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SORGHUM Grower

SPRING 2015

NSP Yield Contest

TOP YIELD

Texas farmer Mike Henson achieves impressive 245.94 bushels per acre yield

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SORGHUM Grower

Spring 2015, Volume 9, Issue 2

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CEO's Desk

Time Flies When You're Having Fun

I remember when I started at NSP in the old Butler building in Abernathy, Texas, where the roof leaked in multiple places every time it rained. The industry and organization had so many problems that some days the board and staff wondered where to start.

Even so, just like in your operation, you show up and move forward one step at a time. This spring many of our growers on the Gulf Coast have struggled greatly getting a crop in because of too much moisture while western Kansas is starting to become very dry. Low commodity prices have certainly challenged profit and loss calculations for 2015, as well.

However, the one bright spot beyond cattle in agriculture right now is sorghum. As of March 31, USDA has set planting intentions for sorghum at 7.9 million acres, which in my opinion is still low. For the first time in my career, there are new crop sorghum bids with positive basis and sorghum is sitting well above competing crops from a net profit standpoint.

You have a talented Team Sorghum organization working to grow the industry from both the board of directors and staff levels from both NSP and the Sorghum Checkoff.

While there is still a long way to go and around every corner another legislative or regulatory item to fix, the industry is much better equipped to handle these issues today. By next fall we will have added a full-time legislative position in Washington, D.C., to help continue to protect and grow the sorghum industry.

Thanks to all the past directors and early staff that worked long hours with little reward to help move the industry forward. We have come a long way the last 20 years, and I cannot wait to see what NSP and the sorghum industry can accomplish in the next 20 years.

Tim Lust

Tim Lust
NSP CEO

The Battle Continues

By Tim Lust

NEARLY 20 YEARS AGO, I attended my first meeting concerning the No. 1 herbicide family sorghum farmers used to control weeds–atrazine and propazine. These herbicides, which are members of the triazine family, were and still are the most used products in sorghum.

If you would have told me 20 years ago that I would be writing an article for *Sorghum Grower* about the ongoing battle to continue the use of those products, I would have been extremely shocked.

Today, however, nothing surprises me. This summer, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency will come out with a 60-day comment period on proposed use changes to the atrazine label. As I have mentioned to growers over the years, this is the most studied product ever with an amazing scientific record of product safety.

In recent years, both Syngenta's own scientific data and data from the EPA Scientific Advisory Board have shown the product is and has been safe. However, that does not mean additional regulations are not possible.

In today's regulatory environment, there are 10 different ways changes can be made that will make it difficult on either registrants, growers or both to use the product as it is intended. Depending on what comes out this summer on this rule, it will be important for sorghum growers to weigh in during the 60-day comment period to let EPA know how the proposed rules would impact their farming operation.

New challenges

Interestingly, there are two additional twists in the new pesticide arena today impacting all chemical approval decisions. The Endangered Species Act and herbicide resistance issues are now front and center in all discussions at the agency. Environ-

Photograph by Billy Bob Brown

mental groups have increasingly used the courts to push for more and more listings on hundreds of species in every corner of the U.S. As this plays out, there is increasing concern over how this could impact historical pesticide usage and if the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service or EPA would win if there is a conflict. Most popular opinions suggest that USFW will prevail.

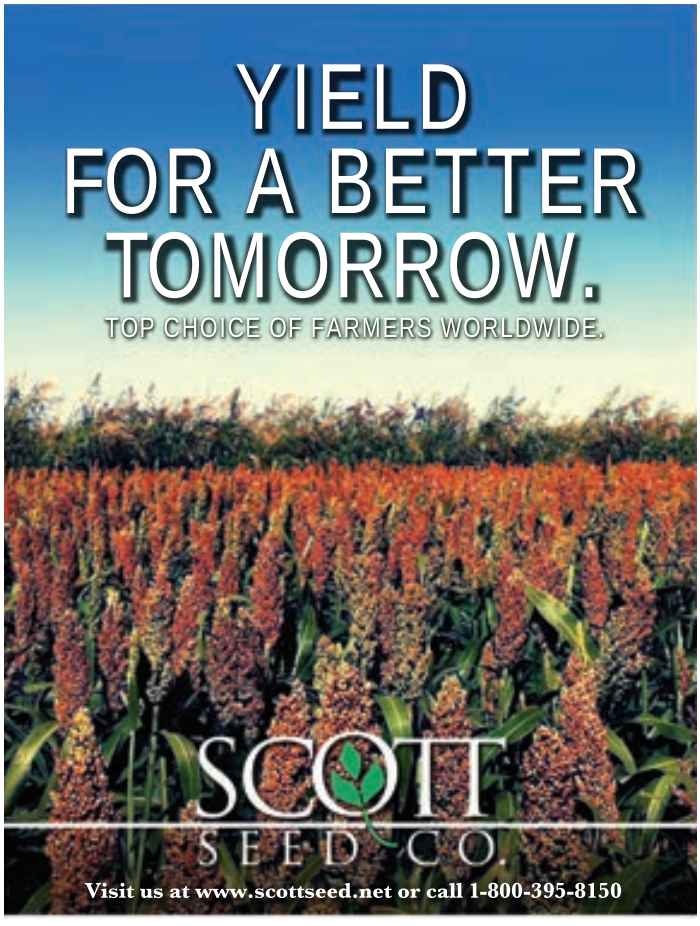
In regards to resistance management, many restrictions are being placed on new and existing products to help extend the product life of those products.

Everyone's responsibility

In recent years, we have spent a lot of time working with different divisions of the EPA. We recently were in Washington, D.C., meeting with the agency to gain their approval for the new Inzen™ sorghum that uses the Zest™ technology. Weed resistance and crop rotation discussions have been a key part of the discussion of the this and many other products over the last year.

The reality is farmers have learned after resistance issues with glyphosate that stewardship plans and best management practices do matter.

We in agriculture have a responsibility to rotate crops and chemistries to make sure we are doing all we can to maintain and extend the life of different herbicide chemistries. Likewise, EPA has the responsibility to follow sound science and make regulatory decisions based on science and not political pressure from those who do not believe in any use of agricultural chemicals.



We will keep fighting

I have strong faith in our growers doing the right thing. Here's to hoping our regulatory agencies do as well.

Tim Lust is the CEO of National Sorghum Producers. NSP is focused on leading legislative and regulatory change through effective policy and relationships for a more profitable, diverse and competitive sorghum industry. For more information on how you can become an NSP member, visit us online at sorghumgrowers.com.

nsp's Industry Partner Program

JOIN THE TEAM!

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

Find out more about NSP's Industry Partner Program at www.SorghumGrowers.com/industry-partners

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Another Record-Breaking Commodity Classic

By Michelle Hochstein

WITH RECORD ATTENDANCE, SORGHUM growers from across the nation flocked to the 20th annual Commodity Classic Feb. 26-28 in Phoenix. Sorghum, wheat, soybean and corn growers accounted for over half of the 7,936 attendees with a total of 4,328 in attendance who learned more about current policies and issues facing the agriculture industry.

As a host of the annual Classic, National Sorghum Producers joined the National Corn Growers Association, National Association of Wheat Growers and the American Soybean Association to put on the largest farmer-led, farmer-focused convention and trade show.

Sorghum General Session

During the Sorghum General Session at Classic, sorghum producers, end-users and industry partners heard from an array of speakers about what's coming down the pipeline in the sorghum industry, lessons from the sugarcane aphid, and surging demand within the market.

What's in the sorghum pipeline?

With the demand for grain sorghum growing, Chad Hayes, sorghum geneticist at USDA-ARS, said more seed

▼ ON STAGE. NSP Chairman J.B. Stewart and the leadership from NAWG, NCGA and ASA discuss industry issues on stage with Classic General Session emcee Mark Mayfield.

companies are interested in investing in sorghum and different traits, including herbicide resistance, drought tolerance and yield enhancements.

"I think the future is very bright for grain sorghum," Hayes said. "I think in the next five or 10 years, as long as demand is high, you are really going to see these traits take off with sorghum."

Ben Beyer, head sorghum breeder for Alta Seeds, said they are currently working with multiseed technology, originally developed by USDA-ARS in Lubbock, Texas. He said he anticipates a significant increase in yields.

"We are going to continue to focus on high yield potential, drought stress tolerance, pests such as the sugarcane aphid, other disease resistance, and herbicide tolerance," he said, "to continue to provide a hybrid that is not only high yielding, but also meets the farmer's needs."

Lessons from the sugarcane aphid

The sugarcane aphid has been a recent hot topic within the sorghum industry. However, Charles Allen, extension entomologist and integrated pest management coordinator for Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, said he believes the aphid is no longer a major threat to sorghum.

"We have the tools, we have the insecticide, and we know more now than we did last year about when to spray and those kinds of things," Allen said. "We know more about what things you need to pay attention to in order to get the coverage you need and how important it is to not let this aphid get too far out in front of you."

Invasives such as the sugarcane aphid, he said, are manageable. Allen said good yields are achievable in the presence of the aphid as long as growers pay attention to it and are proactive.

"These invasives come in, and they are terrible for the first few years," Allen said. "They are the worst as they ever are the first few years they are there, and then over time they tend to not be so important."

Sorghum marketing panel

The sorghum marketing panel, sponsored by the Sorghum Checkoff, focused on the consistent, reliable growth of the sorghum industry, resulting in added demand and market value.

The panel featured Sorghum Checkoff Executive Director Florentino Lopez and High Value Markets Program Director Doug Bice. The panel further exemplified now is prime time to grow sorghum by explaining the increase in demand, the current value of sorghum relative to other grains, the increase in price, and the economic benefits of growing the crop.

One major reason for an increase in sorghum market demand is China. Exports of U.S. grain sorghum are at a record high with China committed to 300 million bushels as of March 5, surpassing USDA's total year export projections only six months into the current marketing year.

Classic General Session

J.B. Stewart, NSP chairman and farmer from Keyes, Oklahoma, joined grower leadership from the national corn, wheat and soybean associations on stage during the Classic General Session. Stewart addressed the increase in U.S. sorghum exports, new uses of sorghum as a food, and the benefits of growing sorghum.

"We are moving sorghum in quantities and prices that we never dreamed possible a few years ago," he said, "and it is totally exciting."

Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack also addressed the general session, making his sixth appearance at Commodity Classic. Vilsack discussed the farm bill, addressing concerns and thanking farmers for their work on it. He also announced a sign-up extension for the agricultural risk coverage and price loss coverage 2014 Farm Bill programs and stressed the importance of the Trade Promotion Authority and Trans Pacific Partnership trade agreement.

Classic Trade Show

Sorghum growers and industry leaders from across the country visited NSP's Commodity Classic booth. The booth was amidst 355 participating companies with the trade show utilizing a record 170,500 square feet.

Booth visitors were able to speak with growers and industry leaders about best management practices, current policy decisions and different sorghum markets while also having their *Sorghum Grower* cover shot taken, viewable at http://on.fb.me/1wXPihg.

See you in New Orleans

Join us next year in New Orleans, Louisiana, for the 21st Commodity Classic, March 3-5, 2016, and enjoy NSP's Sorghum General Session, yield contest awards dinner, Sorghum PAC Auction and casino night and more. Visit CommodityClassic.com for details and updates.

Joe Pennington, 65
Raymondville, Texas

Joe's dad started farming in the area in 1923, and Joe's first crop was in 1972.

1. How does sorghum fit in your crop rotation?
We have to rotate with sorghum. Our typical rotation is cotton, sorghum, sesame, sugarcane, vegetables. Recently, it has become our lead crop because of demand and the great basis. I believe the work the Sorghum Checkoff has benefited us and the basis.

2. What is your sorghum yield target at planting, and how does your farming system support that goal?
I like to make 5,000 (plus) pounds, and with adequate moisture, we can surpass that yield. Typically, our limiting factor is the lack of moisture, but not this year. We also treat the seed and use adequate fertilizer. We use a crop consultant for midge and [sugarcane] aphid control.

3. How do you prepare the seed bed for sorghum from tillage to planting practices?
It depends on the previous crop. If it's cotton, we kill the cotton, pull stalks, pair tilling (or moboard plow). In this area we like to row up and put fertilizer down. However, this year is completely different. We are not rowing up. We are typically done planting milo by 3/10. We plant our milo, cotton and then sesame.

4. What is your typical seed population, variety selection, and seed maturity?
Our plant population is 65,000 seeds per acre, and we plant DeKalb's DKS-3707 (105-day maturity) and Pioneer 83G19. DKS-3707 always makes milo. It's the variety we check against the others, and is also somewhat tolerant to the aphid. We scout our fields twice a week at certain times of the year.

5. How is this year's planting shaping up?
We have great moisture. However, we are going to be extremely late. Milo grain acres will be up. We have to get it in. Since it will be late, we will get the heat units, but we have to get it planted.

Photograph by Katelyn Luckett

Shane Beckman, 33

Seldon, Kansas

Shane has been farming 14 years after starting fulltime in 2001.

1. How does sorghum fit in your crop rotation?
We manage both irrigated and dryland sorghum. Our dryland rotation is wheat, corn/milo then summer fallow. Irrigated rotation is wheat corn/milo then sunflowers/soybeans.

2. What is your sorghum yield target at planting, and how does your farming system support that goal?
Our dryland sorghum yield goal is 100 bu/ac, and our limited irrigation sorghum yield goal is 180 bu/ac. Each year we take soil samples, so we know what we have and fertilize accordingly. We will vary our fertility program applied through fertigation based on the growing season and the crop's yield potential.

3. How do you prepare the seed bed for sorghum from tillage to planting practices?
We run a strictly no-till operation. We use a 24-row, 30-inch planter, but we might experiment with 15-inch spacing on our irrigated milo ground in the future.

4. What is your typical seed population, variety selection, and seed maturity?
Our dryland sorghum is planted at a 40,000-plant population and our irrigated is at a 70,000-plant population. Our optimal irrigated sorghum plant date is May 15 and May 25 for dryland. We plant Pioneer varieties and use 118-day varieties for irrigated and 106-108-day varieties for dryland. This has our grain sorghum flowering mid-July.

5. How is this year's sorghum planting shaping up?
Temperature-wise we've had some really warm weather, which is a challenge as we don't have a lot of soil moisture. A quarter of our farm will be planted to sorghum this year.

Photograph by Josie Alexander

Photograph by Steve Glover

John Scates, 45
Shawneetown, Illinois

John has been farming for 25 years with his family.

1. How does sorghum fit in your crop rotation?
Our farm is located near the Ohio, Wabash and Little Wabash rivers. Water is truly a blessing, but limits our planting season. Sorghum's versatility allows us to plant at a later date and still harvest a high yielding crop.

2. What is your yield target at planting, and how does your farming system support that goal?
Our targeted yield is 150-170 bu/ac. We have irrigated and non-irrigated acres. We apply multiple applications of nitrogen and fungicide, and we're not afraid to use insecticide when needed.

3. How do you prepare the seed bed for sorghum from tillage to planting practices?
We use no-till production practices on soybean stubble. When we rotate after corn, we use a reel disc once or twice depending on stalk breakdown.

4. What is your typical seed population, variety selection, and seed maturity?
We plant anywhere from 115,000-125,000 seeds per acre, which varies depending on soil type. We are dealer for Pioneer Hi-breds and firmly believe in the genetics. The Pioneer hybrid we favor is 84G62, which is an eight yield for maturity.

5. How is this year's sorghum planting shaping up?
Our sorghum acres are up this year. We typically don't start planting until late April and it looks like we are going to run a few weeks behind due to an excess amount of rainfall since Jan. 1.

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Chromatin First Tenant at Texas Tech Research, Technology Park

By Megan Skiles

CHROMATIN INC, AN AG BIOTECH COMPANY singularly focused on sorghum research, will be the first tenant to move into the new Texas Tech Innovation Hub and Research Park located in Lubbock, Texas.

The company produces sorghum hybrids to growers in traditional agricultural markets including food, feed and ethanol and targets solutions for global agricultural issues through sorghum research and development. Chromatin's molecular development team, currently residing in Champaign, Illinois, will be relocating to Lubbock. The move will effectively bring Chromatin's entire research and development team to the area to join its agronomy and breeding programs, which are already established in the region.

Kenneth G. Davenport, chief technology officer of Chromatin, said the collaborative Lubbock-concentrated relationship with Texas Tech University will offer many great research opportunities for sorghum.

"Sorghum is a High Plains, South Plains endeavor, and many of the leading sorghum companies operate here in Lubbock," Davenport said. "We really want to leverage the resources and markets here in the heart of sorghum country. We feel this is the place to be from both a research and development standpoint as well as the commercial side of this planting seed business."

◀ (L to R) Michael Galyean, College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources dean, Duane Nellis, TTU president, Ken Davenport, Chromatin CTO, Robert Duncan, senior VP for reseach, Robert Duncan, TTU chancellor, and Lance Nail, research park chairman. TTU photo.

Texas Tech's Research Park and Innovation Hub, expected to open this summer, will be a center for both innovation and entrepreneurship. The 40,000 square foot, $29 million facility will bridge a partnership between the business and the region's academic community.

"We're extremely pleased to have Chromatin as the first tenant in our research park," said Robert Duncan, Texas Tech University System chancellor. "Sorghum is an important crop in this part of the country because of its water efficiency, and Chromatin is an industry leader in terms of identifying and developing solutions for global agricultural issues. They are a perfect fit here where agribusiness is such a vital economic driver."

Chromatin sells seed under their primary brand Sorghum Partners, which is an NSP Industry Partner.

"Chromatin's leadership and commitment to sorghum is critical to the genetic advancement of the crop," said Tim Lust, NSP and Sorghum Checkoff CEO. "We are pleased to see the new partnership with the Texas Tech Innovation Hub and Research Park and have confidence in the leveraging of a strong plant science platform offered by Texas Tech. We look forward to seeing the fruitful results of this partnership and the start of a new chapter in developing more sustainable and profitable sorghum genetics."

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#GoFor250

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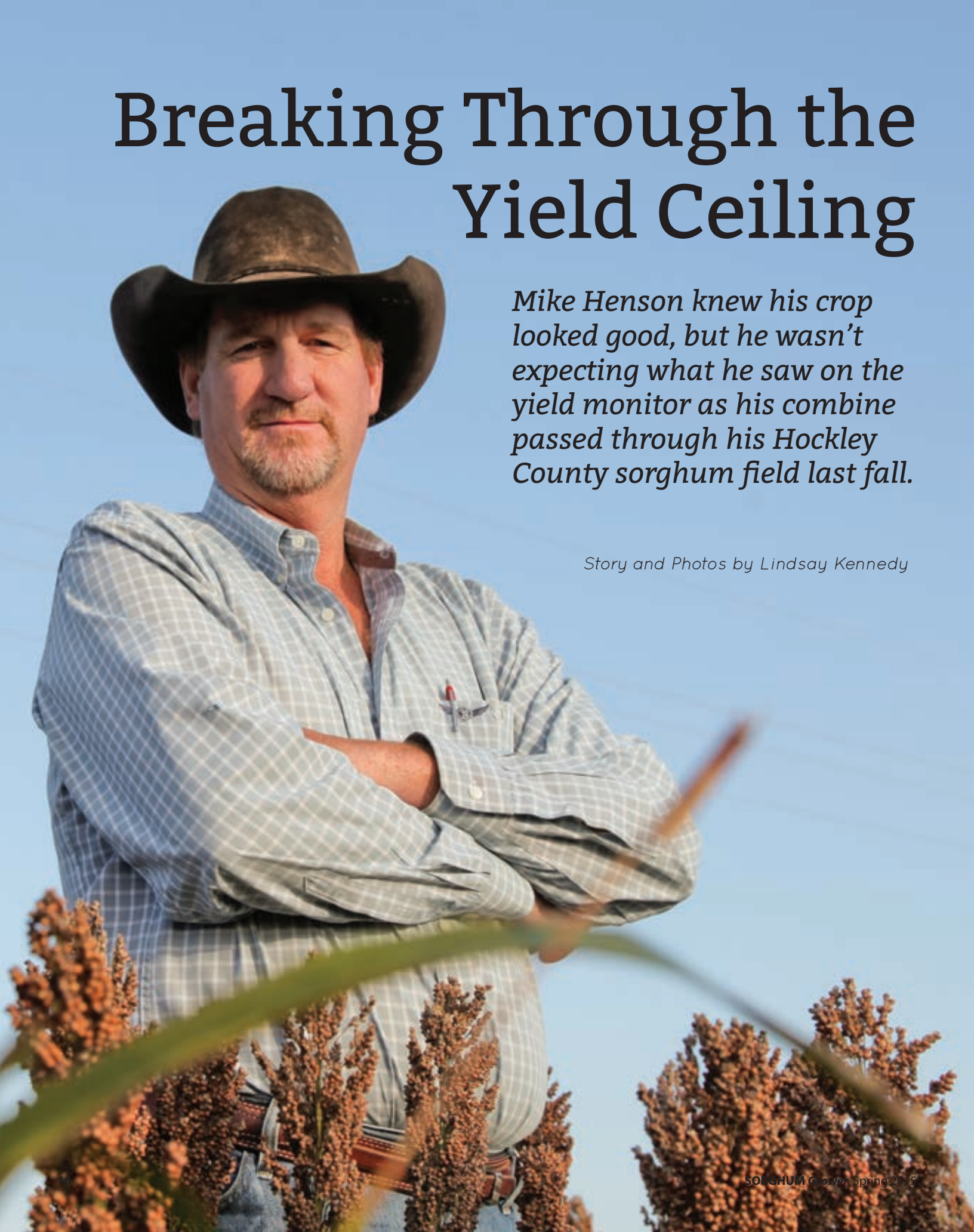
Breaking Through the Yield Ceiling

Mike Henson knew his crop looked good, but he wasn't expecting what he saw on the yield monitor as his combine passed through his Hockley County sorghum field last fall.

Story and Photos by Lindsay Kennedy



PRODUCING A WINNING yield wasn't on Henson's mind when he planted the crop last April. Sorghum had become an important part of his crop rotation with cotton, and although he had grown 200-plus bushel sorghum in the past, the lingering drought left him cautiously optimistic for high yields in 2014.

However, with a good fertility system, some beneficial summer rains, and a little luck, Henson found himself looking at a whopping 245.94 bushels per acre on the yield monitor as he slowly maneuvered his combine through the thick field.

The soaring yield from his Pioneer 84P80 irrigated grain sorghum earned him the top yield in NSP's 2014 Yield Contest.

"I remember looking at the field thinking it would do well, but I never imagined we would hit what we did," Henson said. "I made about a half a pass around the field and then just parked the combine, called my elevator and county agent, and said, 'Y'all are going to have to get out here to see this for yourselves.'"

'Cherry on top'

Henson farms a total of 9,000 acres on the South Plains of Texas near Levelland where he grows cotton and sorghum in a rotation along with some wheat ground.

He also grazes 500 cows on his sorghum stalks following harvest, which allows him to take advantage of current cattle prices.

It should come as no surprise that Henson would achieve a high sorghum yield. Even before his hefty yield success during the 2014 growing season, he was an advocate for sorghum in the heart of cotton country, encouraging fellow growers to treat it like a primary crop.

While participating on a grower panel during a Jan. 2014 Sorghum U event, he made it clear sorghum plays an important role on his farm.

"For years, all I was focused on was cotton," Henson told a crowd of growers. "I knew I had to get to the point where I wasn't treating my milo like a stepchild. I needed to start treating it like my cotton."

He began mixing sorghum into a rotation with his cotton years ago, but didn't see significant yields until he began treating it like a primary crop.

"It is not uncommon now for me to hit between 10,000- and 12,000-pound milo (214 bu/ac)," Henson said. "That's a good range. If everything falls right, and I've got the fertilizer down, that's when it starts inching up above 12,000 pounds."

"On a 100-acre farm with 75 acres of cotton and 25 acres of sorghum, I can make as many bales of cotton on that 75 acres as I could on the 100," Henson said. "Sorghum is the cherry on top."

That primary crop treatment centers on a good fertility system in sorghum, he said.

Henson applied a total of 240 units of nitrogen to his winning crop last year.

"It does take a lot of nitrogen to get over 12,000-pounds," he said. "I put nitrogen down three times, including composted manure and liquid nitrogen. On my irrigated sorghum, I got the rains at the right time, so I came back and kept fertilizing."

Water savings is key

It is no secret water is a big issue on the Texas South Plains. The region's agricultural production relies heavily on the Ogallala Aquifer for irrigation, and as the region crawls out of the recent historic drought, growers are turning to more drought-tolerant and water-conserving practices.

Sorghum allows Henson to get the most out of his available water. He plants the crop in mid-April, applies needed irrigation throughout the growth process, and then pulls back irrigation on his sorghum by July 4.

"By planting [sorghum] early, I can water it, get it up, and then start watering my cotton," he said.

Unless something changes in the next 30 days, he said he will go half dryland milo and half dryland cotton.

"I'll do that for the simple reason of milo prices are good and we had great winter moisture, and cotton prices are low," he said. "Cotton is an expensive crop to grow. Plus, after having cotton after cotton after cotton planted, I like the rotational benefits of sorghum."

Henson said the capacity on his 62 acres of 246-bushel milo was 600 gallons per minute.

"Then that same water went on 116 acres of cotton and produced 1837-pound lint in the same year," he said. "That's the big reason I use milo."

Taking care of the land

"My grandfather instilled in me years ago that you have to take care of the land if you want the land to take care of you," Henson said. "And, I think growing sorghum as part of a rotation is part of what he was trying to get across to me."

Henson said thanks to the sorghum industry's hard work, there are now more options available to make the crop increasingly attractive to growers.

"We now have options in the form of better hybrids and strong markets that we just haven't had in the past," he said. "But now we have those options, and things are looking really good when it comes to sorghum."

In an effort to reduce the number of trips through the field, Henson plans on trying out 20-inch rows, as opposed to his normal 40-inch rows, on one sorghum block this year.

"I think it will help get the ground covered quicker, which will keep the weed pressure down and prevent moisture loss," he said. "Plus, I won't disturb the soil as much, so it will be more like a minimum-till situation."

Going back for more

Henson's 246-bushel yield was enough to earn top honors in the 2014 NSP Yield Contest, but it was oh-so-close to earning him an even bigger prize—a pick-up truck.

NSP and the Sorghum Checkoff offered incentives to growers entering the 2014 yield contest to reach the 250-bushel mark. Henson was a mere 4.06 bushels away from driving away with a three-year lease on new pick-up of his choice. Despite the close call last year, he isn't shying away from giving 250 another shot in 2015.

"I'm going to do everything I can to get there," he said. "We've had great winter moisture, so all we need is a little heat, and we'll be ready to go."

Sorghum Update

Brought to you by the Kansas Grain Sorghum Commission

USDA-ARS Sorghum Research Update

Kansas Grain Sorghum Commission has funded the USDA Agricultural Research Station sorghum team in Lubbock to conduct field trials in Kansas. The Lubbock USDA-ARS sorghum team has been focused on applied sorghum research since 2003. The mission of the program is to identify abiotic stress tolerance and to incorporate those traits into lines that can ultimately end up in growers' fields as traits that help the bottom line of producers. The program is led by John Burke, laboratory director, and includes a multi-discipline research team that specializes in plant breeding, molecular biology and plant physiology. Although the program is primarily interested in drought and cold tolerance, the overall goal of increasing sorghum yields is also a major focus.

(PHOTO A) Example of a multi-seed line (left) compared to a head from a traditional sorghum line (right). Note the smaller, but significantly more seeds on the multi-seed line compared to the traditional line. (PHOTO B) Examples of seed size in msd lines. Advanced USDA multi-seed lines (top), the original msd seed size (middle), and seed size of a commercial hybrid (bottom).

One example of how the program is trying to increase grain yields is by a technology known as mutation mapping. The program has identified many agronomic traits of interest that could be directly used in breeding programs to help increase grain yields. Desirable traits identified include erect leaves, drought tolerance, cold tolerance and unique brown mid-rib mutants. One exciting trait identified, known as multi-seed, has consistently increased the number of seeds a sorghum plant can produce. A traditional sorghum panicle only produces seed on around 50 percent of the available flowers. The multi-seed lines, on the other hand, have the capability to produce seed on 100 percent of the available flowers on the sorghum panicle. The seed size in multi-seed lines has been reduced, but improvements in seed size in new breeding lines look promising.

One of the major yield components for sorghum is the number of seeds produced per area. The Lubbock team hopes they have unlocked an important yield trait that has the potential to increase sorghum grain yields. The first multi-seed hybrids are being produced now and field-testing will begin in 2015 in multiple production environments from the Texas Gulf Coast to Kansas.

The multi-seed trait is an excellent example of how research can begin as a laboratory concept then transition to real world applications in the field. The additional agronomic traits, including drought tolerance and cold tolerance, are also being evaluated in 2015 field testing.

For more information, contact: USDA-ARS-CSRL, 3810 4th St., Lubbock, TX, 79415, 806-749-5560; Plant Physiology, John Burke and Yves Emendack; Molecular Biology, Zhanguo Xin and Gloria Burow; Sorghum Breeding, Chad Hayes.

Kansas Grain Sorghum Commission, 795 22nd Rd. NW, Lebo, KS 66856
(785) 477-9474, www.ksgrainsorghum.org

National Sorghum Producers

2014 Yield Contest

Winners

Irrigated Conventional-Till

245.94 bu/ac

Mike Henson
Hockley County, Texas

Pioneer 84P80

Mike Henson owes his successful yields this year to fertility, irrigation, rain, and, of course, a little bit of luck. Mike has grown sorghum all of his life and appreciates how easy it is to grow and manage. Sorghum plays a major role in his crop rotation because it allows him to conserve more water for his cotton. "I really enjoy growing sorghum, and I especially like the work the seed companies are doing with varieties," he says.

Management Information

Concept safener
44,000 seeds/ac
40-inch row spacing
Previous Crop: Cotton
18.7 in. of rainfall
Planted May 8
Harvested September 30
Sprinkler Irrigation, 17 in.
160 units liquid N
3 tons 90-90-90 composted manure
Milo Pro 1 pt./ac pre-emerge

Irrigated Food Grade

177.97 bu/ac

Ki Gamble
Kiowa County, Kansas

Richardson NUS345

Ki Gamble holds a record of success when it comes to growing high-yielding sorghum, having earned multiple national yield contest titles. Despite wet and cold conditions early on, he still won the 2014 Irrigated Food Grade category. After 30-plus years of growing sorghum, Ki says maintaining good production practices is key. "Sorghum has been a great rotational crop for our operation, and it allows us to conserve irrigation water."

Management Information

Concept safener
120,000 seeds/ac
30-inch row spacing
Previous Crop: Corn
30 in. of rainfall
Planted May 20
Harvested October 27
Sprinkler Irrigation, 9 in.
240 units liquid N, 25 units dry P
25 units liquid P, 100 units dry potash
Milo Pro 1 pt/ac pre-emerge
Medal 1.33 pt/ac pre-emerge

Non-Irrigated Food Grade

118.96 bu/ac

Stanley Brandyberry Farms
Graham County, Kansas

Dyna-Gro Seed M72GW14

Stanley Brandyberry has been growing grain sorghum for more than 24 years and has been entering the yield contest since 2009. Stanley enjoys growing sorghum because it is perfect for the environmental conditions in his area. "We don't get a lot of rain here, but we know we can always count on our sorghum plots versus other crops, which can be hit or miss depending on our moisture levels for the year."

Management Information

Concept safener
36,000 seeds/ac
30-inch row spacing
Previous Crop: Wheat
21 in. of rainfall
Planted June 14
Harvested November 20
76 units liquid N
RT 3 26 oz/ac preplant
2-4D 10 poz/ac preplant
Dual II Magnum 1.3 pts/ac preplant

National Sorghum Producers

2014 Yield Contest Winners

Double Crop Non-Irrigated

193.33 bu/ac

Sam Santini
Warren County, New Jersey

Dekalb DKS38-88

New Jersey farmer Sam Santini has only been growing sorghum for the last three years, but he has earned the national title for his double crop, non-irrigated sorghum two years in a row. Sam attributes his yields to the good climate and growing conditions. "Sorghum is a great crop," he says. "I enjoy growing high-yielding corn and have found many of the practices I have been using with corn translated nicely to sorghum."

Management Information

Concept safener
140,000 seeds/ac
15-inch row spacing
Previous Crop: Rye
30 in. of rainfall
Planted May 25
Harvested November 11
200 units dry N
Bicep 2 qts/ac pre-emerge

Double Crop Irrigated

151.63 bu/ac

Fike Farms
Hidalgo County, Texas

Dekalb DKS53-67

James Fike has been growing sorghum for as long as he can remember on his farm in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas. He says his sorghum yield success during the 2014 growing season was largely due to scouting for the sugarcane aphid and the timeliness of spraying the pest. "We love grain sorghum," James said. "It's a good crop for us, and it fits perfectly into our crop rotation on our farm."

Management Information

no safener
110,000 seeds/ac
40-inch row spacing
Previous Crop: Corn
5 in. of rainfall
Planted February 17
Harvested July 1
Furrow Irrigation
192 lbs dry N, 192 lbs liquid N
Roundup Powermax 22 oz/ac preplant
Transform 1 oz/ac broadcast
NipsIt INSIDE 5.1 oz/cwt seed

No-Till Non-Irrigated

207.98 bu/ac

Cody Sassman
Gasconade County, Missouri

Pioner 84G62

Missouri farmer, Cody Sassman, has been growing sorghum for the last 15 years. After three years of entering the contest, Cody earned top honors as the 2014 No-Till Non-Irrigated national winner. Cody attributed a lot of his success to great weather conditions this past year. He says sorghum fits into their crop rotation exceptionally well. He also likes the fact that is has a better 10-year net return than corn.

Management Information

Concept safener
96,000 seeds/ac
15-inch row spacing
Previous Crop: Soybeans
42.11 in. of rainfall
Planted May 31
Harvested November 10
9 units liquid N, 54 liquid P, 30 units dry P
23 units dry potash, 150 units NH3
Atrazine 2 qts/ac pre-emerge
Gramoxone 1.5 oz/ac pre-emerge

National Sorghum Producers

2014 Yield Contest

Winners

Mulch-Till Non-Irrigated

185.36 bu/ac

Joe Scates
Gallatin County, Illinois

Pioneer 84G62

The Scates Family has become a mainstay on the list of NSP Yield Contest winners during the last several years. Joe Scates was no exception with his winning mulch-till, irrigated grain sorghum yield. He says sorghum provides versatility on their farm, which is located near three rivers in Illinois, and is rotated with their soybeans. Sorghum also allows them to plant later in the year while still producing high yields.

Management Information

Concept III safener
130,000 seeds/ac
30-inch row spacing
Previous Crop: Soybeans
25 in. of rainfall
Planted May 25
Harvested November 13
220 units liquid N, units dry P 300 units dry potash
Degree Xtra 2.1 qts/ac preplant
Aatrex 1 qt/ac preplant
Abundit 1.5 qts/ac preplant
Warrior insecticide .1 qt/ac broadcast

Conventional-Till Non-Irrigated

205.74 bu/ac

Weldon Alders
Leon County, Texas

Richardson Seeds 9400

Weldon Alders' first year entering the NSP Yield Contest proved to be a successful one. Aside from excellent growing conditions and timely rainfall, he attributes his yield success last year to the implementation of poultry litter into his fertilizing program, which he feels helped their crops tremendously. Residing only 100 miles north of the Port of Houston, Weldon takes full advantage of the growing export market.

Management Information

Concept safener
120,000 seeds/ac
38-inch row spacing
Previous Crop: Corn
6 in. of rainfall
Planted May 30
Harvested August 19
120 lbs dry N, 62 lbs dry P, 60 lbs dry potash
2 tons chicken litter
Roundup 24 oz/ac preplant, Atrazine 1 qt/ac
preplant & postemerge, Dual 16 oz/ac preplant
Transform insecticide .75/oz broadcast

Reduced-Till Irrigated

202.66 bu/ac

Taylor Equipment
Kiowa County, Kansas

Dekalb DKS53-67

Tom Taylor attributes his high yields to the good growing environment in south central Kansas. "The key to successful yields for me is planting higher populations," he said. Tom has been growing sorghum for more than 10 years, and this is the second year he has entered the contest. He feels sorghum will always have a place in areas with limited water, and it breaks up chemical sequences and disease pressure between other crops.

Management Information

Concept safener
120,000 seeds/ac
30-inch row spacing
Previous Crop: Corn
20 in. of rainfall
Planted May 9
Harvested November 17
Sprinkler Irrigation, 12 in.
120 units liquid N, 30 units dry P, 100 units potash
Atrazine 1.5 lb/ac postemerge,
Huskie 1 qt/ac postemerge, Halex GT 1.5 pt/ac
pre-emerge, Dual 1 pt/ac postemerge

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Managing Double Crop Sorghum for Profitability

By Sarah Sexton-Bowser

WHILE MARKET SIGNALS encourage the planting of more sorghum, now is the time to evaluate how sorghum can best be utilized within your cropping system.

With acres already committed to growing wheat, double cropping sorghum might be a great option for your farm. Farmers are adding to their bottom lines with double crop grain sorghum. From a management standpoint, double-cropped sorghum does not look all that different from full-season sorghum management.

Utilizing moisture

Bentley, Kansas, farmer Ryan Speer says double-cropped sorghum helps him take advantage of available moisture. In a normal year, approximately 90 percent of his wheat acres are double-cropped with the majority going into sorghum production. While they avoid planting after July 10, medium to medium-early favorites work best in the double crop system.

"One thing we have noticed over the years is eight out of 10 years we have a good moisture profile after the wheat comes off," Speer said. "Double crop milo is the best way for us to utilize that moisture."

With a yield goal of 75 bushels per acre, Speer puts down a nitrogen starter with the planter, and in a good rain environment will add foliar feed nitrogen in season. Weed control is essential, but Speer does not have issues between the wheat stubble and a chemistry program of three quarts of Degree Xtra®.

Speer has been doing double crop sorghum for 15 years, and his 10-year yield average is 80 bushels to the acre.

"Double crop sorghum is a low input crop so it doesn't take a lot of yield to be profitable," he said. "We make money at 55 bushels, and above that is gravy. Even in a dry summer 55 is easy to attain."

Primary crop management

Marty Williams, a farmer in Redrock, Oklahoma, has an average annual rainfall of 32 inches with a range of 11-57 inches in a given year. Just as with Speer, Williams uses double crop sorghum to take advantage of moisture after wheat but plans for the

► DOUBLE DOWN. Double-cropping sorghum allows growers to boost profits while utilizing available soil moisture.

crop well before moisture availability is known. While double crop sorghum insurance is available, Williams has elected not to insure the crop. Since he started farming in 2004, he has only had one failed crop.

Williams manages his double crop sorghum like a primary crop and makes management adjustments depending on rainfall through the growing season.

"I approach it like I'm going to take care of it with full management," Williams said. "I will adjust yield goals late summer if heat is too intense."

His management yield goal is 80-110 bushels per acres but he is happy with 50-60 bushels per acre. He puts all fertilizer down with the planter at a rate of 75 units of nitrogen and 20 units of phosphorous. Running fertilizer near the row with the planter takes the rain risk out of fertilizer uptake. If the crop looks good and good growing conditions are present, he will side dress the milo in-season.

Williams said he is happy with his average production history that ranges from 60-90 bushels per acre.

Williams invests in strong weed and insect control programs.

"You have to be able to control weeds," he said. "It is important to control in timely manner. I plan ahead with my weed management."

In William's region, Johnsongrass is a host plant for sorghum midge. Spraying for sorghum midge is an always do management practice.

When it comes to selecting seed, he plants medium to medium-full season hybrids and said some hybrids mature better and have better growth patterns for double crop. If he plants a shorter season hybrid, there is the risk of blooming in full heat instead of mid-September with medium season. Williams has removed dry-down issues by building storage bins. He harvests his crop at 17 percent or less moisture and puts air on the grain to continue to dry down.

Revenue stream

In Andale, Kansas, the only crop Brian Wetta double crops is sorghum.

"I have had more success with sorghum than any other double crop option," Wetta said. "Double crop milo allows our farm to be competitive by raising two crops in one year with low inputs and low risk on the milo crop."

> "Double-cropped milo allows us to rotate acres and gives us a revenue stream."

His full-season sorghum yield target is 120 bushels per acre and his double crop yield goal is 80 bushels per acre, having raised 100-plus bushels per acre in previous years.

Wetta manages weeds in his double crop primarily with atrazine but will use Lumax in fields with known weed pressure. For his fertility program, Wetta applies a starter fertilizer with the planter, and will side dress during the growing season anywhere from 60-80 pounds of nitrogen based on the crop's yield potential and growing conditions. Wetta plants medium maturity and ideally is finished planting double crop by July 4.

"Double crop milo allows us to rotate acres and gives us a revenue stream," he said.

Gary Cramer, field agronomist for Kansas State University's South Central Kansas Experiment Station, works in Reno and surrounding counties and said sorghum is the better double crop option when under limited moisture at wheat harvest.

In his area, a reasonable double crop yield is 50 to 80 bushels per acre.

"Farmers should fertilize based on a soil test and their yield goal with 50 bushels per acre as minimum yield goal," he said.

To avoid harvest challenges, Cramer recommends selecting the right maturity based on your planting date. Sorghum double crop allows producers optimum water utilization.

"Sorghum has complimentary water-use efficiencies with wheat, using the majority of its water in the spring and sorghum in the summer and fall. You can optimize annual rainfall."

Planting a double crop allows the farmer to get another crop off the land without an additional rent payment.

Pigweed management is critical in Cramer's region, although herbicide costs shouldn't deter farmers from planting sorghum. A farmer would have equal to similar herbicide costs if he plants double crop sorghum or if the ground is left fallow.

"You will take care of some of the costs of your weed control program with your cash crop," Cramer said.

All three growers shared common management approaches to their double crop sorghum. Keep in mind their strategies as you consider adding sorghum acres to your cropping system:

- Plan ahead for double crop sorghum.
- Provide full management with adjustments for growing conditions.
- Make maturity adjustments based on planting date.

Chinese Demand for U.S. Sorghum Still Going Strong

By Kelli Fulkerson

THE HOTTEST TREND IN U.S. sorghum is Chinese demand.

While global demand has grown overall, China's export commitments have reached a stunning 300 million bushels or 69 percent of the total 2014 crop with projections for the 2015-2016 marketing year continuing to grow daily. China has already committed 17 million bushels for the next marketing year putting exports 3 percent ahead of last year's market projection.

"To put it into perspective, China is buying three out of every four rows of grain sorghum produced in the United States," said Florentino Lopez, Sorghum Checkoff executive director. "This paints a vivid picture of the impact strong demand is having on U.S. sorghum growers."

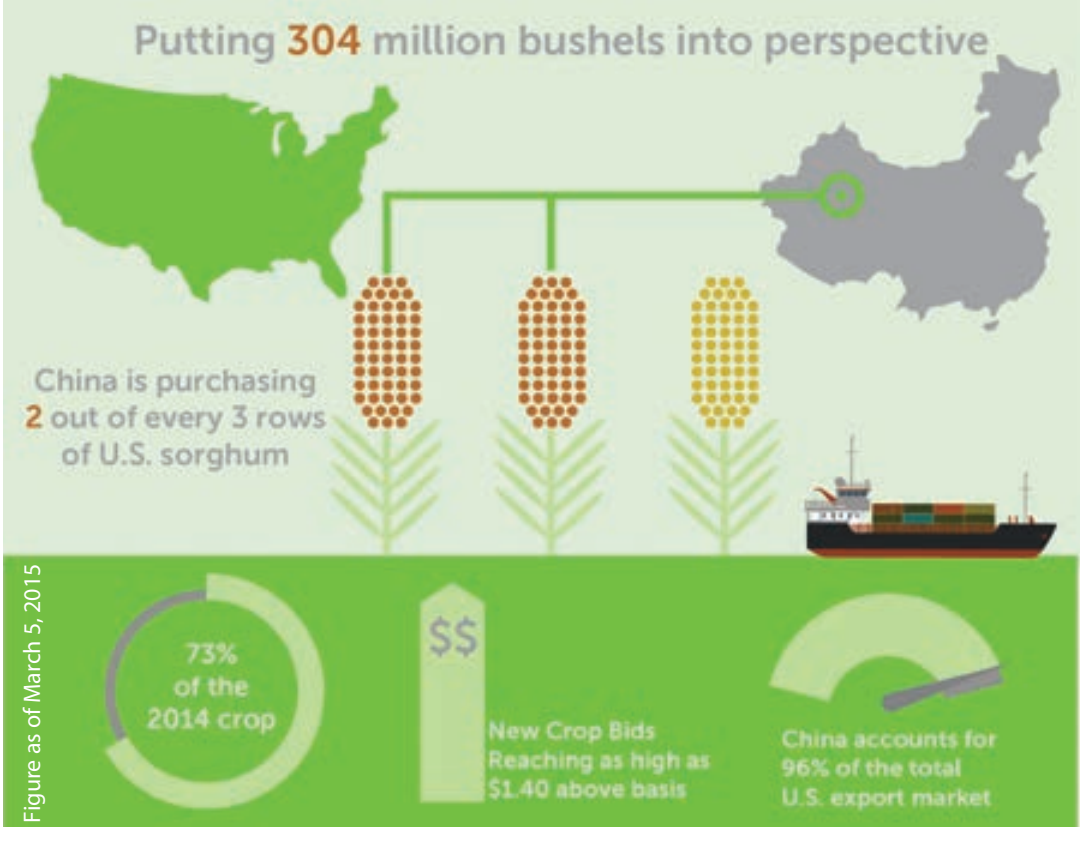

Figure as of March 5, 2015

What's driving the market?

Many argue the ban of the corn trait MIR162 is what has pushed sorghum demand in China.

"There is no denying the corn MIR162 ban did give sorghum a push for higher export numbers, they found a source that fit their desired market," said Lopez. "However, China had already purchased its first shipments of U.S. sorghum before they even thought about rejecting or banning corn imports. Even now that MIR has been reapproved, they're still buying sorghum at a supply rate that American producers can't support currently."

Lopez highlighted several other factors that are being overlooked such as educational efforts to help Chinese grain buyers, traders and feeders better understand the benefits of integrating sorghum into their feed rations.

Economically, there is a Chinese tariff-rate quota (TRQ) system—trade policies created by the govern-

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ment to protect domestic producers from low-cost imported goods—as well as import duties that restrict other grain purchases from happening.

The Chinese have worked to develop their livestock industry over the past two decades in response to the rapidly increasing dietary demand for meat protein. Total meat production has quadrupled in the last 20 years, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and still isn't enough to feed the estimated 1.35 billion people in China. When there is an increase in total livestock demand, feed grain demand follows.

"After research indicated the high nutritional quality of sorghum, feedlot and livestock industries decided purchasing sorghum was a smart choice," said Brian Lohmar, the U.S. Grain Council's China office director. "They saw the large import margin and high nutritional value."

China imports approximately 10 million metric tons of feed grains every year, however TRQ limits the quantity of particular grains being imported. For example, U.S. corn has a TRQ of 2.8 MMT whereas sorghum doesn't have a TRQ, making it an easily assessable option for Chinese buyers to purchase. While buyers don't need a license to purchase sorghum, they also pay a lower import duty in regard to its use. If they're purchasing sorghum to feed to livestock, it's a low 9 percent.

> "We've rarely seen an opportunity where the markets are signaling producers to plant more acres like they are today."

Another factor contributing to rising export demand is alcohol consumption. Chinese representatives have indicated that one-third of the U.S. sorghum exports are being used for the production of alcohol. Sorghum is traditionally used as an ingredient to produce baijiu wine, a delicacy in some areas of China.

2015 sorghum incentives

Tim Lust, National Sorghum Producers CEO, said the Chinese market has created incredible demand urgency for the U.S. sorghum export market.

"In the past there were times when our producers could sell old crop sorghum for solid prices, after the fact," Lust said. "We've rarely seen an opportunity where the markets are signaling producers to plant more acres like they are today."

A strong basis trend has been seen at elevators in the Delta, Midwest, central plains and southern plains as well as the terminals on the Mississippi River to the Gulf Coast. With sorghum input costs being competitive relative to other crops and new crop bids incentives reaching as high as $1.40 above corn basis (a 40 percent premium to corn), how can producers afford to not try planting sorghum?

◀ STRONG DEMAND. Chinese grain buyers tour a grain facility in South Texas last fall during an industry effort to promote U.S. grain sorghum abroad.

Lust said the abrupt shift in new crop bids has rarely been seen in the sorghum industry in at last 30 years.

From 2006-2007, there was a significant increase in the sorghum export market, and there were few, if any, significant positive shifts in new crop bids. This presents a unique opportunity for producers to set themselves up for an increased profit margin. Whether farmers have produced sorghum their entire farming career or if 2015 marks their debut year for sorghum, there's no doubt the hungry market is China.

Million-dollar question

"Will China continue to demand higher levels of U.S. sorghum in the future?" That's the million-dollar question on everyone's minds.

"China cannot afford to fully discontinue U.S. grain imports," said Doug Bice, Sorghum Checkoff high value markets program director.

China has limited farm acres and yield technologies to fully support their domestic market. The U.S. Department of Agriculture projections indicate China will need a total of 15 MMT of feed grains in the next eight years. There may be fluctuations in the total quantities, but sorghum, corn and dried distillers grains (DDGS) will be the sources to fill the gap.

Bice said when trying to judge longevity of the Chinese market, a helpful tool is to look at the DDGS market and rapid adoption from China. The export market for DDGS increased 10 MMT in eight years with China leading the pack at 52 percent of the market.

"It is vital we monitor China's domestic corn policy and TRQ import policy," said Bice. "They will also favor their domestic corn producers, which looks positive now."

U.S. sorghum farmers have other reliable export markets available, but they are being outbid by China. Japan committed to 11.8 million bushels for the 2014-2015 marketing year in addition to commitments from Canada and Mexico.

The market signals are all in line. Now it is time for production to increase in order to meet demand.

"Today's demand exceeds the supply," Lopez said. "This is going to take a number of years and growing seasons to reach our goal to continue creating these export opportunities."

Sugarcane Aphid Tolerant Sorghum Hybrids Now Available

By Lindsay Kennedy

SORGHUM GROWERS NOW have commercially available tolerant hybrids to aid in sugarcane aphid control during the 2015 growing season.

Sorghum hybrids from DEKALB, Sorghum Partners, and DuPont Pioneer have all exhibited tolerance to the pesky sugarcane aphid that has burdened growers in 12 states since 2013.

While these hybrids provide additional tools for sorghum farmers to manage the sugarcane aphid, Sorghum Checkoff Crop Improvement Director Justin Weinheimer said it is important for growers to understand the meaning of tolerant hybrids.

"Hybrid tolerance to the aphid is very different than resistance," Weinheimer said. "These tolerant hybrids can withstand an aphid infestation, which means they can be used as an effective integrated pest management tool."

Available hybrids

Late last year, Monsanto and Chromatin each announced the availability of sorghum hybrids that were confirmed to have exhibited strong sugarcane aphid tolerance during third-party testing by the USDA Agricultural Research Station in Stillwater, Oklahoma, as well as Texas A&M AgriLife Extension.

Monsanto's DEKALB® brand sorghum products, DKS37-07 and PULSAR brand, showed extremely low levels of chlorotic damage from the sugarcane aphid compared to the known tolerant check line TX2783.

Likewise, Chromatin's Sorghum Partner brand seed hybrids SP6929, KS310, NK5418, and K73-J6 are available to effectively reduce the impact of a sugarcane aphid infestation.

In January of this year, DuPont Pioneer announced its 83P56 variety has a "defensive trait package that fights pests such as downy mildew and sugarcane aphid."

Additional sugarcane aphid tolerant hybrids are expected to continue to be brought to market.

Don't wait to buy seed

Weinheimer said growers should act soon if they are interested in buying the aforementioned sugarcane aphid tolerant sorghum hybrids for the 2015 growing season.

"If you're looking for one of the tolerant hybrids to include in your operation, we recommend you make your seed purchase soon," he said. "Since this is the first year we have known tolerant hybrids commercially available, we believe they will go quickly."

Scout, scout, scout

Weinheimer said these available hybrids provide additional tools for aphid control, but growers should continue to thoroughly scout their sorghum fields.

"These products, as part of an overall integrated pest management plan, will allow growers to more adequately limit sugarcane aphid damage in sorghum," he said. "However, we know scouting is extremely important and encourage growers to get out in their fields to regularly scout for the aphid throughout the growing season."

Weinheimer added that early detection of the aphid allows for quicker and more effective control.

At *Sorghum Grower* press time on March 31, Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Arkansas, Louisiana, Alabama and Georgia had received Section 18 exemptions for the use of the insecticide Transform WG in 2015 to control aphid populations. Meanwhile, other states are in the process of seeking exemption.

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Have cotton base and intend to plant forage or silage sorghum? *Keep reading.*

By Lindsay Kennedy & Chris Cogburn

IF YOU ANSWERED 'YES' TO the question above, the opportunity for price loss coverage (PLC) and agriculture risk coverage (ARC) payments exists on eligible forage and silage sorghum hybrids.

If you have generic base, forage or silage sorghum may be a good choice for you in 2015. The generic base attribution gives flexibility on what is counted on the base acres. If you want to have the sorghum forage crop attributed to PLC or ARC, then be sure to choose a hybrid on the list that qualifies as 100 percent or 80 percent eligible.

If for some reason you don't want the generic base attribution, then choose a hybrid not in these categories.

If you are a producer wanting to plant a photoperiod sensitive forage sorghum hybrid south of Interstate 20, then that will count as an eligible hybrid for attribution.

You should also note that male steriles on the list will qualify as an eligible hybrid for attribution if the conditions are met as listed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Farm Service Agency, which among others, include planting a pollinator.

How do you know what forage or silage sorghum hybrid is listed on the FSA list and in which category?

NSP is working with seed companies to update the list and provide that information to FSA. This will hopefully be done in April, and FSA will get the list published as soon as possible.

During the last 10 years, the sorghum seed industry has experienced a tremendous amount of consolidation. As a result, many of the companies and hybrids on the old list no longer exist, and many more new hybrids have been released on the market. Approximately one third of the hybrids currently on the market and available to growers are not represented on the list.

National Sorghum Producers continues to work with FSA to update the list of approved forage and silage hybrids in a timely manner.

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SorghumCheckoff.com

SORGHUM CHECKOFF NEWS

Spring 2015

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Sorghum Checkoff Releases 2014 Annual Report

The Sorghum Checkoff's 2014 annual report is now available in print and on the checkoff website. The report overviews the organization's focus on crop improvement, high value markets and renewables. The report also includes the 2014 financial report and an overview of U.S. sorghum production.

"We have witnessed increasing success over the last seven years," said Sorghum Checkoff Chairman Dale Murden from Harlingen, Texas. "While we have reached many milestones and breakthroughs within the industry, we still have plenty of work ahead."

Murden said the checkoff has focused on producer profitability and it was evident in 2014 not only through expansion in the export market and endeavors in new marketplaces, but also through emphasis on groundbreaking research and genetic advancement.

Sorghum Checkoff Executive Director Florentino Lopez said China's consistent demand for grain sorghum established quite the buzz in 2014 and helped drive producer profitability.

"The resounding pull from the export market led to the second highest value, as compared to corn, paid to sorghum producers in the last 70 years," Lopez said.

Demand from both domestic and international markets highlighted 2014 and Lopez said an upsurge in supply is necessary to meet this growing demand.

Throughout the 2014 annual report, Lopez said it is apparent that change continues to be the desire of the industry and the Sorghum Checkoff board, and more change in the future has the opportunity to lead to increasing producer profitability.

"Going forward, we believe it is important to invest in improving the crop from an agronomic standpoint and developing marketplaces that will lead to producer success," Murden said.

The 2014 Sorghum Checkoff annual report can be accessed online at www.sorghumcheckoff.com or can be requested in print by emailing info@sorghumcheckoff.com.

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Demand for Sorghum at an All-Time-High, Supply Needed

The market place for sorghum both domestically and internationally has steadily increased within the last five years. In fact, exports of U.S. grain sorghum surpassed the U.S. Department of Agriculture's 2015 export projections just six months into the 2014/2015 marketing year.

"Demand for sorghum is at an all-time-high," said Florentino Lopez, Sorghum Checkoff executive director. "This demand is revealed through the purchasing patterns of the export market. In fact, bushels destined for export as of March 19 have already reached 315.9 million bushels."

Five years ago, the export sector accounted for 30 percent of the U.S. grain sorghum market. At that time, Mexico was the largest importer, committing to approximately 973,042 bushels of grain sorghum weekly. However, in 2013 sorghum exports skyrocketed when Gun Jen Juee Agriculture Trading Company became the first company to import U.S. sorghum into China.

"I think with rapid growth in the Chinese feed industry, sorghum is a promising feed material for our company," said Paul Huang, Gun Jen Juee marketing manager. "The cost of grain sorghum is competitive and the nutrition is high for livestock feed production."

Prior to Gun Jen Juee purchasing U.S. grain sorghum, there was no market for the crop in China. Last year alone, Gun Jen Juee imported approximately 1.5 million tons of sorghum, and they anticipate imports to continue increasing.

Brian Lohmar, director of the U.S. Grains Council office in China, said the demand for sorghum in China has increased dramatically within the livestock industries. Lohmar said after research indicated the high nutritional quality of sorghum, feedlot and livestock industries decided purchasing sorghum was a smart choice.

"They saw a large import margin and high nutritional value, so they brought in sorghum," Lohmar said. "I think the big surprise was it went from zero to 118 million bushels in a year."

While China went from importing seemingly no grain to being the largest importer of U.S. grain sorghum, the U.S. Grains Council in cooperation with the Sorghum Checkoff is striving to maintain a permanent market in China for livestock feed and human consumption.

"We're hoping the businesses that market themselves with high quality pork will start to see sorghum as a way to improve pork quality," Lohmar said.

The booming success of the Chinese demand for U.S. grain sorghum has proven to be beneficial for growers in terms of basis and viability. Establishing a more permanent market in China will lead to a more diverse market and long-term producer profitability.

"The Sorghum Checkoff is here to help producers increase their profitability," Lopez said. "We are dedicated to the producer to do just that, and while the export market is vital, we have not forgotten about other market opportunities, including other long-term partners like Mexico and Japan."

Sorghum: A Growing Interest in the Mid-Atlantic

Grain sorghum is a rising crop for North Carolina and the Mid-Atlantic region. The Mid-Atlantic feed grain initiative has been underway for the last four years as a result of the collaboration between Murphy-Brown LLC, the Sorghum Checkoff, the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services and regional agricultural universities. This initiative has challenged producers to increase local grain production in order to meet growing demand in the area.

As a product of the challenge, growers are increasingly interested in producing grains, especially sorghum. To address the interest, Murphy Brown sponsored a Managing Crop Strategies and Farm Profitability Seminar on Feb. 4, 2015, in Raleigh, N.C. The event highlighted marketing, production and technology as it relates to efficiently producing grain sorghum in the Mid-Atlantic region.

Demand for locally produced grains in the Mid-Atlantic region, specifically for livestock feed have skyrocketed in recent years. Terry Coffey, Ph.D., the chief technology officer for Murphy-Brown LLC, stressed the importance of growers continuing to drive production to meet the demand Murphy-Brown and other entities have created.

"Our goal is to continue to deliver management information and technology information to farmers in the region to help them be more productive with regard to grain production," Coffey said.

With high regional demand, Brent Crafton, Sorghum Checkoff regional director, said it is prime time for producers to begin utilizing grain sorghum in their rotations.

"Sorghum producers in the Mid-Atlantic region have a high-value opportunity to market their grain sorghum to meet regional demand bids with originators like Murphy Brown and other local and export markets," Crafton said. "The Mid-Atlantic feed grains initiative looks to boost grain sorghum production within the region to 500,000 acres over the next few years."

Murphy-Brown is currently utilizing approximately six to eight million bushels per year from the region for livestock feed. After extensive research indicating the high nutritional value of grain sorghum, Coffey said Murphy-Brown has committed to being a steady marketplace for producers.

"This state [North Carolina] has an appetite for grain, at least two times more than what is produced," Coffey said. "There is opportunity. There is no question there that these producers live in an area with a good market for grains."

Researchers are also bringing focus to this new, old crop for the Mid-Atlantic, as well. Ron Heiniger, Ph.D., of North Carolina State University referred to sorghum as the hidden gem of commodities. He said sorghum has many desirable qualities that make it a perfect fit for this region and achieving 100-bushels per acre or better grain sorghum is very possible.

"Grain sorghum is competitive crop-profitability wise," Heiniger said. "I think growers need to recognize that opportunity, and that's what we were trying to get them to think about."

Grain sorghum is a key feed grain and crop that is well suited for the Mid-Atlantic region, and the Sorghum Checkoff continues to support this exciting time for producers and the growing Mid-Atlantic feed grain initiative.

"Sorghum fits very well in many crop rotations where each crop can complement one another and potentially provide a welcome boost in yield," Crafton said, "and the Sorghum Checkoff will continue working to make sorghum a more profitable crop for producers."

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Demand for Sorghum at an All-Time-High, Continued

Market trends over the last few years have shown that food-grade sorghum and the ethanol market are growing, as well.

The human-food sector has new products hitting the shelves regularly. Qualities such as naturally gluten-free and non-transgenic, make it a popular item among consumers. In fact, products are no longer just reaching niche markets but are now expanding into mainstream brands, such as Kellogg's Special K cereal.

The ethanol industry's use of grain sorghum is also a value-added market. Approximately 36 plants across the U.S. have utilized grain sorghum in ethanol production. Nearly 336 million gallons of ethanol were produced annually over the last five years, saving consumers an average of $3.1 billion at the pump each year.

Lopez said demand today exceeds supply, and the Sorghum Checkoff will continue to maintain and increase opportunities for producers to strengthen supply and fill the growing demand for sorghum in all marketplaces.

"Today the market is China," Lopez said. "Tomorrow, who knows where that might be, but the end result will be producers gaining more profits."

Sorghum Checkoff Commits $350,000 to Sugarcane Aphid Effort

The Sorghum Checkoff in collaboration with Dow AgroSciences announced a national endeavor geared toward addressing scientific and educational needs as it relates to the sugarcane aphid in U.S. sorghum production.

"The sugarcane aphid has proven to be one of the most significant pests to sorghum in recent history," said Justin Weinheimer, Sorghum Checkoff crop improvement director. "The Sorghum Checkoff board of directors invested $350,000 in this project to ensure farmers have the tools they need to be successful."

This multistate effort seeks to better understand key management protocols, efficacy, susceptible baselines, optimal spray thresholds and more to efficiently manage the sugarcane aphid. To accomplish this, a number of leading scientific and entomology cooperators within 12 states will partner with the Sorghum Checkoff and Dow AgroSciences to answer a series of key questions and provide solutions following a yearlong timeframe.

"Dow AgroSciences is proud to partner with the Sorghum Checkoff on this important initiative," said Phil Jost, Dow AgroSciences insecticides marketing leader. "This industry collaboration will help sorghum growers have access to the latest resources and protocols to effectively combat this troublesome pest that can be devastating to crop yields."

"The Sorghum Checkoff is confident the collaborating partners, and Dow AgroSciences will deliver answers to best management practices regarding sugarcane aphids," Weinheimer said, "Our goal is to provide U.S. sorghum farmers with the most accurate and up-to-date information and education tools to combat this pest and sustain sorghum's role as a viable and profitable crop option."

Sorghum Industry Events

June 1-4 — Fuel Ethanol Workshop
Minneapolis, Minn.

June 9-11 — Export Sorghum
Houston, Texas

July 12-14 — IFT Annual Meeting and Food Expo
Chicago, Ill.

July 28-30 — Leadership Class II Session IV
Texas Gulf Coast

For more events, visit sorghumcheckoff.com/calendar

SORGHUM CHECKOFF MISSION:

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

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Sorghum Shortcuts

Fulkerson joins NSP as communications director

NATIONAL SORGHUM PRODUCERS WOULD like to introduce Kelli Fulkerson as communications director. Fulkerson joined Team Sorghum in Dec. 2014 when Jennifer Blackburn moved into the role of external affairs director.

Fulkerson graduated from South Dakota State University with a bachelor's degree in agricultural communications and animal science.

Her passion for agriculture began on her family's diversified crop and livestock farm in southwest Michigan. She was a Michigan FFA State Officer and previously worked for Biozyme Incorporated and as the marketing specialist for the Texas Longhorn Breeders Association of America.

as "Kelli brings a diversified passion for agriculture and agricultural communications to Team Sorghum," said Jennifer Blackburn, National Sorghum Producers external affairs director. "We look forward to the projects she will be part of this year."

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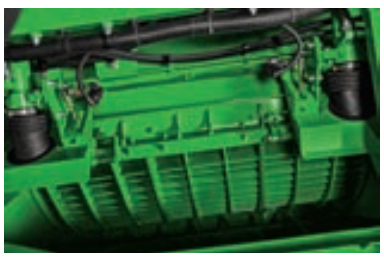

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