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SUMMER 2020

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NATIONAL SORGHUM PRODUCERS  
**SORGHUM**  
*Grower*

SUMMER 2020



ON THE COVER: Precision planting offers farmers a number of benefits, but one southwest Kansas producer took an artistic approach this growing season on a number of his sorghum fields. You may not be able to make these designs out while driving down the highway, but from the sky, well, that's another story. Read more on page 10.



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## Chairman's Column

### A Chairman's Farewell

There are numerous songs, sayings and ways to convey the quick passage of time. No matter whether you prefer to say *Don't blink*, *Time and Tides* or *Time flies*, when you take time to reflect on the past, it always seems to have went by very quickly. As I sit down to write my last National Sorghum Producers Chairman's column, I can easily convey that two seemingly busy years have flown by and are quite a blur in my memory.

While reflecting on the last two years, it would be easy to let the negatives outweigh the positives within agriculture. Farm profitability has seen significant challenges, weather has been extreme and markets and trading have been very volatile. However, my memories of this period will always be of the way agricultural organizations, such as NSP, worked so diligently to make a positive impact during tough economic times. A few significant highlights for me have been the passage of the 2018 Farm Bill, the creation of the Market Facilitation Program and the signing of the China Phase One and USMCA trade agreements. All of these milestones have been very impactful on sorghum producers, and I will be forever proud of the work our organization did behind the scenes to see them to fruition.

I continually talk about how involvement and engagement are paramount to the success of an organization, and NSP is no different. If it weren't for producer members, industry partners, dedicated staff and producer leaders, NSP would not have the voice and resources to affect meaningful change in farm policy. I feel extremely blessed as a chairman to be surrounded by an amazing team of leaders and staff who share a common, passionate vision for the future of the sorghum industry. Sorghum People are just as hardy as the sorghum plants we grow, and I'm exceedingly proud to be a part of the team.

Lastly, I will say that any chair is only as strong as the four legs that hold it up. My family has been extremely supportive throughout my tenure as chairman. Time away from your family and farm operation can be stressful, but having a strong support system has made my life easy. Amanda, Eli, Mom and Dad, I cannot thank you enough for the love and support you have shown to make my dreams into reality.

I always end my column by saying how optimistic I am about the future of sorghum, and I'm more excited than ever. As a producer, I am pleased to see markets are steadily improving, crop genetics are advancing quickly and sorghum acres are increasing. From a leadership standpoint, I believe NSP is primed for great things in the near future. It has been an absolute pleasure to serve as your NSP Chairman, and I humbly thank everyone who has helped make it all possible.

God bless,

Dan Atkisson  
NSP Board Chairman



## Advocacy in the Face of COVID

By Tim Lust

As the novel coronavirus made its rampant run around the world and countries began to shut down in late March, American agriculture drove on as farmers continued to wake up early every day going out into their fields to produce the crops that feed families across the globe.

From National Sorghum Producers' standpoint, it has been a very different year. In some ways, it has been slow with no travel, and in other ways, it has been one of the busiest legislative and regulatory years of my 25-year career.

### Farm Stimulus

As profitability in agriculture continues its decline, and unpredictable weather challenges raise their ugly head once again, we draw our focus to the next round of agricultural support. We believe this support will come with the fourth COVID stimulus package, which we expect to be completed around the time you get this magazine. This package follows CFAP, PPP and EIDL, and it does not even include WHIP+—approved as a part of a year-end package in 2019 but yet to be implemented in many parts of the Sorghum Belt.

WHIP+ pays growers who have had losses either from a quality loss standpoint, like what would happen with a hurricane or an early freeze, or drought—D3 or worse. There have been many policy issues in the implementation of this



▲ ZOOM AND OTHER VIRTUAL formats have taken the place of face-to-face meetings the past four months, but sorghum leadership continues to meet and advocate on behalf of the industry.

program, and the rules related to crop loss differ for 2018 and 2019, which has led to confusion for farmers and FSA staff alike. Learn more about WHIP+ on page 12.

Speaking of programs that change, the Payroll Protection Program has been used by many of our members based upon our surveys. Even though the PPP rules have changed three times in the last three months, unfortunately, the program still will not work for all our members.

Likewise, agricultural producers were not eligible for the Economic Injury Disaster Loan program when it was first released, but after yet another policy change, farmers and ranchers became eligible. NSP has truly had a busy and hectic spring working with multiple agencies in several areas our legislative team has not often worked in the past.

### Trade Update

From a trade standpoint, we have had a positive year. China is coming back as a very strong buyer of U.S. sorghum. Vietnam has finally approved importation of U.S. sorghum after several years of hard work and a great team effort from multiple groups at the state and national levels.

We are also in the beginning stages of working on the approval process for the next large market opportunity for U.S. sorghum—India. Most years, India is the second largest producer of sorghum in the world, but it is all consumed in country. While this opens the door to a path for U.S. sorghum into the country, it does not diminish the challenges we have faced in the past 20 years trying to gain access to the Indian market. We must have a realistic view of how we overcome phytosanitary issues and gain import approvals to access this market. If we do, the possibilities bode well for long-term sorghum demand.

### Policy and Implementation

Farm Bill implementation continues to plod along at what seems like a slow pace, but given all that USDA has on their plate, it is actually going well. We have been through a couple of rounds of Title 1 sign-up, one round of conservation sign-up, and we expect more soon.

Biofuels policy continues to be a high-stakes battle between agriculture and oil. It started out rough four years ago, and it has not slowed down. While our industry has won some battles, we have also lost several, and the current battle over Small Refinery Exemptions shows the challenges that still exist for ethanol. Many ethanol plants face selling out or shutting down if this battle continues.

A number of sustainability and environmental pieces of legislation continue to be rolled out in 2020. While it is not likely many will become law this year, these marker bills are an important indication of the direction legislation could take in 2021. NSP has worked for over six months to make sure we are seated at the table as this legislation is being put together. It is critical the sorghum industry understands this new area of agricultural policy, and we are doing all we can to make sure sorghum fits into any future bills that could become law.

Historically, in a non-COVID year, a transportation and infrastructure bill would be one of the largest, most expensive pieces of legislation to ever go across the floor in Congress—that large bill this year was the CARES Act. As the transportation and infrastructure bill approaches Congress, NSP is pushing for critical infrastructure for the sorghum industry, including upgraded infrastructure at our ports and additional container loading facilities in the Sorghum Belt.

Finally, the routine legislative items continue in agricultural policy with the federal Grain Standards Act currently being reauthorized.

### Regulatory Update

From a regulatory standpoint, NSP continues to work with USDA's Risk Management Agency on crop insurance fixes for sorghum. In the last farm bill, NSP pushed to get language for RMA to study the irrigated sorghum industry, and we are working with them now on several different options to fix that policy going forward. We know we now have an irrigated sorghum silage program that works and are moving forward on an irrigated grain policy, allowing more protection at significantly lower costs.

Additionally, herbicide and pesticide reregistrations continue. Atrazine is at a critical point in the process this fall, and a lot of work has happened over the last three years to make sure there are not significant changes made to reregistration that could make the product unusable for sorghum growers. NSP joined in the amicus brief for dicamba this summer with soybeans, cotton, corn, wheat and farm bureau as we strive to ensure pesticide approvals stay at EPA and away from the courts.

As you can see, coronavirus has not slowed advocacy for NSP, and there is still a lot going on that impacts sorghum producers in 2020. The key to success in a year like this is on-going relationships with staff and members on Capitol Hill. This can be complex over the phone and on Zoom, but doing our homework year in and year out to allow ourselves to work through items has proved critical to our success during these challenging times. NSP directors and staff are honored to serve the industry, and we will continue to do all we can to improve member profitability.



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NATIONAL SORGHUM PRODUCERS

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(DD) (MM) (YYYY)

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FARM/EMPLOYER: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

HOME PHONE: [ ] \_\_\_\_\_

CELL PHONE: [ ] \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

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- ☐ LANDOWNER
- ☐ NON-PRODUCER

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- ☐ \$1,000
- ☐ \$5,000
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National membership automatically confers membership in state organization

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- ☐ **3 YEAR MEMBERSHIP:** \$280 min. \_\_\_\_\_ (amount)
- ☐ *Suggested contribution of \$1/ac* \_\_\_\_\_ (amount)

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By Haleigh Erramouspe

Flying over southwest Kansas, you will see field after field of sorghum, but come August, you may likely do a doubletake at some unique aerial views over Ormiston Farms.

Rocky Ormiston, a sorghum farmer from Kismet, Kansas, took a new twist on precision planting this year, turning his sorghum fields into eye-catching works of art.

In the early phases, Ormiston's sorghum fields looked like any others, but as the sorghum reaches the hard dough stage, Ormiston's fields will have their own distinct appearance. He is using precision technologies to plant five sorghum fields with different designs—a Kansas City Chiefs logo, his Ormiston Farms logo, a Pioneer logo, a Trump 2020 banner with an American flag and #SupportEthanol adjacent to an ethanol plant his family invested into. The designs in the fields will be made using a mix of red and white/yellow sorghum varieties.

"You know, it's something fun to do," Ormiston said, "and, right now, farming is not very fun so we have to make ways to smile about it."

Ormiston bought a used DB80 John Deere planter in 2017, stripped it down bare and built it up with precision technology, including Vset Select meters with hydraulic down force. The planter has two tanks to hold seed and drops it based on a prescription. The prescription is basically a vector image design placed on a geo-referenced map of the field. The prescription tells the planter where to drop each type of seed, and, according to Ormiston, is accurate up to an inch.

Although they farm primarily irrigated acres, Ormiston said they picked up five quarters of dryland within the last two years, and sorghum was the best fit for those fields. Ormiston said he has seen moderate yield improvements using precision planting in corn, but this season is his first year to use the precision planting technology in his sorghum fields. Ormiston said even

moderate improvement in yield can have a positive impact on profitability.

"You can think, 'Well, it's just five bushels an acre,'" Ormiston said, "but five bushels across 4,500 to 5,000 acres is a lot. Once we did the math, it's like, 'Holy cow, let's do it!'"

Ormiston works with Crop Quest Inc., a crop consulting and agriculture production management company out of Dodge City, Kansas, to build his precision planting prescriptions. He worked with Crop Quest agronomists and precision ag specialists to determine the optimal sorghum varieties to minimize risk while still getting the best look for the designs he wanted.

After they were designed, Ormiston shared the prescription maps of his sorghum fields on social media and said he has received a lot of positive feedback from other farmers online. He said farmers know precision technology is out there, but many have not seen it used for this purpose.

John Gibson, a precision ag specialist for Crop Quest, said the Ormiston family has been a pioneer in precision planting technology in the area.

"You've got your leading edge type innovators that are always pushing the limits," Gibson said, "and I would definitely say that Rocky and his dad have always been willing to take that stance."

Gibson said although Ormiston is, in this instance, not using precision planting in a conventional manner, his willingness to try new things and share his results on social media have drawn considerable attention to precision technologies and their capabilities.

To help farmers, like Ormiston, implement precision agriculture techniques, Crop Quest starts by collecting data on a wide range of soil characteristics including texture, moisture, salt content, pH levels, organic matter and more. Throughout the growing season, satellite, aerial and drone imagery is used to monitor the crops, checking for irrigation problems, pest damage, application skips or storm damage.



► THROUGH PRECISION PLANTING, Ormiston uses a combination of sorghum seeds to create his field designs.

Gibson said based on soil data and aerial imagery, different precision agriculture techniques can be used to target different areas of the field. These techniques can vary from variable rate seeding, fertility and irrigation to applying inputs to very specific areas of the field.

Ormiston said he has seen the increases in yield and profitability that precision agriculture can bring to the farm, but it is important for farmers to do their due diligence before they invest. Ormiston said he ran the numbers, dove into data and talked to several farmers across the country to determine if the new technology was right for his operation.

Gibson also stressed the importance of taking a hard look at what has worked and what has not. In the past, he said most people believed precision agriculture was about evening out a field, but it is really about maximizing your return on investment for each acre. He said precision agriculture is not a one size fits all program but a tailored program to match conditions in a given field or area.

Gibson also explained any change is likely to be a bit uncomfortable. Farming is a personal industry, and it can be challenging to step out and try something new, even if it can improve yields and profit.

He said starting with small, simple changes like planting straight through irrigated circles into dryland corners saves money on turning around, and working toward bigger changes like using satellite imagery and variable rate seeding and fertility can help ease the process of implementing new technologies and techniques.

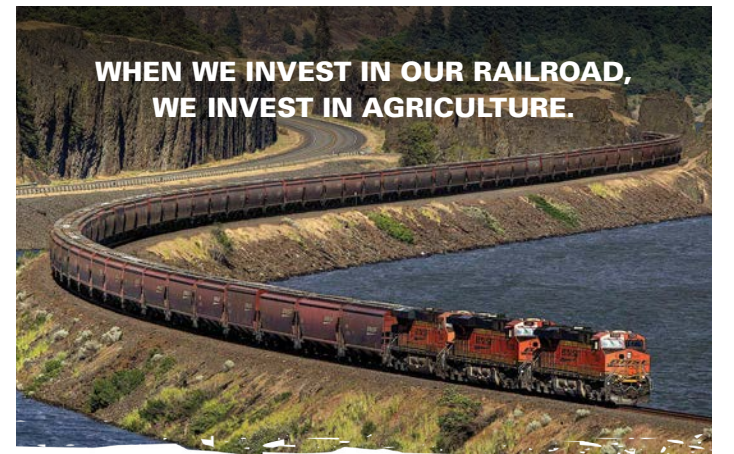
"The main thing is just be willing to get a little uncomfortable, figure out what you're willing to do and take a step," Gibson said.

Although making the initial switch to precision planting may be uncomfortable, Ormiston said once he got started, the process was easy. He said he has been



impressed with the precision technology in every field he has planted, whether it is an image or variable zones.

Ormiston expects his sorghum fields to mature in September, so whether you are flying over southwest Kansas, scrolling through Twitter, or looking to invest in precision technologies yourself, look out for Ormiston Farms' creative spin on precision planting.



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## WHIP+, Are You Eligible?

**W**HIP+ was authorized to help producers affected by natural disasters in 2018 and 2019. The natural disasters include hurricanes, floods, tornadoes, typhoons, volcanic activity, snowstorms, wildfires, drought and excessive moisture.

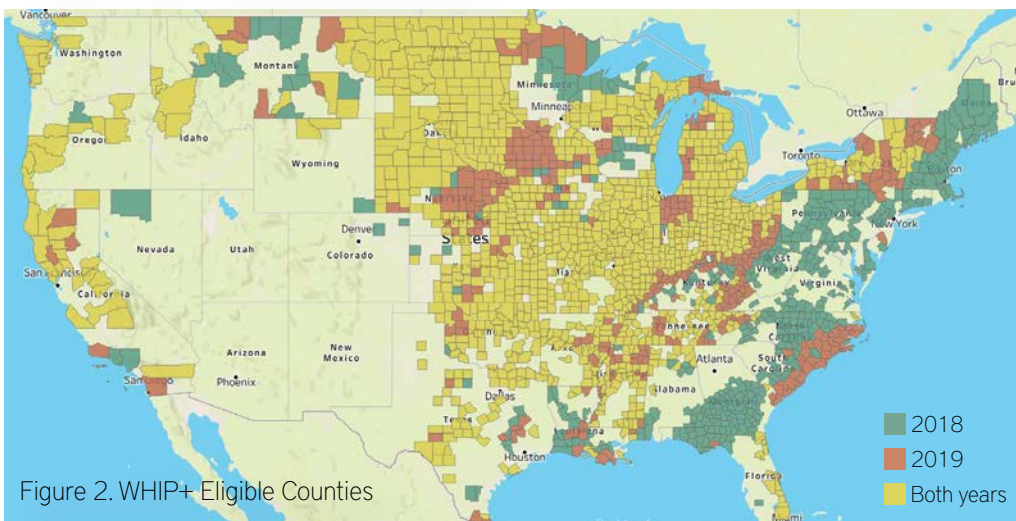
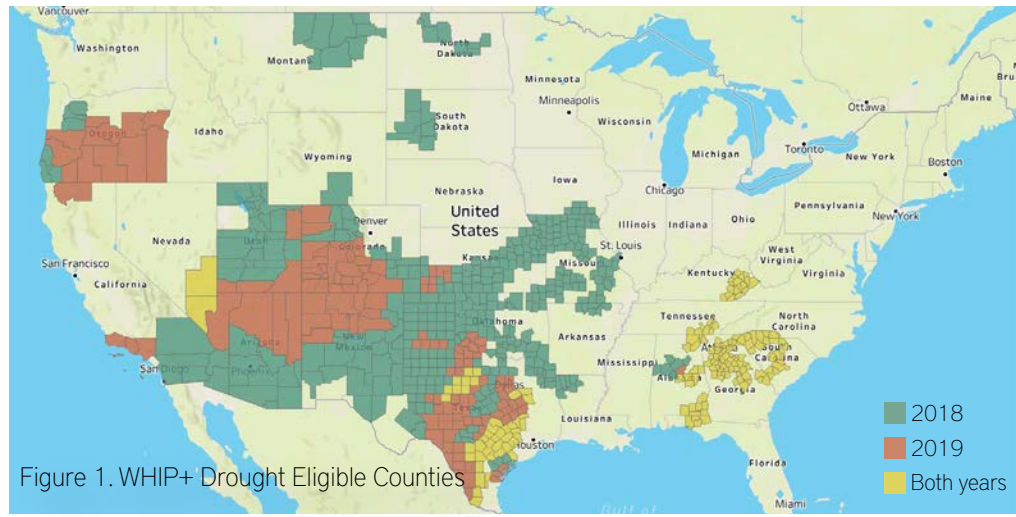
Producers must have suffered a loss due to a qualifying disaster event in a primary county that received a qualifying Presidential Emergency Disaster Declaration or Secretarial Disaster Designation. Counties that experienced D3 and D4 drought in 2018 or 2019 are also eligible. Producers not in these counties may also be eligible but must supply documentation establishing crops were directly impacted by a qualifying disaster event.

There is no current deadline to sign up for WHIP+, and producers can contact their local FSA office to apply.

The WHIP payment formula is: **WHIP+ payment = the expected value of the crop x the WHIP factor - the actual value of the crop harvested x the payment factor - the NAP payment or crop insurance indemnity received by the producer.**

The WHIP+ Factor is based on a producers crop insurance coverage level (see Figure 3).

Crop insurance or NAP must be obtained for the first two available consecutive crop years after the enrollment period ends but no later than 2022 and 2023. Crop insurance or NAP policy coverage level must be at a level of 60/100 or equivalent. Learn more about WHIP+ at [farmers.gov/recover/whip-plus](https://farmers.gov/recover/whip-plus).



▲ THERE ARE A number of counties across the Sorghum Belt where some producers may be eligible for the WHIP+ program. NSP encourages eligible growers to seek this opportunity or call our office at 806-749-3478 if you have questions.

Figure 3. Crop Insurance Coverage Levels

COVERAGE LEVEL	WHIP+ FACTOR
CAT/NAP Basic 50/55	75%
50% - <55%	77.5%
55% - <60%	80%
60% - <65%	82.5%
65% - <70%	85%
70% - <75%	87.5%
75% - <80%	92.5%
> = 80%	95%
Supplemental Coverage Option	95%

## Risk Management Workshops Recap

### WHOLE-FARM REVENUE PROTECTION

Whole-Farm Revenue Protection (WFRP) provides risk management for all crops under one policy.

- Available in all counties in all 50 states
- Prices are based on guidelines in the policy
- Claims are settled after taxes are filed for the policy year
- Coverage is provided for the duration of the producer's tax year
- Largely calculated using tax documents, including and especially the Schedule F
- Protects against the loss of insured revenue due to an avoidable natural cause of loss during the insurance period

WFRP protects against revenue loss from:

- Crops produced during the insurance period
- Crops bought for resale during the insurance period
- All crops except timber, forest products and non-livestock animals

### CROP INSURANCE

**Acreage report** – Details number of acres planted, percent share insured and plant dates

**APH** – Historical data on acres and production. Determines average yields

**Cause of loss** – Reason for damage to crop

**CAT** – Covers only catastrophic losses above 50% at price equal to 55%

**Coverage level** – Percent of yield covered in the event of a loss

**Guarantee** – Total amount promised to an insured in the event of a loss

**Harvest price** – Determined closer to harvest and values production to count

**Enterprise unit** – Allows insured to group all acreage of same crop by county and share

**Optional unit** – Allows land to be divided by location, crop type and practice within county

**Production report** – Details actual production of crop

**Projected price** – Estimated price at sales closing date

**Revenue protection** – Protects or guarantees price insured receives for crop along with yield

**Sales closing date** – Date the insured must apply for coverage

**Transitional yield** – County average yield used to make up required four years of APH history

**Yield protection** – Protects amount of production crop produces; Claim is paid when production is less than guarantee



**Art Barnaby**  
EMERITUS PROFESSOR  
KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY

"Back in the 2012 time frame, we had corn prices on the board get all the way to \$8.00. [Farmers] could've actually sold three years out and then fully hedged with the replacement contract, which we call revenue protection. When [farmers] get out to those second and third years they will have enough bushels to offset that hedge position or they'll have enough insurance dollars to actually replace the bushels. Either way, they're fully hedged."



**John Miller**  
OWNER  
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"Risk management is very important because of volatility as we become a global marketplace. The more erratic nature of politics in business, and macroeconomics worldwide, and the interconnectedness of countries worldwide has increased volatility. And so, daily, they have to deal with issues that really don't connect directly back to the farm. And so, risk management practices and risk management tools help [producers] deal with those radical unknowns."

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PRESENTED BY NATIONAL SORGHUM PRODUCERS IN FINANCIAL PARTNERSHIP WITH RMA



By Jennifer Blackburn

**K**en Rose grew up in the Oklahoma Panhandle near Boise City, a booming small town in the early 1900s serving as a hub on the rail line for merchants and traders.

Today, Boise City is a sleepy panhandle town surrounded by farming and grassland in the dry prairie of the High Plains or “no man’s land,” which it is often referred to as. The Dust Bowl of the 1930s left a lasting mark on those who survived it, leaving only a few families, like Ken’s, left to tough out one of the most challenging areas in the west to work and raise a family.

“Those were some really tough years,” Ken said, choking back tears as he recalled growing up in the area forever changed by black clouds of dust. “I went through the ’50s and ’60s, too, with the dust and windy days. There were no crops. My dad went through a number of years with just almost nothing.”

Ken said, growing up, the dust was so bad some days it made it challenging to return home from school.

“The bus would pick us up at school then drive to the edge of town, and the dust would be so bad he’d just turn around and take us back,” he said. “He’d drop us off at a friend’s house in town, and in the evening when the wind went down and folks could see to drive on the highway, they’d come in and pick us up.”

These tough times prompted Ken’s father to encourage him to pursue an education and profession away from the farm.

“I remember dad saying, ‘Son, I want you to go to college and get yourself an education, and go find a good job,’” he said.

And so he did.

Ken went to college and received two degrees in chemistry, and over his lifetime he has accumulated over 200 hours of college coursework from six different universities.

“Continual learning and continual education is just an important part of life,” he said.

Ken and his wife Norma made the same emphasis on the importance of education with their two daughters who have secondary degrees, as well.

“Even if you don’t use the education, just the experience of being in college, being confronted with other ideas, other things that are outside of your scope of being on the farm is a good thing,” he said.

Ken spent a number of years utilizing his degrees in the career field working in various places, but through the Holy Spirit and an article in a science magazine about sun spot cycles, he felt a calling home.

“When I was about 33, it just seemed like the Lord was saying, ‘Ok, it’s time to go back to the farm,’” he said.

A common belief about the sun solar cycle is the sun’s magnetic field goes through a cycle approximately every 11 years. Ken explained there is a deeper cycle every other 11-year cycle with those periods taking place during dust storms both in the 1930s and 1950s. The sun was coming out of the cycle when he returned to the farm, which led to his prediction for a higher rainfall period, and that is exactly what happened, he said.

Returning to the farm, Ken had an eye toward conservation and changing the dynamic of the land once considered cursed.

“I started reading articles about ecofallow—that’s what they called it then,” he said. “It was basically no-till

rotations, and I thought, ‘That sounds like something we need to try.’”

Ken attended educational seminars in Kansas and Nebraska to learn what needed to be done to implement the practice on his farm. He was met with resistance.

“The first year I no-tilled wheat stubble and planted milo directly into standing wheat stubble I had neighbors tell me that would never work,” he said. “Now probably 80 percent of the county is doing some kind of a wheat, sorghum, fallow rotation on dryland because it works and saves up soil moisture.”

Ken was a pioneer for no-till systems in his area and took the opportunity to educate other growers in the county through his service on the local conservation district board. Sitting on top of the Ogallala Aquifer, Ken also recognized the limited asset farmers have and encouraged farmers to limit their water use and utilize crops and practices that provide the best benefit. Insert sorghum.

“I look at sorghum as the drought buster or the thing that has probably made my farm as profitable as anything,” Ken said about sorghum in his rotation.

Ken’s passion for sorghum on the farm led to his leadership for the industry on both the Oklahoma sorghum and National Sorghum Producers boards.

Ken said, at the time, Mabry Foreman, the longest sitting chairman and founding board member of NSP who served close to 40 years, was considered Mr. Sorghum and had a lasting impact on Ken and his leadership journey.

“Mabry was very direct about how much we needed to have a voice in politics and up to that point, I hadn’t really thought about politics or the political side of farming and raising crops,” Ken said. “Mabry was emphatic about how farmers need to get involved and realize the power they have in state and national government. That had a huge impact on me.”

Ken said serving on various boards was difficult at times but made him better at home. From increasing international markets to setting strategies to develop a national sorghum checkoff board, Ken has seen a lot of changes in the sorghum industry and is considered one of the sorghum greats, serving as NSP chairman from 2002-2003.

He humbly credited the influence of other past sorghum leaders like Bill Kubecka, Dale Artho, Stan Fury and Terry Swanson in addition to Mabry along with the leadership of NSP CEO Tim Lust.

Today, Ken is transitioning his farm ground and equipment to his long-time hired hand while retaining his cow herd. He said he looks forward to time spent with his family in Red River, New Mexico, feeding milo to the deer and chipmunks.

He said in spite of the ups and downs, the Lord has been good to him and his family and they have been blessed. Adding to his list of life influences, Ken remembered his father.



▲ **KEN ROSE SPEAKING** at the Sorghum Annual Convention—an event he enjoyed for the comradery and knowledge transfer with sorghum farmers across the U.S.

“Without a doubt, my dad has been very influential as far as being able to survive on a difficult farm in a difficult area.”

Ken just completed 11 weeks of radiation, diagnosed with prostate cancer earlier this year, but the prognosis is good, and he is home doing well. A resilient man and humble leader, Ken Rose, National Sorghum Producers and Oklahoma Sorghum thank you for your leadership.



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THE TRADING OF DERIVATIVES SUCH AS FUTURES AND OPTIONS MAY NOT BE SUITABLE FOR ALL INVESTORS. DERIVATIVES TRADING INVOLVES SUBSTANTIAL RISK OF LOSS AND YOU SHOULD FULLY UNDERSTAND THOSE RISKS PRIOR TO TRADING.

## It Started with a Cookie

By Sam Barnett

**B**efore MILO Insulation Owner Tom Martin began his journey with sorghum insulation, he worked as a commodity trader in Kansas. During his stint in the Sunflower State, Martin developed a relationship with a man who worked with sorghum flour.

Each visit, the man gave Martin a sorghum flour cookie. After several visits, the cookies started to accumulate and eventually got set aside in a desk drawer. When Martin started cleaning out his desk to relocate, he found the cookies in his desk.

“Amazingly enough, they were just like the day I put them in there,” Martin said. “Cushiony, soft, no deterioration whatsoever.”

A new product idea was born.

### From Packing Peanut to Insulation

Martin began playing with the idea of a packaging material using sorghum as the primary ingredient. After research and development, Martin formulated an effective sorghum-based packing peanut called MILEX™. This product was so successful, in fact, it was eventually sold to Sealed Air Corporation, one of the largest packaging material manufacturers in the world.

Through customer review, Martin’s packaging peanuts were found to be an excellent insulator. This claim gave Martin another idea. After selling the rights to



MILEX™ 2.0 Insulation

MILEX™, Martin turned his full attention to developing a home insulation product, which would later become known as MILEX 2.0™.

After years of research and product development, MILEX 2.0™ was perfected. Martin founded MILO Insulation, a residential insulation company, to sell his product.

MILO Insulation touts MILEX 2.0™ as the world’s first and only biodegradable, toxin-free home insulation. MILEX 2.0™ is a natural alternative to fiberglass or cellulose blow-in attic insulation, outperforming or comparing to traditional insulation products in most categories.

“Third-party testing tells us,” Martin explains, “fiberglass, cellulose and MILO Insulation are the same R-value, which is a performance indicator.”

With an emphasis on environmental protection and sustainability, MILO Insulation is dedicated to revolutionizing the building industry by providing regenerative products to consumers at a practical price with comparable results to traditional insulation methods. The company is doing its part to responsibly source, manufacture and install its products.

### A Win-Win-Win Situation

MILO Insulation contracts with High Plains growers to source their grain sorghum. Careful lab analysis has helped the company determine which hybrids and regions produce the best grain for MILEX 2.0™ formulations. The company has worked to build a network of grower partners stretching from the Texas Rio Grande Valley into parts of Nebraska.

Once grain is sourced, insulation manufacturing begins, and Martin has worked closely with scientists and equipment specialists to create an efficient assembly line. The streamlined process allows hulling, extruding, treating and curing of the grain to be managed by only two employees.

Once the insulation leaves the raw material plant in Tulia, Texas, it is ready to be installed into homes across the Texas Panhandle. Martin said customers report there is a more consistent temperature across the home, and they experience fewer allergies after the product is blown into their attics. The insulation also acts as a deterrent to pest and rodents.

Grain sorghum has untapped potential in the sustainability space, and people like Martin help push the bounds of what is possible for the crop. With creative thinking, the desire to expand markets and an old sorghum cookie, who knows what could come next?

“We’re going to develop other uses,” Martin said, “and some of them are going to be big.”



REPURPOSE USED DEERE, CASEIH, NEW HOLLAND, GLEANER AND CLAAS CORN HEADS TO CUT SORGHUM, SUNFLOWERS MILLET AND INDUSTRIAL ROW CROP HEMP, AT 1/3 TO 1/2 THE COST OF ROW CROP OF A NEW ROW CROP HEADER





# NEWSLETTER

sorghumcheckoff.com | Summer 2020

## Vietnam Open for U.S. Sorghum Exports

A new pest risk assessment was approved by both the U.S. Department of Agriculture and Vietnam's Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, opening the door for U.S. sorghum to flow into the country for high-value uses including pet food, liquor, aquaculture, poultry and swine industries.

This opening follows nearly five years of collaborative efforts by the United Sorghum Checkoff Program, National Sorghum Producers, the U.S. Grains Council and state sorghum organizations, in addition to work with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Foreign Agricultural Service and Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, plus regulators and industry in Vietnam.

"From an initial visit in 2015 by USCP and the USGC to discover the potential for sorghum in various marketplaces to the development of a fish feeding trial followed by the release of very positive trial results, our organizations have worked to create the opportunity for U.S. sorghum

in Vietnam," said Sorghum Checkoff Executive Director Florentino Lopez. "Of course, all this work would fall short without organizations like NSP that came in along the way to help steward the approvals needed to make it official. Our persistence has paid off, creating an additional market opportunity for U.S. sorghum farmers."

The Sorghum Checkoff and Council worked in Vietnam to assess potential markets for U.S. sorghum. This included feeding trials to test the viability of replacing cassava, a root vegetable, with grain sorghum in feed rations for Pangasius, a large catfish species native to Southeast Asia diets.

The groundwork the USCP, NSP and the Council built in Southeast Asia's aquaculture sector was a critical step in seeing this opportunity to diversify U.S. sorghum's export markets through one of the fastest-growing food-producing sectors globally.

While the size of the export opportunity to Vietnam remains uncertain, the Sor-

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| Pangasius, a large catfish species native to Southeast Asia, is one of the most consumed fish in the world.

ghum Checkoff sees tremendous potential as aquaculture is one of the fastest growing segments of the sorghum industry with interest both domestically and globally.

For more information on sorghum's role in Vietnamese markets, visit [sorghumcheckoff.com](http://sorghumcheckoff.com) and [usgrains.org](http://usgrains.org).

## NEW MARKET: NEW ZEALAND

DYK: Another new importer of U.S. sorghum is New Zealand. The country has purchased over 34,000 metric tons (1,365,755 bushels) in the current marketing year.

34,692  
METRIC TONS



1,365,762  
BUSHELS

TOTALS AS OF JULY 2020

## Sorghum Checkoff Completes USDA AMS Administrative Review

The United Sorghum Checkoff Program recently underwent an Administrative Review in accordance with the Commodity Promotion, Research and Information Act of 1996 (Act) and Sorghum Promotion, Research and Information Order (Order).

The review is conducted every three years and ensures the organization's compliance with the Act, Order, Bylaws and USDA AMS Guidelines, which in turn maintain fiscal responsibility of USCP to the farmer.

Earlier this year, the Sorghum Checkoff started the

auditing process amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Unprecedented circumstances required innovative solutions to complete the audit virtually. The Sorghum Checkoff was recognized to be fully accredited after a thorough review by USDA-AMS.

## Sorghum Checkoff Selects Leadership Sorghum Class V Members

The United Sorghum Checkoff Program selected 13 members to Leadership Sorghum Class V, a program designed to develop the next generation of sorghum leaders and industry advocates.

“Leadership Sorghum has become a staple for recruiting new leaders to the sorghum industry and fulfilling those roles on state, national and associated boards and committees,” Sorghum Checkoff Board Chairman Craig Poore, a sorghum farmer from Alton, Kansas, said. “As a past graduate, I believe leadership is vital to the success of any industry, and congratulate these individuals for being selected to the program.”

Participants of the Leadership Sorghum program will gain an understanding of how sorghum moves through the value chain, how checkoffs and interest groups interact on behalf of the industry and what the future holds for the crop through hands-on and classroom-style education. Leadership Sorghum Class V will complete professional development training and have several networking opportunities, as well.

“The Sorghum Checkoff uses this program to prepare sorghum advocates and

leaders at the local, state and federal level,” Leadership Sorghum Program Director Shelee Padgett said. “Leadership development is critical to the sorghum industry’s advancement, and we are so excited to equip Class V with skills to advocate for their operations and the sorghum industry as a whole.”

The Sorghum Checkoff recognizes the benefits of meeting face-to-face and networking with farmer peers and industry leaders, but given the restrictions placed on companies and regions due to COVID-19, some modifications to the traditional Leadership Sorghum program timeline and structure have changed for Class V. The program, originally slated to start in August, will now begin in December 2020. The ultimate goal is to provide program participants with the same quality experience offered in the past while also keeping the health and safety of participants, staff and guests in mind. The Sorghum Checkoff will continue to evaluate these measures as the program moves forward.

For more information about the Leadership Sorghum program, visit [LeadSorghum.com](http://LeadSorghum.com).

**Leadership Sorghum Class V will consist of 13 farmers from five states.**

**David Barrett**

Sinton, Texas

**John Browning**

Plainview, Texas

**Matthew Crane**

Pritchett, Colorado

**Daniel Hopper**

Leonardville, Kansas

**Winter Johnston**

McConnellsburg, PA

**Deanna Lanier**

Valley Center, Kansas

**Matt McCune**

Plainville, Kansas

**Brant Peterson**

Johnson, Kansas

**Gage Porter**

Mercer, Missouri

**Dale Stoltzfus**

Schuylkill Haven, PA

**Ciera Ware**

Ralls, Texas

**Brian Younker**

Spearville, Kansas

**Kirk Zerr**

Quinter, Texas

leadership  
**SORGHUM**  
a program sponsored by the SORGHUM CHECKOFF

## Enhancing International Buyer Relations with VR

While the COVID-19 pandemic temporarily closed Sorghum Checkoff headquarters and canceled or modified many meetings, Sorghum Checkoff staff continue to work hard on behalf of sorghum farmers and the industry.

Each summer, one of the Sorghum Checkoff’s key strategies is showcasing the U.S. sorghum crop to international buyers through trade team visits. With international travel restrictions in place, the Sorghum Checkoff has taken measures to showcase the crop, virtually, by contracting XR Global Consulting, a company specializing in virtual reality, to capture 3D video content that will allow potential buyers to not only see but interact with U.S. sorghum from their respective countries of origin.

The Sorghum Checkoff will launch a video at the end of July of the Texas Coastal Bend harvest and will continue to report on crop progress and quality as the growing season progresses north through the Sorghum Belt.

The content will be made available to international customers through digitally accessible platforms to ensure U.S. sorghum farmers maintain relationships with buyers and do not miss an opportunity to market this year’s sorghum crop. The initial video will be available on the Sorghum Checkoff YouTube channel [youtube.com/sorghumcheckoff](https://youtube.com/sorghumcheckoff).

Like other industries, the Sorghum Checkoff continues to push forward as our pro-

ducers do the same on the farm. Through virtual meetings, conferences and other means, we continue to carry out the strategic plan and seek ways to innovate during this unique climate for the betterment of the sorghum industry, and we look forward to the time we can once again see you in the field.



A branded VR headset and custom packaging will be sent to existing and potential buyers.

### SORGHUM INDUSTRY EVENTS

**August 11** Sorghum U™/Wheat U™  
Dodge City, Kansas

**August 11-12** Sorghum Checkoff Annual Board Meeting  
Lubbock, Texas

**Sept 7** Labor Day  
Office Closed

For more events, visit [sorghumcheckoff.com/calendar](https://sorghumcheckoff.com/calendar)

**USCP MISSION**

The Sorghum Checkoff commits to reveal the potential and versatility of sorghum through increased shared value.

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## Foliar Fungicide Use in Sorghum

[ FOR EASTERN SORGHUM GROWERS ]

By Brent Bean, Ph.D.

One reason sorghum is a popular crop in the central U.S. is it has fewer foliar disease problems compared to most crops. Dry climates tend to inhibit many of the diseases that can potentially be a problem, but in regions of the U.S. where wet, humid conditions are prevalent, foliar fungicide applications may benefit sorghum farmers.

An excellent study examining the effectiveness of fungicides and their application timing took place in Virginia and North Carolina where eight trials were conducted in 2015, 2016 and 2017.

Anthrachnose severity and onset of the disease varied with location. Yield was significantly improved with fungicide applications at three locations (RM-16, SF-17 and LW-17) and improved the economic return at six of the eight sites. How early the onset of anthracnose occurred had a greater effect on yield loss than the severity of the disease when rated at the end of the season.

**SORGHUM YIELD LOSS ASSOCIATED ANTHRACNOSE DISEASE ONSET AND SEVERITY<sup>(1)</sup>**

LOCATION	DISEASE ONSET (DAYS AFTER PLANTING)	% DISEASE SEVERITY	% YIELD LOSS
SF-1	51	78	0
RM-15	64	56	11
RM-16	43	44	55
KS-16	72	24	1
SF-17	48	40	53
RM-17	66	32	12
LW-17	50	40	29
KS-17	71	7	14

1)Adapted from Bhupendra Acharya, et al. 2019. Effectiveness of fungicides and their application timing for the management of sorghum foliar anthracnose in the Mid-Atlantic United States. Plant Disease Vol 103 No. 11.

Of the five fungicides tested in this trial, Headline (pyraclostrobin) and Priaxor (pyraclostrobin + fluxapyroxad) provided the best anthracnose control followed by Quadris (azoxystrobin).

Foliar fungicides should only be applied to sorghum when the onset of foliar disease occurs before flowering and wet, humid weather is anticipated that will cause the disease to flourish. Fungicide should be applied between the boot and early flowering stages.

Another area where fungicides can be beneficial is reducing lodging that can occur prior to harvest. Lodging often occurs when green leaf tissue is lost to foliar diseases causing the plant to cannibalize the stalk to support grain fill. By protecting the leaves, photosynthesis can provide the needed resources for grain fill while maintaining stalk integrity.

Keep in mind that unlike insecticides and herbicides that kill insects and weeds, most fungicides only inhibit the spread of fungi by slowing their growth and reproduction. Growers in regions with environments that are favorable for anthracnose and other foliar diseases should first consider planting resistant hybrids and then follow with timely fungicide application as needed.

► ANTHRACNOSE PRESENT IN SORGHUM. Other foliar diseases that are of concern to U.S. growers are leaf blight (northern corn leaf blight), gray leaf spot, zonate leaf spot, rough leaf spot, target leaf spot, sooty stripe, downy mildew and leaf rust.



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## Dipping into Sprouted Sorghum

By Sherrie Ray

**S**prouted grains are not a foreign concept for modern consumers. For years, nutritionists have been tapping into the hidden value they offer, and now, the secret is out—sprouted sorghum is a modern-day super food with benefits for both sorghum farmers and consumers.

If you farm in the eastern half of the U.S. and have experienced excessive rainfall in sorghum at the wrong time, you probably already get the idea of what sprouted sorghum looks like. If not, picture something resembling a bean sprout. While any type of sorghum can technically sprout, white, cream and red varieties are most commonly used for human consumption.

Sprouted sorghum also provides farmers a unique opportunity to take advantage of the associated premiums. Tapping into this niche market can fetch farmers up to a 50 percent increase in price per bushel.

Justin Crownover, owner of Lone Star Family Farms and Shane Anthony, Crownover's business partner, recently produced three varieties of tortilla chips containing sprouted sorghum.

"We've always just been farmers," Crownover said. "Food service and retail is new for us but we saw an opportunity to expand our operation, and we felt like sprouted sorghum was the way to go."

Anthony said they source sorghum from their own sorghum fields in the Texas Panhandle, and it is then shipped to Custom Ingredients, a processing partner, to be sprouted.

James Curry is the founder of Custom Ingredients and said the process of sprouting sorghum is fairly simple. After harvesting the grain, it is rinsed, sterilized to rid it of surface bacteria, soaked in water for 12 hours and then placed in sprouting chambers for 24-48 hours.

Once the sorghum sprouts, it is served as a whole grain or put into grinders to get the desired size, texture and visual appeal to be used in products such as tortilla chips, croutons, taco shells, pretzels and much more.

Curry said sprouted sorghum has a great flavor profile because certain starch molecules are transformed into maltose when activating enzymes in the sprouting process.

"This natural process gives sprouted sorghum a natural sweetness and chewy texture," Curry said.

Companies and restaurants such as Xochitl, Gold Emblem Abound, H-E-B, CVS Pharmacy and Tito's Burritos have all produced or sold products with sprouted sorghum as an ingredient. Sprouted sorghum appeals to the modern consumer market because it is gluten-free and has many nutritional benefits.

Curry said sprouted sorghum improves digestive health, is loaded with vitamins and minerals and is an excellent source of protein for gluten-sensitive diets. It also contains antioxidants and polyphenols that are great for reducing stress and improving cholesterol, blood sugar and blood pressure.

There is opportunity for sorghum producers, nutritionists and consumers to continue to unveil the financial and nutritional benefits of sprouted sorghum, and it is poised to hit the main-stream market.

"In terms of versatility, nutritional benefits and eye appeal, I think sprouted sorghum is the best," Curry said. "It is just a matter of getting the word out there."

▼ LONE STAR FAMILY FARMS produces a variety of tortilla chips utilizing sprouted sorghum that is sourced from their farms in the Texas Panhandle.



## Sorghum Update

Brought to you by the Kansas Grain Sorghum Commission

### McCurry Appointed to EPA Ag Advisory Committee

**E**nvironmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Andrew Wheeler named individuals from across the country to a renewed advisory committee.

Fortunately for sorghum growers, through this committee, voices from the heartland—including Kansas—will elevate the needs of our farm communities within this crucial agency.

The Farm, Ranch and Rural Communities Advisory Committee is charged to provide policy-oriented advice, information and recommendations to the Administrator on a range of environmental issues and policies that are of importance to agriculture and rural communities. It was established in 2008 to build a more positive and proactive relationship with the agricultural industry but has been idle until the present Administration.

Jesse McCurry, executive director of Kansas Grain Sorghum, was one of the 33 qualified individuals appointed by Administrator Wheeler.

National Sorghum Producers congratulated McCurry for his appointment in June. The EPA's Office of the Administrator will be responsible for financial and administrative support, and the group will meet twice a year to advise the agency on important stakeholder input.

"I am excited to be a part of this committee," McCurry said. "It will be a great learning experience and the other folks

on the committee will be valuable to meet and work with on behalf of U.S. agriculture. Given the complexity and plethora of issues facing producers, we won't be bashful about lifting up and contributing in a precise way to try and help our growers."

McCurry said he applied because of the concerns farmers often express around EPA's impact on their farms. He hopes to ensure practical impacts are considered and ethanol plants are not disadvantaged.

Among many of its prerogatives, the EPA intersects with nearly every aspect of farm families' operations and, ultimately, their livelihoods; it is charged with evaluating important on-farm chemical applications, regulating water and air quality and administering the crucial Renewable Fuel Standard, which adds tremendous value to Kansas sorghum producers' crops. For example, in 2019 nearly a third of all sorghum production in the U.S. went toward ethanol production—over 100 million bushels, according to USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service.

Working to ensure the agency promulgates smart policies based on sound science while considering economic impacts will help steer the regulatory process and empower farmers to continue to be the very best stewards of their land. McCurry's work will also ensure those farms continue to endure to hand off to the next generation of agrarians.

"It is too important to let the committee go without some good Kansans on it," McCurry said.

For more information on McCurry and to contact staff with your thoughts on issues you would like considered on the committee, visit [ksgrainsorghum.org/contact](http://ksgrainsorghum.org/contact). More information on the committee can be found at [epa.gov/faca/frcc](http://epa.gov/faca/frcc).



# Sorghum Shortcuts



## Clint White Hired as USCP Director of Communications

Team Sorghum recently hired Clint White as the Director of Communications for the United Sorghum Checkoff Program. White is responsible for the planning, development and implementation of all Sorghum Checkoff communications, both external and internal. He will direct and carry out the duties of the information, communication and education (ICE) department and coordinate at the strategic and tactical levels with the other program areas of the organization.

White has a bachelor's degree in design communications from Texas Tech University, and prior to joining Team Sorghum worked in design communications for over 16 years with some of the most recognizable consumer brands.

## Jennifer Blackburn Promoted to Vice President of Communications

Former External Affairs Director Jennifer Blackburn was promoted to Vice President of Communications. Moving forward, Blackburn will evaluate and implement industry-wide strategic communications with a renewed day-to-day focus on the association and legislative arm of the sorghum industry. This includes a broad range of internal and external communications through public relations and legislative and fundraising support. Blackburn will also continue to serve as Editor of the *Sorghum Grower* magazine.

Blackburn began working for NSP as a student intern in 2009 then transitioned full-time to the NSP Communications Coordinator role. For the past five years, Blackburn led communications as External Affairs Director for both National Sorghum Producers and the Sorghum Checkoff.



## Haleigh Erramouspe Transitions to Part-Time NSP Communications Coordinator

Haleigh Erramouspe will transition from intern into a part-time role as Communications Coordinator for NSP where she will provide a broad range of public relations and communications support to the organization. She has worked with Team Sorghum

as a communications intern since September 2018.

Erramouspe graduated this May with a bachelor's degree in agricultural communications from Texas Tech University. While at Texas Tech, Erramouspe served as the Editor for *The Agriculturist* magazine and participated in the Texas Tech Congressional Internship Program where she worked for the House Committee on Agriculture.

Erramouspe will continue her education at Tech as she pursues a master's degree in agricultural communications online.

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## FIVE STEPS FOR MANAGING SUGARCANE APHIDS WITHOUT SACRIFICING YIELD POTENTIAL OR AGRONOMICS

### Hybrid Selection Remains Your Most Important Management Decision

Sugarcane aphids were first observed in grain sorghum fields in 2013. Since then, the pest has spread rapidly across the major sorghum-growing regions in the U.S. The sugarcane aphid reproduces exponentially on sorghum in a matter of days, severely stressing plants by sucking moisture out of leaves and depositing sticky honeydew that causes mold to grow, reducing photosynthesis.

### Follow these five steps for managing sugarcane aphids:

#### 1. SELECT THE RIGHT PRODUCTS

When making sorghum hybrid decisions, remember these important considerations to help maximize yield potential:

- Place the right hybrid in each sorghum field – and manage fertility and planting rates accordingly
- Select hybrids for important agronomics like standability, head exertion, disease resistance and drought tolerance

No sorghum hybrid is "aphid proof" but Pioneer® brand hybrids are available in a range of maturities and several have demonstrated tolerance to sugarcane aphids. Look for hybrids with the Pioneer Protector® technology designation, which means that product is above average in its tolerance to sugarcane aphids.



#### 2. CONTROL VOLUNTEER SORGHUM AND WEEDS AFTER HARVEST

Sugarcane aphids can overwinter on volunteer sorghum plants and weeds such as johnsongrass, setting up the following year's sorghum crop for an early infestation.

#### 3. HAVE A PLANTING PLAN

Aphids tend to become more active as temperatures increase. They seek out the newest sorghum plants. Planting early and using an insecticide seed treatment can

give seedlings a head start before aphid populations multiply; planting too late can make the field more of a target for hungry aphids.

#### 4. SCOUT EARLY AND OFTEN

Sugarcane aphids are light-colored with dark feet and cornicles; adults may develop stripes and green wings. In high numbers, they can cause significant yield loss.

Scout for aphids once a week after emergence and at least twice a week after aphids appear. They tend to feed first on the underside of leaves and then move to all plant surfaces.

#### 5. APPLY INSECTICIDE AT THE RIGHT TIME

An insecticide seed treatment can provide early protection from aphids without harming beneficial predators.

During the growing season, consider spraying an insecticide, such as Transform® WG, when thresholds reach more than 50 aphids per leaf on more than 20% of the plants in a field. Spraying earlier could result in problematic aphid infestations before harvest.

Avoid spraying pyrethroid insecticides, which are harmful to beneficial insects.



Infested sorghum leaf with all stages of sugarcane aphids present.

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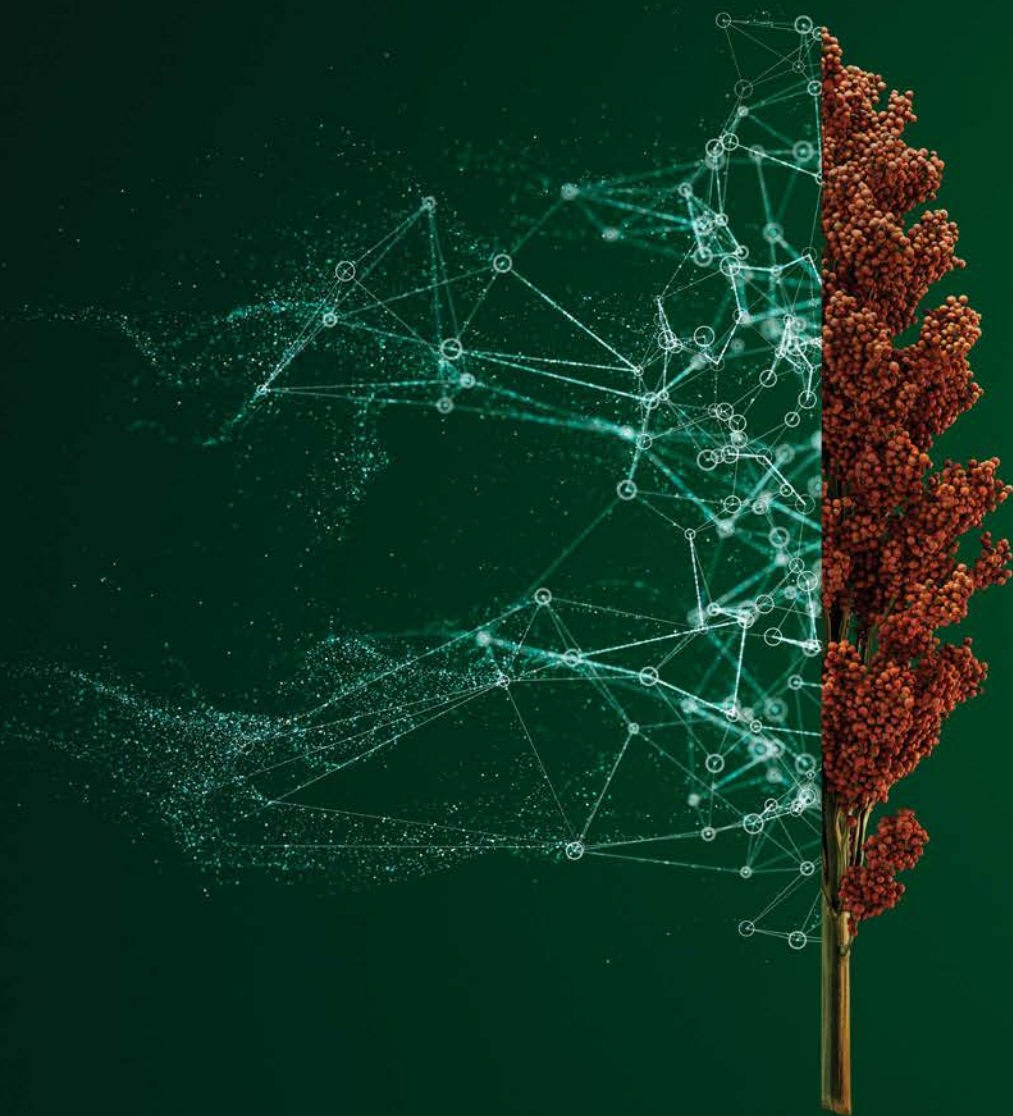
Our researchers are continually developing new sorghum hybrids from our elite germplasm with enhanced sugarcane aphid tolerance traits. They go well beyond field observations to help ensure yield potential under aphid pressure.

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

Ask your local Pioneer sales representative about the best sugarcane aphid-tolerant sorghum hybrids for your acres.  
Learn more at [Pioneer.com/SCA](https://Pioneer.com/SCA).



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Powered by elite genetics for unrivaled yield potential, our sorghum hybrids excel in sugarcane aphid tolerance. Ask your Pioneer sales representative about the industry's strongest lineup of sorghum.

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