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SUMMER 2013

SORGHUM SUCCESSES

The sorghum industry
is taking major strides

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ON THE COVER: Clay Neff gets some help planting grain sorghum from his son Brady near Idalou, Texas. Enter your 'Sorghum Kids' photos in our cover contest. Details on p. 30. Photo by Jennifer Blackburn.



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Editor's Desk

A Fresh Look



YOU MIGHT NOTICE SOMETHING DIFFERENT ABOUT this issue of *Sorghum Grower*. After publishing many issues of the official publication of National Sorghum Producers, we decided it was time for a fresh look. If this is the first time you have read *Sorghum Grower*, we hope you enjoy this unique look inside an industry we at NSP believe to be full of energy and potential.

We have added new departments to *Sorghum Grower*, including Biofuel Biz, Sorghum Abroad and From the Field. Biofuel Biz will provide news on sorghum's use as an energy feedstock and the industry surrounding biofuels. Sorghum Abroad will focus on international marketplaces and their impact on U.S. sorghum, and From the Field will illustrate regional perspectives from around the Sorghum Belt from producer and end-user guest columnists.

Much like this issue, the sorghum industry is taking on a fresh look all its own. We have touted the momentum the industry is experiencing in last few issues, but we truly believe sorghum is making its way into the limelight as a sustainable, water-efficient crop. As always, we welcome input from our readers. Feel free to contact me at lindsay@sorghumgrowers.com. We constantly strive to report important and relevant information in *Sorghum Grower*, and reader involvement is key.

We wish you the best this crop season.

Lindsay Kennedy
Sorghum Grower Editor

Farm Bill Poised to Move Forward

By NSP Staff

IT HAS NOT BEEN PRETTY. IT HAS NOT BEEN smooth. There is no modern historical precedent for the trajectory of this farm bill as it moves through Congress, but it is at least finally moving.

The 2007 Farm Bill expired on Sept. 30, 2012. Prior to its expiration, the agriculture committees and the industry had spent over a year and a half preparing for reauthorization by holding hearings, hammering out language and limping toward consensus. But to no avail, as Congress failed to pass a farm bill before they ran out of time late last year in a flurry of fiscal cliff, debt ceiling and election year activity.

Instead, they passed a one-year extension, a stopgap measure to maintain agriculture and nutrition programs until Sept. 30, 2013, which is just around the corner.

The House Makes History

When the gavel finally fell on passage of the House farm bill this July, it made history by marking the divorce of agriculture policy from the \$743 billion nutrition title that makes up 78 percent of the legislation as it stands today.

Since 1973, when the two sets of policy were formally linked to compile the voting power of rural and urban interests, the alliance between food support programs and the farmers who grow that food has been a cornerstone of successful, bipartisan farm bills.

In a deeply divided House of Representatives, even a decades-old alliance was not too sacred to break. When House Agriculture Chairman Frank Lucas (R-Okla.) brought his committee's version of the farm bill to the House floor, the House dissolved into factions over the

size, scope and appropriate roles of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

NSP, along with like-minded organizations, helped to fend off amendments that would have required a conservation compliance plan for crop insurance enrollment and placed disastrous caps and means tests on crop insurance. In the end, the weight of dissent over nutrition programs was too much to overcome and the bill's first trip to the House floor resulted in a contentious and unprecedented failure.

The farm bill that suffered devastating defeat on the House floor in June returned for mostly party-line passage in July. After dividing the nutrition title from the rest of the bill, Chairman Lucas brought the House "Farm Bill Farm Bill," as he called it, back for consideration less than a month later.

In another departure from decades of farm policy, Chairman Lucas supported a provision in the July encore ending reversion to 1938 and 1949 laws, which would go into effect if Congress were unable to approve modern farm policy. The new language would ensure that if Congress cannot pass a farm bill in the future, U.S. agriculture will revert to this farm bill's commodity title.

In an interview with Ron Hays of the Oklahoma Farm Report and Radio Oklahoma Network, Lucas explained the move. "The old logic was if you had a '38 and a '49 law on the books that were so horrendous, so impossible to implement, that will force action. I would tell you in the new environment, my friends on the left and my friends on the right don't care. I'm trying to craft good policy in a way that we can live with it, not just for the next five years, but the next 10 or 15 years. I want to use



that as permanent law to protect us from a day when we can't pass any farm legislation."

Chairman Lucas's unconventional, but sincere, effort to provide policy certainty to U.S. farmers and ranchers accomplished at least one goal. The bill can now progress one step more toward final passage as the House now has something to conference with the Senate.

Senate Sticks to Tradition

A month prior to the House's final passage, the Senate's version of the farm bill, complete with a robust nutrition title, muscled across the Senate floor as proponents of agriculture policy fended off more amendments to weaken crop insurance.

The Senate bill's movement was much less dramatic in that, though vigorously debated, both Republicans and Democrats ultimately supported Senate Agriculture Chairwoman Debbie Stabenow (D-Mich.) in her recommendation of the bill.

In the end, the Senate bill included an amendment that would place payment limits on crop insurance and another, from committee action, that would link crop insurance to conservation compliance. Differences between the House and Senate bills will be addressed in conference.

Through diligent work by NSP leadership, both the House and Senate versions of the bill establish crop insurance programs for sweet and biomass sorghum, a major victory that will help these critical arms of our industry continue to grow.

A Conference Plan

Both the House and Senate now have bills that can be conferenced into a final package. House leadership has signaled its intent to pass nutrition legislation in a stand-alone bill that would eventually conference

continued on next page

What is in a farm bill?

THE 2008 FARM BILL was made up of 15 titles, or distinct areas of policy interest. The titles below comprise the 2008 Farm Bill, and though many will remain the same in the next farm bill, adjustment is likely.

TITLE I *Commodities*

TITLE II *Conservation*

TITLE III *Trade and Food Aid*

TITLE IV *Nutrition*

TITLE V *Credit*

TITLE VI *Rural Development*

TITLE VII *Research*

TITLE VIII *Forestry*

TITLE IX *Energy*

TITLE X *Horticulture and Organic*

TITLE XI *Livestock*

TITLE XII *Crop Insurance*

TITLE XIII *Commodity Futures*

TITLE XIV *Miscellaneous*

TITLE XV *Trade and Tax*

How Did Nutrition Get into the Farm Bill in the First Place?

U.S. FARM PROGRAMS and nutrition assistance programs were formally linked for the first time in the Agriculture and Consumer Protection Act of 1973, a marriage of traditionally urban and rural interests that formed an important alliance. This “logrolling” as it is called, encouraged urban members with high rates of food stamp recipients to vote for farm support programs, and rural members with lower nutrition assistance needs to support the priorities of their urban colleagues. The formal alliance was solidified after years of informal vote trading among farm state and urban lawmakers between 1964 and 1970.

continued from previous page

with the House and Senate farm bills. However, they did not bring a nutrition package to the House floor before August recess and with only eight legislative days in September before the 2008 Farm Bill's expiration, it will be difficult to develop and pass such a politically charged bill.

Because the Senate bill contained nutrition provisions and the House bill did not, it is too early to say if the final version of this farm bill will actually divide nutrition and farm spending. It is still likely that the Senate and House conferees will search for common ground on nutrition reforms and ask both bodies to pass a conference report that preserves one of Congress' odd couples.

In a nod to the ever shortening timeline, Chairman Lucas indicated the unpleasant possibility of another extension, even as Chairwoman Stabenow has urged the House to appoint conferees and begin the conference in order to pass a bill before Sept. 30.

Once conferees are appointed on both sides, there will be a number of conflicting commodity title policies to meld into a five-year farm bill. For example, the House and Senate farm bills rely on significantly different commodity title programs. But some titles, like conservation, are much the same in the House and Senate bills and should ride fairly smoothly through the conference process.

New Precedent

In the long run, it is too difficult to say how July's House floor action will affect farm policy long term. There is

no doubt that breaking ties between farm-related programs and nutrition programs will change the policy landscape and influence the art of the possible.

In the short term, however, NSP is focused on working with chairs of both the House and Senate Agriculture Committees and across Congress to craft workable and effective farm policy for the sorghum growers we proudly represent. 🌾

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Sorghum the Top Choice for Texas Panhandle Swine Feeder

By Robert Jones

AS THE LARGEST PORK producer in the state, Texas Farm has become a consistent consumer of grain sorghum in the Texas Panhandle. Created by parent company Nippon Food Supplies in 1995, Texas Farm operates just outside of the northwest Texas town of Perryton, in the heart of the Sorghum Belt.

The 40,000-sow, farrow-to-finish operation consists of several facilities in Ochiltree and Hansford counties, high in the Texas Panhandle. Nine sow farms, 11 nurseries, 20 finishers and a boar-stud facility make up Texas Farm, one

of the 20 largest pork producers in the U.S. with 800,000 market pigs produced last year.

While a good portion of the herd is sent to facilities in the Midwest to be finished, most of the animals are grown and harvested at the main facility in Perryton. To feed all those swine, the Texas Farm feed mill takes in 5 million bushels of grain sorghum each year in order to produce 4,000 tons of feed per week. To achieve these numbers, Grain Procurement Specialist Jason Frantz said Texas Farm prefers to contract with local producers to buy grain straight from the field.



“We get everything we can straight from the farmer, which allows us to pay them a little more than they’ll get from the elevator,” Frantz said. “We achieve this through



▲ A SOLID MARKET. Texas Farm is located in Perryton, Texas, providing a stable, reliable market for sorghum producers in the Panhandle.

acreage contracts, which is a great deal for us and the producer.”

After taking delivery of the grain, Frantz said they store it in their on-site elevator with the capacity for 2 million bushels, and at the feed mill facility, which alone has capacity for 600,000 bushels of grain. To produce enough feed for 800,000 market pigs per year, grain sorghum is mixed with 26 ingredients, including soybean meal and salt, and then run through a hammer mill to create a quality feed product.

continued on next page

Texas Farm, continued from p. 9

In addition to being a better option cost-wise vs. other grains, Frantz said sorghum fits their meat quality requirements for the discerning Japanese market.

“Most of our meat is exported to Japan as fresh products cut up into serving-size portions,” Frantz said, “and the reason we like sorghum so much as a feed ingredient is it gives the pork a firmer fat content. For our product presentation is everything, and sorghum gives our pork a nice, pristine appearance.”

Studies show sorghum is a completely viable replacement for corn, wheat and barley as a cereal grain

▼ **LOCALLY SOURCED.** Texas Farm offers acreage contracts with local sorghum growers.

for all classes of swine. While sorghum may have a slightly lower fat and energy value compared to corn, this can actually prove a positive quality from a carcass fat prospective and can provide an advantage over corn for bacon processors and in fresh pork markets.

“
Sorghum gives our
pork a nice, pristine
appearance.”

Sorghum Checkoff Executive Director Florentino Lopez, who worked for Texas Farm for 16 years prior to taking his current position with the national checkoff, said companies like Texas Farm are vital to the success of growers in the Texas Panhandle for several reasons.

“We have an active marketplace, including the swine industry as a whole

that can utilize sorghum,” Lopez said. “If we can help the swine industry however we can, then it turns around and helps the sorghum producer.”

Texas Farm has been a great option for many West Texas sorghum producers including Monte Wright, who farms 550 acres of irrigated and dryland sorghum just outside of Perryton, Texas.

Wright has contracted his sorghum acres with Texas Farm for four seasons now, and said he wants to continue doing business with them for a long time.

“It’s just been wonderful,” said Wright, who has farmed in Perryton for 15 years. “Acreage contracts are such a nice thing to work with, and with Texas Farm I don’t have to worry about making a certain amount of bushels every year, they just guarantee to buy whatever I bring them.”

Working closely each year with Grain Procurement Specialist Jason Frantz to establish a fair price for his grain, Wright said he and several other area farmers who contract with Texas Farm have grown accustomed to being treated fairly by and building a relationship with the largest swine production company in Texas.

“They care about me as a person not just a farm,” Wright said. “I want to contract my sorghum acres with Texas Farm for a long time.” 🍷



Seeking Advanced Biofuel Pathways for Sweet, Biomass Sorghum

By Robert Jones

LAST DECEMBER, AFTER A 34-month long petition process, the EPA approved grain sorghum as an eligible feedstock under the Renewable Fuels Standard. It was a win for grain sorghum farmers as it allowed the domestic production of advanced biofuels from grain sorghum as envisioned in the 2007 Energy Bill.

However, for National Sorghum Producers, grain sorghum was just the beginning as they are now seeking pathways for sweet and biomass sorghums.

Biomass Sorghum

In Aug. 2012, NSP sent a petition to the EPA asking for biomass sorghum to be assigned cellulosic biofuel status as a feedstock. It has been nearly 12 months, but NSP Strategic Business Director Chris Cogburn is confident EPA will give its answer soon.

► **SWEET & BIOMASS SORGHUM.** After working to establish an advanced biofuel pathway for grain sorghum, NSP has set its sights on pathways for sweet (left) and biomass (right) sorghums.

“If everything goes well, then we could have everything wrapped up with EPA by December,” Cogburn said. “That may seem like a long time, but it is relatively soon compared to the grain sorghum process, which took 34 months.”

Biomass sorghum is moving fast in the grand scheme of things. The fuel making process is familiar to both ethanol producers and the EPA, so all that stands in the way of securing cellulosic feedstock status for biomass sorghum is the EPA’s stamp of approval.

Companies, including Sweetwater Energy and Chemtex, have shown interest in biomass sorghum because of the high cellulosic content of the stalk, which brings more than a couple benefits to the table for ethanol plants.

“We want to have a RIN – renewable identification number – pathway, which we applied for last August,” Cogburn said. “We’re trying to classify biomass sorghum as a cellulosic feedstock because those RINs are worth more to the ethanol producer.”

continued on next page



*Sweet, Biomass Petitions,
continued from p. 11*

The process of making ethanol from biomass sorghum involves conditioning the plant stalk using some form of steam or acid pre-treatment to extract the sugars and then fermenting those sugars to make biofuel. Biomass sorghum tonnage rates are high compared to other cellulosic feedstocks, and it would be relatively easy for farmers to produce a lot of biomass sorghum.

"If you make a lot tons per acre then you make a lot of gallons per acre, and the feedstock costs should be better for the ethanol producer," Cogburn said. "Biomass sorghum cheaper to establish than

a lot of other feedstocks because it is an annual crop and we have an established seed industry that's ready to go."

Sweet Sorghum

The process becomes a little more complicated with sweet sorghum. Biofuel production from sweet sorghum was adopted from sugarcane, which involves pressing the liquid sugar out of the plant stalk and then fermenting that sugar to make ethanol that will be classified by EPA as advanced biofuel.

According to the 2007 Energy Bill, sugar extracted from the plant itself can only be classified advanced biofuel and not cellulosic.

However, ethanol producers do receive an added bonus from using sweet sorghum: once the sugar is extracted from the plant, what's left is a dry fibrous matter called bagasse. This material can then be burned to create electricity to power the plant. By burning bagasse to create electricity instead of coal, the ethanol plant will lower its greenhouse gas emissions and meet the qualifications for advanced biofuels.

"We're very close with sweet sorghum," Cogburn said. "This is a crop for a new kind of grower, with new acres and new markets. After some delays with the writing process, the sweet sorghum petition is ready to be sent to EPA."

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A Look Inside the Sorghum Industry ‘Down Under’

By Jennifer Blackburn

FOR SORGHUM GROWER'S FIRST INTERNATIONALLY focused article, we head down under to learn how the Aussies do. Sorghum is the primary summer crop there, and enthusiasm was high at this year's Australia Summer Grains Conference, which encompasses sorghum, maize, sunflowers, soybeans and mungbeans.

National Sorghum Producers CEO Tim Lust had the opportunity to present as an international keynote speaker on behalf of the U.S. industry and said it was exciting to see how important sorghum is in Australia.

"Sorghum is the big summer crop there," he said. "It's refreshing to be surrounded by so many people who are excited about sorghum and realize the vast opportunity that lies ahead with this crop."

Lust presented on issues surrounding U.S. summer crops and their impact on sorghum, and said there is a lot that can be learned from our Austra-

lian counterparts all the way from farm management practices to research.

"Farmers in Australia have a much greater focus on management it seems," said Lust, "and from a research standpoint, they are extremely organized and really create a model for how research partnerships can work."

David Jordan, principal research fellow at the University of Queensland (UQ), leads the sorghum breeding program, which is a partnership between UQ, the

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► **SORGHUM DOWN UNDER.** Sorghum is an important crop in Australia, with more than 2.1 million metric tons of production in 2013.



Ensuring Generational Success

By Kevin Spafford, eLegacyConnect

National Sorghum Producers is dedicated to strengthening member farmers, maintaining a healthy organization and continuing prosperity for the industry. To help you plan for succession, NSP is proud to announce eLegacyConnect as a new member benefit.

MOST FARMERS ARE FIERCELY INDEPENDENT and self-reliant. They pride themselves on being capable and hard working.

eLegacyConnect is an online succession planning community. It is the center of NSP's Legacy Initiative—a long-term commitment to provide members the assistance they need to plan for succession and implement solutions. The site provides educational resources, action plans, community forums, and a roster of qualified advisors to answer your questions.

"How am I going to keep it together? Land prices are sky high, and only one of my four kids is involved in the farm." His note went on, "An article from the department of agriculture says, 'if a family has not adequately planned for succession, the farm is likely to go out of business, be absorbed by a large farming neighbor, or be converted to non-farm use.' What should I do? Where do I start? And, who can help?"

John's email was not unlike most we receive. Unfortunately for John and many farmers like him, the situation seemed overwhelming and beyond hope. Multi-generational success is difficult and rare. The planning process is not easy, and the path is not always clear. History tells us 70 percent of first generation family operations will not transition to a second. Of those that do, 90 percent



will not go to a third. And, of the meager few remaining after that, 96 percent will not go to a fourth.

Succession will not happen without effort, determination and a plan. There are five keys critical to your family's planning success:

1. Utilize good communication skills

Communication is the heartbeat of family business. Learning to connect in a respectful and constructive manner is necessary for success. Communication is more than talking points. It's listening to learn, and then using actions to support your message. It's important to understand the wants, needs, and intentions of others. A communication plan should include:

- Regular meetings
- Written agendas
- Behavior guidelines

- A decision-making process
- Written/taped records of each meeting
- Follow-up procedures

2. Define common objectives

Human nature sways us to focus on our own needs first. For a family business, unchecked self-interest can be the beginning of the end. Each person in the family must agree that decisions made and actions taken in the succession planning process should benefit the operation first—and, above all, cause no harm. The family should focus on objectives related to:

- Improving operational integrity
- Enhancing each family's financial security
- Preparing the next generation to lead

3. Overcome common obstacles

A succession plan must overcome the hurdles that are common to every family in business, and provide solutions to the complex puzzles which plague most family business owners. Early in the succession planning process, each family must confront and then help devise solutions to the following obstacles:

- Equal versus fair
- Active versus inactive
- In-laws
- Financial insecurity
- Relinquishing control

4. Fortify the operation

If each person speaks for their own self-interest, who speaks for the operation? If the operation is going to survive and continue to endow the family with financial security, future opportunities, farming lifestyle, and a lasting heritage, it must have a voice in the discussion. The strength and long-term health of the business must be a first priority. Like Aesop's goose that laid the golden eggs, if we're not careful we can tear it apart.

- Each decision must be measured against what is good for the operation.
- Family members must gain some financial and intrinsic value from continuing ownership.
- Personal goals must not compromise or unduly burden the integrity of the operation.

5. Take definitive action

Good intentions without action are hollow promises. They don't mean anything, and they'll never lead to a successful result. An owner must take definitive action to achieve their most heartfelt succession intentions. Succession is about gaining confidence and eliminating the unknown. A comprehensive plan ensures a smooth ownership transition and provides financial security for you and your family.

For more information, go to eLegacyConnect.com. It takes only a few moments to join the community. Be sure to include the membership code [sorghumgrower](#) to receive your discount. The help you need is just a few clicks away... 🖱️



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With eLegacyConnect you control your succession plan, save lots of money, and get the results you want. eLegacyConnect provides an action plan, advice from planning experts, and a library of resources to help you pass the family farm to the next generation. The site offers succession planning resources that generate results and a full complement of subject professional advisors to answer your questions and share best practices.

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NSP members may go directly to eLegacyConnect, and enter the Membership Code: [sorghumgrower](#). The login takes just moments.

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Sorghum Successes

By Jennifer Blackburn

"Progress, of the best kind, is comparatively slow. Great results cannot be achieved at once; and we must be satisfied to advance in life as we walk, step by step." – Samuel Smiles

PROGRESS IS DEFINED AS A FORWARD OR onward movement toward a destination, but that does not mean we have to limit ourselves to a single objective—especially in such a diverse and exciting industry like sorghum.

At National Sorghum Producers, our mission is to lead legislative and regulatory change through effective policy and relationships for a more profitable, diverse and competitive sorghum industry.

Has this mission changed since our organization's inception? Of course it has, and it is likely to change again someday. While it may appear to some that little has transpired in the sorghum industry over the last five years, that could not be farther from the truth.

Maybe as staff, we are biased because we eat, sleep and breathe this culture on a daily basis, but believe it. We are making progress even if you cannot quite see it yet in your field, community, livestock operation, fuel tank, the grocery shelf or whatever aspect of your daily life the sorghum industry now touches.

Sorghum is no longer perceived as the thick molasses your grandma put on your biscuit or the old, itchy grain your great-grandfather grew in his field.

In some market sectors, like food for instance, sorghum is this hip, vintage grain, if you will, being used outside of its gluten-free attributes for baking, glazes, alcohol, and much more. And to think, this sector accounts for less than 5 percent of the entire industry.

◀ A GROWING LIST. Earlier this summer, NSP and USCP staff developed this list of sorghum industry accomplishments in the last five years as a result of NSP and USCP programs and activities.

This transformation certainly has not happened overnight, and as Samuel Smiles said, the best kind of progress is slow.

So how did we get to this point where sorghum is becoming cool again? Well for one, you have in your corner a dedicated, passionate staff at both national organizations for the sorghum industry—National Sorghum Producers and the United Sorghum Checkoff Program.

While how we go about our jobs at NSP and the Sorghum Checkoff is different, our objectives are the same, and we rally as Team Sorghum each and every day.

The individuals at Team Sorghum are exactly that—strong, willing individuals, but together, we make a great team and enjoy working on behalf of producers, consumers, researchers and end-users.

Some of us have been working for the sorghum industry for a long time, and others are brand-new, but the level of excitement is consistent whether we have been involved in the industry for one or 57 years.

In fact, Team Sorghum's staff has grown significantly out of necessity since the establishment, five years ago this summer, of the Sorghum Checkoff.

That means the industry is growing, diversifying and being looked at as far more than a grain crop. We have

more team members covering new market areas and new geographical areas like the Carolinas, for instance.

There Murphy-Brown LLC, the largest producer of pork products in the U.S., has single-handedly driven demand for sorghum, causing production to rise from 10,000 acres in 2011 to 70,000 acres in 2012, and that number is expected to rise to more than 100,000 acres this year.

NSP and the Sorghum Checkoff have been with Murphy-Brown every step of the way, acting as a resource, answering questions and filling the holes to make this acreage shift happen.

"Working for the sorghum industry is a real pleasure. The combination of a five star team, dedicated work ethics, and strong agricultural ties gives 'Team Sorghum' a family-like appeal."

Dr. Justin Weinheimer
Crop Improvement Director
Sorghum Checkoff

Not only has the Sorghum Checkoff sent thousands of sorghum production guides to Carolina farmers, but it has also sent more than 10,000 copies to sorghum producers across the United States—all tailored to their specific growing region.

On top of that, forage guides, livestock feeding guides and calculators, among other resourceful tools, are now available to help producers make better management decisions in their respective operations.

Sorghum U was developed this year and was held at different locations across the Sorghum Belt, attracting more than 100 farmer-attendees at each location eager to learn more about growing grain sorghum.

Class I of Leadership Sorghum—a program designed to develop the next generation of leaders for the sorghum industry—will wrap up its 15-month education series in December.

Team Sorghum has become an information gateway where agencies like

"I like working for the producer because we can accomplish together what one producer could not do by himself. I have enjoyed seeing the energy of our group be multiplied by new employees that have come on since we started USCP. We can accomplish more together than apart."

Chris Cogburn
Strategic Business Director
National Sorghum Producers

"Water must be considered the most critical issue of the 21st century. With the many water conserving traits of sorghum how fortunate to be a part of an on-going effort for a 'Blue Revolution' from our commodity."

Dr. Bruce Maunder
Research Adviser
National Sorghum Producers

USDA-NASS and ERS go for inside information about what is happening within the industry for their own reports and understanding.

From an ethanol standpoint, grain sorghum is now the only major feedstock with an advanced biofuel pathway under the supplemental rule of the Renewable Fuels Standard—an accomplishment NSP worked more than two years to realize. We have worked with ethanol plants to help source and manage feedstock procurement, which in some cases has created a stronger basis in many areas.

We have strong working relationships with ethanol plants and industry leaders across the U.S. as well as relationships with private industry companies, various state organizations and groups like the U.S. Grains Council.

NSP raised the price election for grain sorghum in the 2008 Farm Bill, which amounted to a difference of \$17.1 million for 2012 grain sorghum losses between the old price election calculation and the current method.

NSP memberships have also continued to rise, and the Sorghum Political Action Committee fund has doubled since its first year, allowing NSP to more effectively lobby for the priorities important to sorghum farmers.

Both organizations now have new websites, providing the tools producers and consumers need to navigate and learn more about our industry. Team Sorghum's increased exposure and representation on social media

"Being part of the sorghum industry gives me the opportunity to work with a dynamic organization, board and staff with a strong passion to step beyond the habitual path and into a new paradigm where sorghum becomes the Smart Choice."

Florentino Lopez
Executive Director
Sorghum Checkoff

sites like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram and others continue to grow with each follower.

We have also recently began branding Sorghum: The Smart Choice, which made its international debut this year in Japan on several products containing sorghum. The campaign will continue to be developed and implemented throughout many facets of the industry.

These are only a few of the many items we consider progress at Team Sorghum. Some are being worked on as you read this article, and we cannot wait to share that information with you. Others are long-term goals that will take time to develop and implement. They say good things come to those who wait though, and with each step we take as a team, we come that much closer to reaching our goals. Have faith in the work we are doing, and trust the industry is in good hands. If the next five years are as exciting as the last, big things are on the horizon for sorghum. 🌾



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Sorghum, Sorghum and Sorghum 2013

No-Till, Reduced-Till Can Boost Sorghum Yields

By Tanner Ehmke, Healy, Kan.



Tanner Ehmke is a farmer from Healy, Kan. He plants an average of 2,000 acres of sorghum each year because it is a great

rotational crop with wheat. His family has been growing sorghum since the 1950s and uses no-till and reduced-till farming methods. Tanner is also a member of the Sorghum Checkoff's Leadership Sorghum Class I.

IT'S BEEN ANOTHER YEAR OF WONDERING if I picked the wrong time to start farming. Each year since my wife, Anne, and I came back to farm in 2010 has ranked as one of the driest in history for our region of West-Central Kansas, reminding us of how precious water is on the semi-arid High Plains. My wife even got to see her first dust storm this year.

Fortunately, with water-efficient crops like grain sorghum, farming here in Lane County, Kan., is a more sustainable practice. But in addition to picking sustainable crops like sorghum to rotate with wheat, no-till and reduced-till farming practices have also been a huge advantage in boosting our sorghum yields and make farming a less risky endeavor during these dry years.

In both of these conservation tillage practices, crop residue remains on the soil surface to protect the soil from the wind and sun, thereby reducing the amount of moisture lost to evaporation. Standing wheat stubble also increases snow catch, increasing the amount of soil moisture available the following spring for grain sorghum. Conventional tillage, meanwhile, buries or destroys crop residue and exposes the soil to the elements.

The yield differences between these tillage practices are astounding. According to a long-term study from 1991 to 2006 at Kansas State University's Southwest Research-Extension Center at Tribune, both no-till and reduced-till practices produced a serious pay-off in terms of improved sorghum yields when farmed in a wheat-sorghum-fallow rotation.

Look a little closer, though, and still another story is told. When you compare sorghum yields of no-till versus reduced-till, there's a clear winner. Reduced-till increased sorghum yields by an average of 21 bushels/acre over conventional till while no-till boosted yields by an average of 35 bushels/acre during the 16-year study.

Hands down, no-till is the way to go if your goal is to achieve higher sorghum yields.

We're not just after higher yields, though. We're looking for an economic return. Again, K-State research shows sorghum and no-till are a winning combination.



▲ **IMPROVED YIELDS.** No-till and reduced-till can boost sorghum yields by an average of 21-35 bu/ac, respectively.

In a separate study, “Ten Crop Sequences, Transition to No-till” conducted from 2002 to 2010 at K-State’s Northwest Research Extension Center in Colby, wheat-sorghum-fallow was the most profitable rotation, netting \$35/acre/year compared to wheat-fallow with a net profit of \$31/acre/year. At a distant third place was wheat-corn-fallow at \$14/acre/year while all other rotations lost money. Crop insurance was not figured into the study.

“

...both no-till and reduced-till practices produced a serious pay-off in terms of improved sorghum yields...

”

The authors in the Colby study also noted that grain sorghum productivity exceeded corn when limited by water. Last I checked, water in our region of Kansas was a scarce commodity that is continually getting scarcer, which makes our crop choices and farming practices that much more critical.

We can’t argue with the data. Growing sorghum under no-till farming practices and in a wheat-summer crop-fallow rotation produces higher sorghum yields and a greater economic reward. 🌾



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Sorghum Checkoff, Chromatin Inc. Partner to Develop Grain Sorghum Breeding Program

The Sorghum Checkoff and Chromatin Inc. will work collaboratively on a project to develop new higher yielding and more advanced grain sorghum hybrids for farmers.

The Sorghum Checkoff will contribute \$200,000 per year for five years to the jointly-funded project, which leverages Chromatin's sorghum-based expertise and technology.

"The Sorghum Checkoff is committed to increasing producer profitability, and we are excited to partner with a company like Chromatin that is also completely focused on sorghum and committed to enhancing the quality and yield of grain sorghum," said Stewart Weaver, Sorghum Checkoff chairman and grower from Edmondson, Ark. "This type of program exemplifies the role a national checkoff can play in utilizing producer dollars to make a difference in the sorghum industry." ✓



Sorghum Checkoff, USDA-ARS Team Up to Enhance Sorghum Genetics

The Sorghum Checkoff will fund a five-year, \$1.21 million project with the USDA Agricultural Research Service (ARS) station in Lubbock, Texas, that will continue and expand research ARS has conducted on sorghum cold and drought tolerance and the identification of unique sorghum genetics.

The project will continue drought and cold tolerance research while also working to develop and mark key genes in sorghum, such as Tri-Seed. The effort will be led by Lubbock USDA-ARS Laboratory Director, John Burke, Ph.D.

"Dr. Burke and his team have become leaders in public sorghum research, working intimately with private industry and other public institutions to release game changing genetics to the sorghum industry," said Stewart Weaver, Sorghum Checkoff chairman and sorghum grower from Edmondson, Ark. "This is another great example of how producer dollars are being used to enhance sorghum genetics." ✓

Leadership Sorghum Class I Spotlight



Luke Sayes

Larto, Louisiana

Luke Sayes, along with several family members, works on the family farm in Larto, La., where on average they plant around 2,000 acres of sorghum.

Sayes said sorghum fits well into their rotations because it has potential for high yields and can be counted on as a dependable crop.

"We are a cotton and grain farm," Sayes said. "I try to keep an abreast knowledge of markets and how they can affect planting options for the next year. Before, we planted sorghum as part of a rotation, but with a recent swing in commodity prices, we are focusing on boosting sorghum and corn yields because of high prices on both." ✓



Josh Levin,

Kensington, Kansas

Josh Levin works on his family farm along with his father and several other family members near Kensington, Kan. The Levins annually plant around 700 acres of sorghum and have been

growing the crop for more than 25 years.

"Sorghum works well on our farm because it is a drought-tolerant crop that works well in our area and gives good yields," said Levin. "A local ethanol plant offers a valuable marketing option along with the local elevator."

In addition to sorghum, the Levins also grow wheat, soybeans, alfalfa, corn and oats. They also run a few hundred head of replacement heifers every winter. ✓

2

Leadership Sorghum Meets in Houston for Fourth Session

Leadership Sorghum Class I met for its fourth session in Houston, Texas, July 30-Aug. 1, 2013, focusing on port operations, international marketing and next generation biofuels.

During Session IV, the class met with various entities in Houston to gain a better understanding of international trade, including trade logistics, marketing strategies, international contracts, sourcing U.S. sorghum, trade finance and business ethics.

The class toured the USDA Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration (GIPSA) facility and the Port of Houston and observed a sorghum vessel being loaded at the port. Next generation biofuels were also addressed with the class hearing from Carlos Rionda of Southeast Renewables who spoke about using sweet sorghum for biofuels production. Sam Jackson of Genera also spoke about the logistics behind using biomass and sweet sorghum as next generation biofuel feedstocks.

Class I will graduate from the Leadership Sorghum program during the Sorghum Checkoff board of directors meeting in December 2013. Class I is made up of 15 sorghum farmers representing eight states.

To learn more about the Leadership Sorghum Program or how to apply for Class II, visit www.SorghumCheckoff.com/leadership. ✓



Sorghum TV: Online Videos Tell Sorghum's Story

The Sorghum Checkoff has produced 15 videos and counting, putting the sorghum story in motion.

3

From research and seed production, through planting and harvesting, to promotion and leadership training, Sorghum Checkoff videos help tell sorghum's story from every angle. Video coverage of events allows the checkoff to show, rather than simply tell, producers, end-users and consumers about the developments and innovations impacting their operations.

Every video is 100 percent produced and edited in-house by checkoff staff.

"These videos are a valuable opportunity to not only showcase Sorghum Checkoff activities, but also to publicize new events and research," said Florentino Lopez, Sorghum Checkoff executive director. "Each video highlights experts who are experienced in working with sorghum and farmers who have been successful in growing it. There is something for everyone to learn from these educational tools."

Check out the ever-growing list of Sorghum Checkoff videos by visiting our YouTube channel or watching them at www.SorghumCheckoff.com. ✓



Visit YouTube.com/sorghumcheckoff to check out informative videos from the Sorghum Checkoff.

Sorghum Checkoff Videos

 ***Sorghum Checkoff, USDA-ARS Focus on Sorghum Research***

 ***2012 South Texas Grain Sorghum Harvest***

 ***Leadership Sorghum Class I Session Recaps***

 ***Determining Grain Sorghum Seeding Rates***

 ***Sorghum Market Opportunities in North Carolina***

 ***Sorghum Checkoff, USGC Host Colombian Trade Group***

 ***Sorghum U: Kansas, Texas and Nebraska***

Study Shows Benefits from Integration of Sweet Sorghum Juice in Corn Mash for Ethanol Production

The Sorghum Checkoff in collaboration with the NCERC at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville (formerly the National Corn-to-Ethanol Research Center) announced in May a successful bench-scale evaluation of sweet sorghum juice sugars with corn mash for the production of fuel ethanol. This study expands upon a commercial-scale trial that was conducted in Hopkinsville, Ky., in late 2012 by Commonwealth Agri-Energy LLC, Delta BioRenewables LLC, Ceres Inc. and the Sorghum Checkoff.

The bench-scale study yielded critical data on the production of ethanol from a combination of the two feedstocks by evaluating fermentation performance at different levels of sweet sorghum juice inclusion in corn mash. The sugar juice was successfully used as a replacement for process water, demonstrating the potential for a corn ethanol plant to increase production above nameplate capacity by incorporating sweet sorghum juice sugars.

“This analysis was extremely successful at the lab scale, and suggests that sweet sorghum juice inclusion could increase the throughput of existing corn ethanol facilities. In addition to increased yields, sorghum juice inclusion may reduce enzyme and nutrient usage per gallon of ethanol produced. Sweet sorghum juice sugar can also help ethanol producers diversify their feedstocks and serve as a bridge to the next generation of biofuels,” said Dr. Sabrina Trupia, NCERC assistant director of research.

John Duff, Sorghum Checkoff renewables program director, says the success of the trial is validation sweet sorghum juice sugars are fully compatible and maybe even synergistic with corn mash in ethanol production.

“Before a corn ethanol plant will take a step toward that next generation it must be confident in its ability to do so successfully,” Duff said. “We think this study will help provide that assurance and support the commercialization of sweet sorghum as a new industrial sugar feedstock crop across the broad geographic area of the country where it can be grown.”

The Sorghum Checkoff and NCERC recognize Delta BioRenewables and Commonwealth Agri-Energy for their input into the study’s experimental design. Delta BioRenewables provided the sweet sorghum juice used in the study. ✓



Sweet sorghum billets are used to produce juice to be blended into ethanol. Billets such as these were used in the NCERC study.

Sorghum Industry Events

| | |
|-------------|---|
| Aug. 26-28 | USCP Board Meeting Lubbock, Texas |
| Aug. 28-30 | SICNA Annual Meeting Lubbock, Texas |
| Sept. 10-12 | Advanced Biofuels Conference Omaha, Neb. |
| Sept. 12 | Sorghum Field Day Hays, Kan. |

SORGHUM CHECKOFF MISSION:

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

CONTACT US:

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Communications Coordinator
(877) 643-8727
jenna@sorghumcheckoff.com*

Sorghum Down Under, continued from p.13

Queensland government and the Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC). GRDC was established in 1990 to assist the Australian grains industry by investing in research, development and extension.

The GRDC simulates checkoff programs in the sense that it is principally funded by a grower levy (1.02 percent farm-gate value) but also has partial matching of these funds with Australian government contributions. Research and development investment decisions are made by regional panels, which include grain growers, researchers and GRDC staff for various different grain crops.

Jordan said sorghum is unique because it is highly diverse and has outstanding tolerance to many environmental stresses—all characteristics that make it a viable crop option for Australian farmers.

Another unique factor in sorghum research, Jordan noted, is the group of scientists working on it worldwide are small in number but very exceptional.

“Being smaller can be an advantage at times, and sometimes it means you need to find innovative ways to do things,” said Jordan. “Also, there is a tendency for more interactions outside of your specific discipline area, which probably tends to result in more cross discipline research.”

▼ AUSSIE ETHANOL. Lyndon Pfeffer, a farmer from Millmerran, Queensland, poses with his vehicle promoting ethanol from Australian-grown sorghum.



A couple traits specifically prevalent and important to Australian farmers in sorghum hybrids are midge resistance and stay-green. Jordan said as a result, all sorghum hybrids being marketed in Australia have some level of both traits, which are primarily from their program.

On the horizon for sorghum research, Jordan said many of the priority areas of concern for Australian farmers match those of farmers in the U.S., such as increasing yield, drought and lodging resistance, grass and weed control, nutrient decline in cropping soils, and sorghum ergot.

The sorghum improvement program has been operating for more than 50 years, but does not produce commercial hybrids. Instead, it works in partnership with the commercial sector producing improved sorghum germplasm lines, which are licensed to seed companies via a non exclusive license system. These lines are widely used in Australia and internationally with all commercial hybrids grown in Australia containing genetics from the program. Jordan said the GRDC has licensed more than 1,300 lines to industry in Australia and overseas, including the U.S.

“The reason for making the [germplasm] available is twofold,” he said. “Firstly, it generates a royalty return that is used to fund more sorghum research, and secondly and most importantly, in this age of multi-national seed companies, material that we produced may be used in breeding programs in both Australia and the U.S. New derived material can be bred in either country, tested in both, and then used to produce improved hybrids that are grown by Australian farmers.”



◀ U.S. SORGHUM. Tim Lust, NSP CEO, represented the U.S. sorghum industry at the 2013 Australian Summer Grains Conference. Lust was an international keynote speaker and addressed issues impacting U.S. farmers and markets.

Even though sorghum has room to improve, he said its productivity and ability to tolerate stress continue to make it a key crop in the northern cropping zone of Australia.

Laurie Black, a sorghum farmer from Brookstead, Queensland, said in their harsh growing climate, sorghum is a tough crop that yields well, making it his crop of choice from an economic standpoint.

“Sorghum is just so tough, and we love it,” he said. “We make money in good and dry seasons.”

Black also said one significant change Australian sorghum farmers have made to naturally improve their yields is changing plant population. He plants 30,000 seeds or less per acre.

“With the introduction of precision planters, lead farmers in the district discovered you can plant thinner, and we started lowering the plant population,” said Black. “It took some farmers, and even seed companies, a long time to realize the positive impact this was having on yields.”

Another component contributing to precision farming Black and many other Australian farmers use is WeedSeeker® technology. This technology was originally developed in the U.S., but Black said he feels farmers in Australia are more prone to taking up new technology, thus

WeedSeeker’s more prevalent adoption in Australia.

Since WeedSeeker® was first imported from the U.S. in May 2002, well over 200,000 hectares, or almost 50,000 acres, have now been sprayed by farmers and commercial operators across Australia, saving them up to 80 percent in

fallow herbicide use, according to the Crop Optics Australia website.

The WeedSeeker® technology uses sensors and nozzles spaced at 380mm apart and will only spray weeds not bare ground. Black said this technology allows him to save money because select chemicals would be far too costly to spray entire paddocks, or fields, when the sensors can detect weed locations.

Once sorghum is ready to harvest, Australian farmers will spray sorghum with roundup “a fortnight before it is ripe” in order to completely kill the plant.

“Within two days, the plant has stopped functioning,” said Black. “This really helps us save moisture and nutrients for the next crop.”

At harvest, Black uses self-storage to control costs and increase profits. Many farmers in Australia are building on-farm storage, but in Black’s case, he leases an old elevator system close to his farm that has four concrete silos, which will hold up to 7,000 tons of grain. By storing his own grain, Black is able to save money not paying storage costs at another facility, and he has the flexibility to market his grain for a potentially better price later in the season.

The only disadvantage tied to self-storage Black said is having to haul the grain once it is sold in his own semi-trailers, but for the added savings both in costs and time waiting to unload during harvest, it was a great business opportunity that has paid off.

Black said some of the conservative, non-progressive Australian farmers have had resistance to this movement toward self-storage and other technologies he now credits as keys to his farming success, but that being said, he feels Australians are naturally more inclined to try new things.

“A lot to do today with farming is technology and new ideas,” said Black. “I’m not sure why, but perhaps because we get less help from our government here, in order to remain viable, you have to be willing to farm the right way or you won’t continue to be a farmer long.”

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Downer Creek Crop Guard, Ransom, Kan., announces its improved Downer Creek Crop Guard with 3/8-in. thick, UV-resistant, heavy-duty plastic crop catching fingers mounted on metal framework to guide the crop into the header. This reduces shatter loss and saves grain. The Downer Creek Crop Guard is proven effective with corn, sunflowers, milo and hulled and short wheat. The tapered plastic at the cutter bar allows greater sickle cutting width, while 17-in. and 13-in. staggered fingers allow crop flow into the header. A 12° downward bend allows the finger to be lower than the cutter bar. It's also available for John Deere 4-in. drapers & flex heads.

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Sorghum *Update*

Brought to you by the Kansas Grain Sorghum Commission

KSU Agronomy Hires Four New Faculty Working on Sorghum

Kansas State University has added four new faculty members to its statewide agronomy programs who will be working on sorghum-related projects.

production issues in his new position with K-State. Like Dr. Ciampitti, Dr. Min has already authored articles for K-State's Agronomy eUpdate newsletter.

"We look forward to lots of good new information in the future on better sorghum management techniques, and improved understanding of the sorghum genome and its potential for advancing sorghum yields and adaptations to environmental stresses," Gary Pierzynski, K-State Agronomy Department head.

Ignacio Ciampitti

Ciampitti is the new state Cropping Systems and crop production extension specialist, based in Manhattan. Ciampitti received his Ph.D. and master's degree in crop physiology and plant nutrition from Purdue University. His work is focused on biotic and abiotic stresses and ways to generate higher yields and productivity in sustainable cropping systems. He believes that more precise and earlier in-season yield predictions can offer competitive advantages in the marketplace and promote rapid and less costly progress in breeding programs.


Doo-Hong Min

Dr. Min is the new southwest area crops and soils specialist, based in Garden City. He comes to K-State from Michigan State University where he was an extension specialist focused on manure nutrient management in forage production, carbon sequestration in forage-based dairy systems, and legume-grass ecology for pasture. Dr. Min will be working on both grain sorghum and forage sorghum

Geoffrey Morris

Dr. Morris is the new sorghum geneticist. He was most recently research assistant professor at the University of South Carolina. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Chicago in 2007. His research has been focused on bioenergy production, population genetics of sorghum and other crops, the genomic basis of the environmental adaptation of crops, and applying genomics to sustainable agriculture and bioenergy. In particular, his work has included genomic basis of diversification in sorghum, genomic basis of diversity in switchgrass and the effects on productivity, and evolution of genome-wide expression patterns in brewer's yeast and wild relatives.

Augustine Obour

Dr. Obour is the new soil scientist at the K-State Agricultural Research Center-Hays. Dr. Obour was most recently research scientist, Department of Plant Sciences at the University of Wyoming. He received his Ph.D. in 2010 from the University of Florida in soil and water science. His research has focused on forage management and production, evaluation of crop production systems for the changing climate, soil fertility management, and water quality issues in crop production systems. His research program at Hays will be extensively involved in grain sorghum. 

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Sorghum Shortcuts



“Sorghum Kids” Cover Contest

Your farm kids could be on the cover of *Sorghum Grower Magazine*! During this growing season, photograph your kids as they participate in sorghum farming activities. Whether it's amidst a sea of red sorghum heads in a field or while they help out with harvest, your photo could be a winner.

To enter the contest, submit your digital photographs to Lindsay Kennedy at lindsay@sorghumgrowers.com no later than Nov. 30, 2013. The winning photograph will appear on the winter 2014 issue of *Sorghum Grower*, which will arrive in mailboxes in January 2014. Photographs receiving second place, third place and honorable

mention will be recognized on our website at SorghumGrowers.com.

Photographs must be vertical, high resolution, 300 dpi digital images no smaller than 11" x 8.75". Photos must be taken during this year's growing season and must have sorghum in the image. Horizontal or low resolution photos unsuitable for printing will not be eligible.

For more information on photo quality, tips on capturing a winning photograph, and contest rules, visit www.SorghumGrowers.com. 📷



National Grain Sorghum Foundation Awards Scholarships

The National Grain Sorghum Foundation recently awarded two sorghum-specific scholarships to students exemplifying interest and achievement in the sorghum industry. The 2013 Sorghum Challenge Scholarship recipient is Kassie Curran of Farlington, Kan.

Curran is a senior food science and industry major at Kansas State University. This scholarship is awarded to undergraduate students enrolled in an agriculturally-based degree program.

The Dr. Darrell Rosenow Memorial Scholarship was established in 2010, and is awarded to undergraduate students enrolled in agriculturally-based departments related to agronomy, plant pathology, and plant breeding with an emphasis on sorghum. Morgan Halderson of Delphos, Kan., is the 2013 recipient of the Rosenow Memorial Scholarship. Halderson is a junior agronomy major at Kansas State University.

NSP congratulates the scholarship recipients for their achievements, and wishes them continued success. 📷



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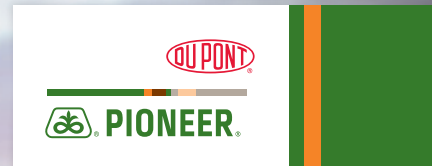
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