-time attendees saw an 80 percent increase over the previous year.

For more information about Gluten-Free Essentials™, visit their website at www.gfessentials.com

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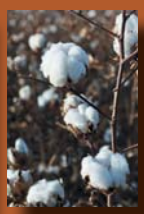

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