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SUMMER 2021

ON THE COVER: Food entrepreneur Robert Harris and TAMU researchers Lloyd and Bill Rooney worked together to select a high-tannin, black sorghum with the antioxidants and heart healthy attributes Harris used to make Grain Berry cereal. He licensed and named the sorghum ONYX. (cover photo by Megan Rooney)

Background photo by Heather Eaton



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Editor's Desk



Back in Action

As the world sets back more into motion, so does Team Sorghum. In fact, writing this column, I was getting ready to head to Ag Media Summit in Kansas City to interact with ag journalists and colleagues—a networking and continuing education opportunity I look forward to annually. We had team members in Manhattan, Kansas, with Leadership Sorghum Class V, not on Zoom for the first time, learning about public research and risk management, and sorghum had strong representation at the U.S. Grains Council summer annual conference where trade, partnerships and worldwide demand-building efforts were being discussed.

There is no lack of movement in Washington, D.C., either. In fact, your National Sorghum Producers board leaders travelled there mid-July for the first time since January of last year. It was a timely visit to Capitol Hill. Leadership advocated for disaster assistance for 2020 and 2021 crop years, which was advanced by the House Agriculture Committee the following week. The legislation will add drought, and is a valuable bipartisan effort, particularly as our farmers in South Texas and the Gulf Coast have received significant rainfall during harvest—the total impact still unknown. You can read more about the 2020 WHIP+ Authorization Act on page 8. Infrastructure, which the Senate went to debate on when this issue went to the press, was also a key issue sorghum leaders discussed with Members of Congress as well as proposed changes to the tax code and the detrimental impact they will have on family farms—more on that on pages 6-7.

The first week of August, both the NSP and United Sorghum Checkoff Program boards of directors convened for their respective board and budget meetings, laying the financial groundwork for plans the following year and beyond. While the work never stopped in the last year—in fact, we are quite proud of the strides we were able to make during that time—we cannot wait to get to work for the U.S. sorghum farmer. Through adversity, there is opportunity, and our industry is brimming with plenty of that right now. The face-to-face value is not lost on us either, and we look forward to seeing our farmers, partners and other members of the sorghum community more as time and opportunity allow. Thank you for your ongoing support, and if you find value in the work we do but are not a member of our organization yet, please join us. Together, we can accomplish much more.

Jennifer Blackburn, VP of Communications

The Race to Complete Infrastructure and Proposed Tax Changes

By Haleigh Erramouspe

Where there is infrastructure there will be taxes. For months large infrastructure packages have been under negotiation in the Senate with significant debate on the definition of infrastructure and how to pay for the legislation.

Infrastructure

Republicans have leaned toward a more traditional definition of infrastructure: roads, bridges, broadband, and the like, while Democrats have proposed a more expansive version of what they define as “human” infrastructure, including child care, elderly programs and similar new entitlements, in addition to ambitious climate change measures.

After months of positioning and negotiations, President Biden and a bipartisan group of Senators—five Democrats and five Republicans—struck a deal on a potential infrastructure framework on June 24. The compromise was at \$1.2 trillion to fund roads, rail improvements, electric-vehicle charging stations, rural broadband and other traditional physical infrastructure components.

After the compromise had been reached, Democratic leaders in Congress had a new challenge—how to move it to completion. The key was whether and

how to link the package to the much larger, and far more controversial, “human” infrastructure package, costing as much as \$6 trillion with corresponding “pay-fors” or tax increases to move via a partisan reconciliation process. While President Biden initially stated he would not sign the bipartisan bill into law without the larger human infrastructure package, he quickly walked back that statement. Early in discussions, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) held the line that the two bills must be passed together, a position opposed by most Republicans.

On July 13, a group of Senate Democrats announced a scaled back \$3.5 trillion infrastructure blueprint developed by Schumer and Democratic Senators on the Budget Committee to take the place of the original \$6 trillion package. While smaller (though complete details were not released), it still would create many of the same entitlements and included tax increases. It was also still not clear how the bills could move through the process.

On July 21, Senate Republicans rejected an attempt by Senator Schumer to invoke cloture and begin debate on the \$1.2 billion bipartisan traditional infrastructure deal negotiated with President Biden. The

Republicans mounted a filibuster, seeking a delay until July 26, in an effort to garner time to iron out unresolved issues and review the final details.

Late in the afternoon of July 28, nearly a month after negotiators reached a bipartisan compromise with the White House, 17 Senate Republicans joined all 50 Senate Democrats and voted to begin consideration of this package, which contains roughly \$550 billion in new spending above ongoing infrastructure spending. Despite the many challenges this measure has faced, Senate Democrats and Republicans are still celebrating this step as a bipartisan win—even as next steps are still unclear.

Taxes

In order to pay for many of the provisions in the Democrat-led infrastructure package, Biden and Democratic Leadership have proposed tax increases. These proposed tax increases would likely have extremely negative impacts on agriculture and small businesses and the way individuals transfer assets at death.

In the American Families Plan unveiled April 28, the Biden Administration proposed higher capital gains taxes on inherited assets and the elimination of stepped-up basis for gains in excess of \$1 million. Stepped-up basis currently allows inherited assets to be taxed upon sale at their value at the time of the decedent’s death rather than the value at which the decedent had acquired the property. In a press release sent shortly after the plan was announced, USDA stated no capital gains would be due at death for family farms as long as the farm remains family-owned and operated within the family. USDA claimed 98 percent of farm estates would not owe any tax at transfer, provided the farm stayed in the family. This claim was refuted by the American Farm Bureau Federation who claimed 32 percent of U.S. farms have assets greater than \$1 million and that those farms accounted for more than 90 percent of farmland.

Beyond the Biden tax package, two more bills—the Sensible Taxation and Equity Promotion Act (also called the STEP Act) and the “For the 99.5 Percent Act”—have been introduced that could destroy the transfer of assets to the next generation of farmers and ranchers.


The STEP Act, led by Senator Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), proposes to eliminate stepped-up basis and will impose a “transfer tax” on any assets transferred to a trust or any individual other than a spouse after the first \$100,000 of cumulative gain. The “For the 99.5 Percent Act,” led by Senator Bernie Sanders (D-VT) in the Senate and Representatives Jimmy Gomez (D-CA) and Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) in the House, would increase estate tax rates and make dramatic cuts to the exemption.

At the request of Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Ranking Member John Boozman

(R-AR), and House Committee on Agriculture Ranking Member Glenn ‘GT’ Thompson (R-PA), the Agricultural and Food Policy Center (AFPC) at Texas A&M University analyzed the impact the two pieces of legislation would have on farm and ranch estates.

Under the STEP Act, 92 of AFPC’s 94 representative farms would be impacted with additional tax liabilities incurred, averaging \$726,104 per farm. Under the 99.5 Percent Act, 41 of the 92 representative farms would be impacted with additional tax liabilities via the transfer tax, averaging \$2.17 million per farm. If both the STEP Act and the For the 99.5 Percent Act were simultaneously implemented, 92 of the 94 representative farms would be impacted with additional tax liabilities, averaging \$1.43 million per farm across the representative farms.

National Sorghum Producers continues to stay engaged in protecting family farms’ ability to efficiently pass down assets from one generation to the next, and NSP supports the longstanding tax code provisions that are fundamental to the financial health of production agriculture and the businesses that support the sorghum industry. For more information, visit SorghumGrowers.com/issues or SorghumGrowers.com/podcast.



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House Agriculture Committee Advanced 2020 WHIP+ Authorization Act

On July 27, the House Committee on Agriculture advanced H.R. 267, or the 2020 WHIP+ Authorization Act, which would authorize the Wildfire and Hurricane Indemnity Program Plus (WHIP+) for 2020 and 2021 losses. This legislation, which extends the model that complements crop insurance, broadens the scope of WHIP+ to include losses from extreme cold and drought, such as the polar vortex seen in Texas earlier this year, as well as other disastrous weather events seen in the past two years.

“We are extremely grateful to see the House Agriculture Committee working in a bipartisan effort to provide essential support to not only sorghum producers, but all of America’s farmers and ranchers who have been detrimentally affected by natural disasters,” National Sorghum Producers Chairman Kody Carson, a sorghum farmer from Olton, Texas, said. “Sorghum producers had a challenging 2020 dealing with severe drought on the High Plains that crept into 2021. Currently, in a disaster that is still developing, farmers in South Texas and the Gulf Coast are struggling to get their crop out and salvage its value given torrential rains. The extension of WHIP+ into 2020 and 2021 improves upon the existing program and will offer much needed assistance during a particularly challenging, high cost and high stakes time for agriculture. We commend the members of the committee for recognizing the needs of producers and expediting this much needed legislation, and NSP is committed to providing support throughout the process.”



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KansCAT Research Fellow Contributes to Sorghum Sustainability Efforts

By Sanders Barbee, Kansas Sorghum Conservation & Sustainability Fellow



As sustainability has recently been pushed to the forefront of our minds, many policymakers, industries and researchers have been searching for sustainable agriculture solutions. That's why more research into grain sorghum's inherent sustainability could lead to a multitude of new avenues for sorghum growers.

As this year's Conservation and Sustainability Fellow at Kansas Grain

Sorghum, I intend to help map that path. I am a junior at Kansas State University studying agricultural economics with a specialty in pre-law, and I am on the executive board for Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Related Sciences chapter at K-State.

I grew up in Lawrence, Kansas, with no exposure to agriculture until high school when I began attending agricultural summer camps. These camps were simply ways to fill my summers, but I became increasingly interested in the ongoing story of agriculture and began to intentionally seek out programs like the Vet-Step and AgriTrek camps at Tuskegee University in Alabama.

I learned how vast and full of promise agriculture really is. Of course, not growing up in agriculture seemed like a setback, but my peers who grew up in the industry were always very welcoming and eager to help me join.

In fact, the more I learn about agriculture, the more passionate I become about it as a way of life and the more aware I become that my non-traditional background in this work may actually count as one of my greatest assets.

My time with Team Sorghum has been an exciting mix of new and unique learning opportunities. I have met Members of Congress and their staff, researched and prepared policy memos and interfaced daily with National Sorghum Producers, the Sorghum Checkoff and sorghum farmers.

Throughout this spring, I visited sorghum operations to help further my understanding of the industry and chat with the individuals driving its progress. In 2021, I have developed a working knowledge of

grain sorghum production to assist with my capstone project—building NSP's community and market partnerships to leverage the creation and application of a technology platform, KansCAT, for conservation of soil and water systems in Kansas.

The KansCAT project focuses on emerging methods of farming grain sorghum for conservation of air, soil and water systems in Kansas. Our work has three main objectives: deploy a database for storing and assessing practice information; increase conservation literacy of farmers for the industry to remain modern and efficient; and, leverage conservation practices for value in low carbon fuel markets through added-value ethanol. All three of these objectives keep farmers in mind to secure sorghum's future in the fields. Simply put, sorghum is essential in terms of environmental sustainability and conservation.

For my role in KansCAT, I continue to interact with Kansas farmers to survey and sample their farming methods and document records such as production and yield reports, fertilizer applications and other important aspects of production. Kansas farmers have maintained their land for generations and they often see their stewardship efforts as commonplace; however, from my non-traditional perspective, they are speaking on aspects that are completely novel to me as well as to others still unfamiliar with all the extraordinary work that they do every day of every year. The farmer's story can be one of the farm's most powerful tools.

I continue to learn so much when speaking to our farmers. Quite often, the things we talk about seem mundane and routine to them but are completely intriguing to me. One of the biggest lessons that they have taught me is appreciating and cherishing the fruits of your labor (which, in their cases, are very much tangible berries). Hard work and practice cultivating one's craft will always yield a positive outcome, no matter the task.

Another recurring theme I continue to hear is being open to change in order to stay productive and dynamic. The theme is as true in today's rapidly accelerating world as it was when humans first started sowing the earth. Through my work with KansCAT on Team Sorghum, I have gained knowledge and perspective into the jobs of Kansas farmers, jobs they instead see as lifestyles built on hard work, determination, and leadership.✂

Kansas farmers have limited technical capacity to quantify the effectiveness of farm practices in improving soil health and water quality. This project, titled "Community and market partnerships to leverage the creation and application of a technology platform, KansCAT, for conservation of soil and water systems in Kansas," consists of three objectives aimed at addressing this problem:

1. Deploying a database (KansCAT) for storing and assessing important farm practice information
2. Increasing literacy of farmers and conservation partners
3. Leveraging conservation practices for value in carbon-based markets

FAST FACTS



20 FARMERS

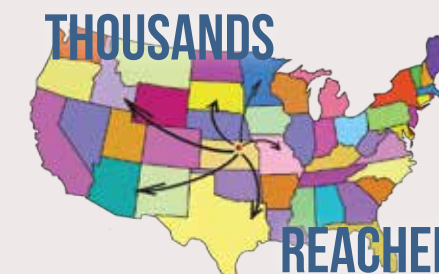


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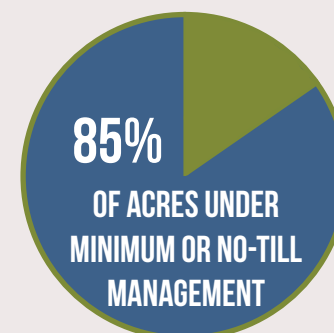
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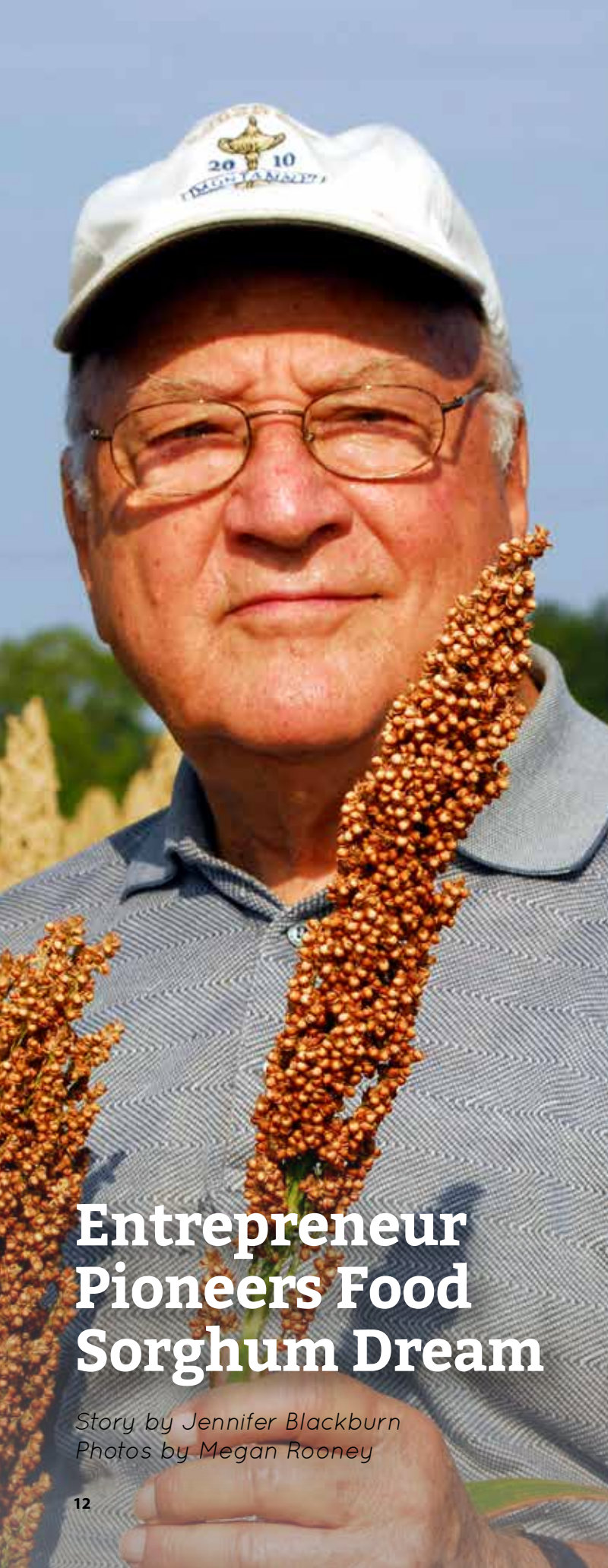


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Entrepreneur Pioneers Food Sorghum Dream

Story by Jennifer Blackburn
Photos by Megan Rooney

Robert M. Harris was a dreamer, a visionary and an innovator. After working in advertising for the food industry for 25 years, he launched his own food business in 1973 with a mission to help people live healthy lives.

Harris, who died July 5 at the age of 95 at his home in Englewood, New Jersey, is most notably known for creating the trans-fat-free margarine Smart Balance. He also licensed the Weight Watchers brand for low-fat margarine, various low-fat cheeses, salad dressings and mayonnaise.

He was on the leading edge of the fat-free diet trend, and had a personal interest in heart health. His father died from heart disease at the age of 40 when he was only 8-years-old, and both of his brothers died from heart disease, as well.

Harris's businessman acumen was bolstered by his thirst for knowledge. He liked science and was an avid reader. It was within a stack of medical journals that led him to his next novel, food discovery—high tannin, black sorghum.

Harris had never worked with grains, but through further investigation and research, he was put in touch with the late Lloyd Rooney and his son Bill at Texas A&M University (TAMU) in College Station, Texas, who worked on a line of sorghums meeting the specifications Harris was seeking. Harris met with the TAMU researchers in 2008 at the age of 82. Initially, the Rooneys were skeptical at best—they had seen innovators before but none quite like Bob Harris.

The Rooneys informed Harris that taking this to market would not be easy, but Harris was not dissuaded. The hybrid he chose, later named ONYX, was an antioxidant powerhouse with many nutritional benefits he advertised like slowing sugar absorption, natural plant fiber and free radical protection.

However, as Bill Rooney told him, it had limitations on the production side. Yield did not match those produced by commercial hybrids, no one at the time was growing it commercially, and Harris would need to find someone to grow it and mill it. He was committed and pushed forward.

After almost five years, Harris fully licensed Onyx sorghum and launched a series of products under the Grain Berry brand, marketed by Silver Palate Kitchens, Inc., which is headed by his son Peter Harris. He developed breakfast cereals, and muffin, pancake and waffle mixes—all featuring his key Onyx sorghum ingredient.

Coming together at that point in their careers was serendipitous for Harris and Lloyd Rooney. The two families grew close during their time working together and a mutual respect was formed. The Rooneys helped Harris find farmers to grow his Onyx sorghum and made improvements to the hybrid in subsequent years. Harris's marketing strengths were impressed upon the research pair, and, likewise, Harris learned a great deal about farming, research and production agriculture.

Harris was all-in for sorghum. His family, friends and acquaintances knew it, and he wanted everyone to know—



▲ ROBERT (BOB) HARRIS (left), Lloyd Rooney (center) and Bill Rooney (right) worked together to find the right variety of black sorghum to meet the health objectives for Harris's Grain Berry food products.

about Onyx, yes—but about its characteristics that contributed to a healthy diet even more. Harris ate Onyx every single morning, up until two days before he died, and was absolutely convinced that is what kept him alive.

Many radio listeners across the U.S. heard about sorghum for the first time when Harris launched a nationwide campaign advertising Grain Berry, made with *Amazing ONYX Sorghum*. Harris also took the health benefits of Onyx to the health expert himself, Dr. Oz.

He told The Dr. Oz Show Co-Executive Producer Stacy Rader after their initial meeting he was 90-years-old, and they needed to record the episode in the following few weeks because he may no longer be there by the following month. This carried on for five years, and they

“ Bob was a visionary leader who brought out the best in all his partners. He fed our bodies and our minds and left love with everyone he touched.” - Dr. Oz

did 10 episodes together as he remained eager to tell the world about Onyx sorghum.

He and his son Peter came to their first meeting with cereal and milk in hand for everyone to try—a departure from the formal, corporate meetings Rader was accustomed to with other guests. Rader worked to balance Harris's attention to the science with getting consumers to relate to the brand—a constant debate. Dr. Mehmet Oz and Harris took a shine to one another almost immediately, and over time, a strong bond was formed between the show and the Harris family.

Harris had a health setback in November 2020, but

a minor procedure kept him going. Although slowed, Harris was still pushing forward, focusing on packaging with his son Peter until the time of his death. He and Peter talked about business daily, he facetimes Rader about segment feedback from his home, and he was exchanging text messages with Bill Rooney up to three weeks before he died.

Harris's entrepreneurial spirit carried through to the end—he was by no means done, shared his daughter Susan who spent most of his final days with him. His accomplishments in business were notable, but his children agree—he would consider his family his greatest achievement.

Harris was a pioneer in the food sorghum industry. Given his experience and industry know-how, he could have chosen many things to make his final venture. But he chose sorghum and proved at the age of 82, you can do

anything if you have a passion for it. The fact that there are now hundreds of products on store shelves containing sorghum as an ingredient is in part to his credit, and for that, we say thank you, Mr. Harris.✍

National Sorghum Producers thanks Robert Harris's children Peter and Susan, Bill Rooney with Texas A&M University, and Stacy Rader with The Dr. Oz Show for contributing commentary and anecdotes for this story. Mr Harris was an avid supporter of NSP and a pioneer in our industry. We send our sympathy and deepest condolences to the Harris family.

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Sorgonomics

Harvest is Approaching.

How is your marketing plan?

Q&A with Dan O'Brien, Kansas State University Extension Agricultural Economist. O'Brien focuses is in the area of grain market analysis and forecasting. Working in Kansas, he gives attention to U.S. and world corn, grain sorghum, wheat, soybean, sunflower and canola markets. He also works with crop production economics-related issues, such as cost of production and profitability of irrigated and non-irrigated crop enterprises throughout the state of Kansas but with a particular emphasis on western Kansas. He is located in Colby.

Q1. What are your thoughts on the size of the corn crop and its impact on the market?

Balancing areas of reduced corn yields in the U.S. with those that are doing well—it seems that a 14.5-14.9 billion bushel U.S. corn crop is a fair estimate at this time with the possibility of more or less DEPENDING on weather for the remainder of July and August.

Q2. What should farmers be thinking about now that the sorghum crop is getting closer to maturity?

Market-wise, it seems that at least Kansas grain elevators are expressing optimism for new crop U.S. grain sorghum export sales—based on their strong forward contract bids in the past few weeks. It seems that there is anticipation that major world export buyers—being the savvy marketers that they are—will likely wait for any harvest price lows to purchase U.S. grain sorghum in quantity. If this happens, then watch for local basis improvements for sorghum that may be fleeting as grain elevator managers fill unit/shuttle trains for export.

Q3. How can farmers manage board risk at this point given so much uncertainty with the size of the corn crop and all the global unknowns?

As of this writing (July 27, 2021) there are “new crop” 2021 grain sorghum forward contract opportunities in local elevators that are markedly above cost of production and should be seriously considered for action. The biggest key to making marketing decisions in this environment is to have a reasonable point of reference, or

reference price, to use for making marketing decisions. IF a farmer's point of reference is full economic cost of production, or full economic cost of production plus 10-25 percent, then current new crop forward pricing opportunities are attractive and actionable. However, if a farmer's point of reference is the highest price that was ever available in spring-summer 2021, then they are setting goals that may or may not ever be attained—and are likely to burden themselves with unrealistic expectations. A sustainable farming operation takes full economic profits when they are available for judiciously chosen amounts of their expected production. Those farming operations that are taking on financial risk are those that in essence speculate too frequently in the cash market and end up losing tens of thousands of dollars in lost profitable marketing opportunities.

Q4. For farmers who have already contracted and have a good sorghum crop, how can they double down? What about if they have a bad crop and need to adjust?

“Doubling down” implies taking on more financial risk to try to dig out what has turned out being an unprofitable marketing decision. After first doing no more harm to their financial position, I would recommend loss minimizing, judicious decisions for the remainder of the crop. And, who knows, but the forward contract price commitments that now seem to be too low may end up looking OK to very good if an unanticipated market downturn for agriculturally related or non-ag-related reasons. I would advise managing as well as you can at each step of the way through a marketing plan and not taking on undue excessive risk by jumping in and out of market positions.✂

The Global Significance of sorghum



Sorghum holds an important role in the lives of millions of people around the world. The origin and early domestication of sorghum took place in northeast Africa, and the earliest known record of sorghum comes from an archaeological dig at Nabta Playa, near the Egyptian-Sudanese border dated 8,000 B.C. It spread throughout Africa and, along the way, adapted to a

wide range of environments from the highlands of Ethiopia to the semi-arid Sahel. The development and spread of five different races of sorghum can, in many cases, be attributed to the movement of various tribal groups in Africa. Sorghum then spread to India and China and eventually worked its way into Australia. The first known record of sorghum in the United

States comes from Benjamin Franklin in 1757, who wrote about its application in producing brooms. Today, sorghum has deep cultural roots in many countries and regions across the world. Grab your passport, and let's take a closer look at the important role sorghum plays across the globe, diving specifically deeper into Africa, China and Mexico.

Africa

By Haleigh Erramouspe

A mug of beer after a long day of hard work is a tradition in America, but in Africa, that cold brew might taste and look a bit different. Nat Bascom and his small-scale irrigation team spent the entire morning hand digging a meter-wide community well and preparing to line it with concrete castings in the sapping heat of the sahel in West Africa, Niger. When the midday heat reached its peak, they took a break, and a villager brought them each a calabash full of sorghum beer complete with a hollowed out sorghum stalk as a straw.

Sorghum is an integral component of the lives of those living in many West and East African countries. From sorghum drinks and common foods to livestock feeds and building materials, those local to western and eastern Africa use sorghum products in a multitude of ways. This is partially due to how long sorghum has been grown in the continent. The origin and early domestication of sorghum can be traced back to Northeastern Africa as early as 8,000 B.C., and Nigeria, Ethiopia, Sudan and Niger are all in the top 10 sorghum producing countries in the world.

Sorghum Production

Bascom is the assistant director for the Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Collaborative Research on Sorghum and Millet (SMIL) at Kansas State University and has worked in various capacities in Africa for around 20 years. He said the typical small-holder sorghum producer in many parts of Africa ranges from 2-10 acres, primarily as a form of subsistence farming. They often plow, plant, cultivate and harvest the fields by hand or with assistance from draft animals.

"Many of the populations that depend on sorghum are food-insecure and living in very harsh environments,"

Bascom said. "I would call it the safety net for many households where they are truly dependent, on a very subsistence level, for that sorghum crop to literally keep them above malnutrition and at times starvation levels."

Bascom said these populations often use every part of the sorghum plant. The grain is used for human consumption, and the forage and residue are often consumed by local livestock or by cattle moved through the region by semi-nomadic groups. These populations even use the stalks to build fences around home compounds or as firewood, and, traditionally, some ethnic groups have used sorghum as a sort of peace offering to alleviate cross ethnic tension.

The sorghum grown in Ethiopia, Sudan and similar climates is typically a 10- to 12-foot tall variety of grain sorghum, which lends itself to multi-purpose uses. Joseph Awika, a professor in the Department of Soil and Crop Sciences at Texas A&M University (TAMU), grew up in Kenya before moving to the United States in 1998 to pursue his graduate and doctorate degrees. Awika said cultural ties to the taller sorghum varieties are a major driver for why they are still grown in these regions.

"Part of it is cultural tradition," Awika said, "and they don't want to change even if the newer sorghums are better performing, because they use the whole plant."

Food Products

While sorghum in this region has long been a crop grown for sustenance, Awika said he is seeing sorghum food products emerging in urban areas as healthy alternatives in markets and high-end restaurants.



Photo provided by the Sorghum and Millet Innovation Lab (SMIL)

There are multiple ways sorghum is consumed in Africa, Awika said. It has gone from being consumed in a village as a porridge or as bread, but it is also served as a liquid that is either fermented or unfermented (alcoholic or non-alcoholic), which you can pick up at a corner store.

Research is being conducted at SMIL, Bascom said, to strengthen sorghum's appeal to the "modern food table" in Africa through the development of easy-to-prepare, pre-packaged products. As part of this research, Awika said he and his team are developing sorghum hybrids that have a unique protein structure that makes them easier to cook, while still maintaining the agronomic benefits that have made sorghum culturally significant in these African nations. They are also demonstrating how sorghum could replace traditional ingredients in local foods like injera, a crepe-type pancake typically made with teff, in Ethiopia and kiswa, a similar product, in Sudan.

Domestic and international researchers, like Awika and Bascom, are partnering with in-country national research teams, local producers and entrepreneurial processors to support innovative practices and technologies that will enable sorghum as an "ancient grain" with traditional appeal to find its place in the future food table of Africa.

China

By Cason Lutrick



A celebration in America often calls for a toast of champagne. Business meetings are approached with a serious demeanor, and guests at dinner parties gently sip glasses of whiskey or wine. These events are treated much differently across the globe, and in China, banquets, dinner meetings, and certain events are a celebration of comradery typically including toasts with the most consumed liquor in the world—baijiu.

Baijiu production has occurred for over 1,000 years in China. Baijiu translates to “white liquor” and is primarily made from sorghum, but it can also be made from wheat, rice and corn. The Chinese drink baijiu in a variety of situations for everything from seasonal holiday festivities to business dinners with important guests. U.S. sorghum contributes to baijiu production in China, and the spirit has and continues to play an important role in Chinese culture.

A Toast to Friendship

It is not uncommon for a traditional business meeting to be followed by a meal where participants toast each other, their businesses and a

hopeful future. Soyya Liu, a commodity trading manager for Hang Tung Resources Holding Limited, said a toast of baijiu can relax the situation and bring more transparency from those who are drinking it.

“When Chinese drink baijiu together, they will be easy to talk to,” Liu said. “This is why some important business meetings will be followed by a dinner with baijiu.”

Baijiu in Chinese culture can also signify respect the host has for his colleagues. Jerry Wang, an agricultural commodity trader at Axia Trading LLC said being offered baijiu has a deeper meaning.

“I am being treated as one in their intimate circle,” Wang said. “The Chinese want to show we can be very hospitable, and baijiu is an incentive in our culture.”

Gifting the spirit represents a similar sign of respect, especially if you know the consumer enjoys drinking baijiu. People will typically give baijiu as a gift on holidays, for festivals and other celebrations—and if they are trying to make a good first impression.

Soyya Liu explained that when a boyfriend goes to see his girlfriend’s

BAIJIU, OR WHITE LIGHTENING, is consumed by billions of people around the world, and China is the top consumer and supplier of the spirit.

father, it is very traditional to bring baijiu as a gift.

Pop Culture Prominence

The first time baijiu truly entered American pop culture was former President Richard Nixon’s visit to China in 1972. Nixon attended a banquet with Chinese Premier Zhou in which they toasted the liquor throughout the evening. Since then, knowledge of the history and production of baijiu has spread to the Western Hemisphere, but it still does not hold the same cultural significance as the spirit does in China.

Baijiu distilled from sorghum also made its way into Chinese pop culture with the internationally acclaimed 1987 film, “Red Sorghum.” Based on a novel, this film follows the life of a young Chinese woman in a sorghum liquor distillery. Soyya Liu explained how this famous film emphasizes the importance of sorghum baijiu.

“Due to maotai, a type of baijiu, being made from sorghum and the famous movie ‘Red Sorghum,’” she said, “when thinking of sorghum baijiu, to me, it means it is very valuable and pure.”

The Chinese are starting to see the younger generation shift away from baijiu. The high alcohol content and strong taste can make it difficult for some to drink throughout the evening. They are taking up wine, whiskey and other cocktails instead. Even so, this has not removed the importance of baijiu from Chinese culture, and it is still the drink of choice for billions of people.✍

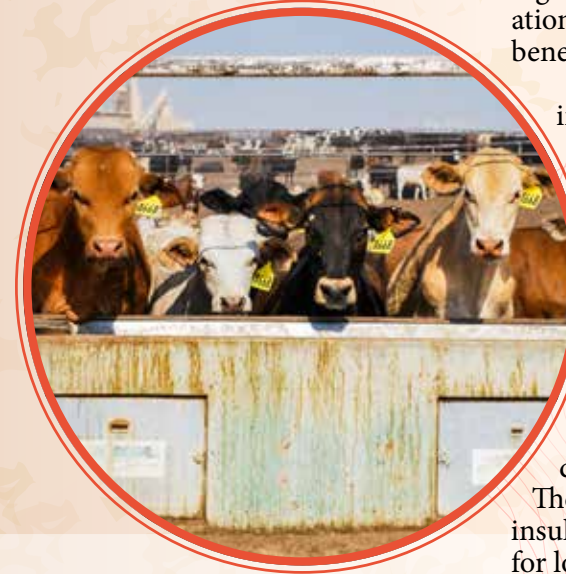
Mexico

By Taylor Rankin

Dating back 7,000 years, agriculture in Mexico has played an integral role in shaping the country’s modern economy and culture. Today, the majority of land in Mexico is utilized for agriculture production, and while corn is a staple in Mexican culture, sorghum has a rich history, as well.

East of Monterrey, Mexico, is Tamaulipas, which borders Texas and spans south. The northern part of this state is a major contributor to sorghum production in Mexico, and the region makes up for nearly half of production for the entire country. According to the USDA Foreign Agricultural Service, Tamaulipas farmers supplied 58 of the 157 million bushels of sorghum produced in 2020.

Mexico also plays a major role in sorghum research, and during winter months, Mexico’s tropical climates are ideal for hosting winter nurseries for seed companies around the world. These nurseries provide ways to collect data and grow seed in one season for use in subsequent growing seasons in the U.S.



THE TAUMALIPAS REGION of Mexico plays a significant role in the country’s agriculture economy and is a major contributor to its overall sorghum production. The region also serves as a dedicated area for sorghum research where many seed companies utilize its temperate climates during winter months to test and grow seed sorghum.



In a competitive market year, a portion of sorghum produced in the U.S. returns to Mexico as a key feed ingredient at livestock operations across the country, particularly the Yucatán Peninsula.

Arturo Basulto has served as a significant figure in the feeding industry in the Yucatán Peninsula for 35 years, helping shape the industry by implementing new ways of purchasing and measuring the quality of grains.

Basulto is the Purchasing Manager for Feed Grains and Oilseeds at Inter Industrias del Sureste, S.A., where his company serves as the grain purchasing and import department for nine animal feed mills. He said sorghum is an important feed ingredient for cattle finishing operations not only for its nutritional benefits but also for its storability.

“We can keep it for more time in our silos,” Basulto said. “We don’t need a lot of products to maintain the seed condition, and it works very well in our coastal environment.”

The Yucatán area is key in the production of eggs, broilers, pigs and cattle. Grain is typically offloaded from ships at the port in Progreso then transported to Inter Industrias del Sureste’s associates’ facilities. The tropical climate of the peninsula allows sorghum to be stored for longer periods of time than corn

without quality loss, allowing buyers to purchase large quantities and then store what they need for the year.

Storage capabilities are only one of the assets sorghum offers buyers in Mexico. It also contributes to a formulation that gives the buyers peace of mind when feeding the product to their stock because U.S. sorghum contains low mycotoxin rates.

Customers, like Basulto’s, also favor feeding whole sorghum, specifically to pork, because of the color it gives the meat. It has been shown pork fed whole sorghum produces a whiter fat color and the meat is firmer, adding to its marketability.

While little U.S. sorghum is currently entering the Mexican feed market today as a result of Chinese demand, opportunity remains in a competitive marketplace, and Basulto hopes to continue using sorghum in the future.

From farming production to research and feed for a host of livestock and even food for pets, sorghum is a large contributor to the agricultural landscape in Mexico. The U.S. sorghum industry has partnered with its Mexican counterparts for many years, and although trade has been lower in the recent past, the historical importance of the relationship will carry the two countries’ partnership well into the future.✍

Harvesting Quality Grain Sorghum

By Sorghum Checkoff Agronomist Brent Bean, Ph.D.

Harvesting quality grain sorghum begins with a timely harvest. Ideally, grain sorghum should be harvested when the moisture content is between 17 and 20 percent. Elevators and end users differ on when they begin discounting for moisture, but any grain above 14 percent can be subject to a charge. In the South and some eastern states, extended periods of wet weather can lead to lodging, grain deterioration from molds and seed sprouting. For this reason, growers are encouraged to harvest as soon as the crop reaches maturity.

If all grain heads in the field reach maturity at the same time and the heads extend above the flag leaf, growers may avoid the use of a harvest aid (desiccant) or the need of a hard freeze to kill and desiccate the plants. However, most of the time, growers still need a harvest aid to eliminate late green tillers, weeds and sorghum leaves that interfere with timely harvest.

The most common harvest aid in grain sorghum is glyphosate. The key to successfully using glyphosate is to treat only the amount of acres that can be harvested in a timely manner. Growers should try to harvest glyphosate-treated sorghum eight to 15 days after application. If harvest is delayed, the sorghum is at risk of lodging. Also,

the addition of Aim herbicide with glyphosate can aid in the control of morning glory and other tough-to-control weeds. Once harvest begins, growers should cut just below the heads to avoid unnecessary intake of leaves and stalk material, which decreases harvesting efficiency. Grain sorghum can be harvested with a grain header (platform or rigid cutterbar), flex header, row crop header or draper header. When using a grain header, guard extensions attached to every other guard will reduce gathering losses in standing sorghum. Other attachments are available that can help with lodged sorghum if needed.

The ARRO header conversion kit, Bish SuperCrop Header and Geringhoff Milo Star header have provided options for sorghum growers and are increasingly being used across the Sorghum Belt.

Finally, growers should take their time when setting their combines because a well-adjusted combine can add a significant amount of income per acre. Loss is determined by counting seeds left behind the combine. Depending on seed size, 16 to 21 seeds per square foot will equal one bushel per acre. A 5 percent loss is considered acceptable for grain sorghum. For more information visit Sorghum-Checkoff.com/for-farmers/agronomy-tips.



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AVAILABLE WHERE YOU GET YOUR PODCASTS



Brittany Smith Hired as Precision Ag & Conservation Specialist Under USCP Partnership with PF&QF

For Brittany Smith, natural spaces have been a defining part of her life for as long as she can remember. Coupled with her experiences growing up on the farm, she recognized early on where agriculture and ecosystems could thrive side-by-side.

"I got to be that kid who was outside on the farm from morning until night," Smith said.

She looks back on her childhood in west-central Minnesota with great fondness and credits it for playing a key role in shaping her future career path.

Smith was recently hired by Pheasants Forever & Quail Forever (PF&QF) as the new Precision Ag & Conservation Specialist to help expand and enhance technical support offered to growers in a key sorghum production area in western and west-central Kansas. The effort comes as a key component of a new partnership between PF&QF and the United Sorghum Checkoff Program. Smith's background makes her especially well-suited to the role where she will be working to bridge the common goals between agriculture and conservation.

Smith spent most of her summers as a child on the family dairy farm, which was nestled among countless wetlands across the landscape. She

passed the days sitting at the water's edge catching frogs, snakes and salamanders and learning the names of all of the local wildlife. She listened to her grandparents talk about how the ecosystems had changed over the years and began to make her own observations about shifting bird populations and patterns.

"I remember the changes in the bird community," she said, citing specific appearances of new species in the area.

Those experiences made a big impact on Smith. When she headed to college at North Dakota State University, she pursued a bachelor's degree in fisheries and wildlife and then went on to complete a master's degree in natural resources management. From there, she went straight to work in wetlands with a private company before joining the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Nebraska. What she was missing, however, was the close contact with growers, who she knew were acutely in tune with the state of local ecosystems. After all, their livelihoods depend on it.

"Farmers are so observant," she said. "They are people who work the land and are therefore very tied into the natural

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rhythms and things that are going on."

That desire to get back to farms and working lands led her to join PF&QF in 2018 as a field biologist in Colby, Kansas. From there, she relocated to Pratt, Kansas, before being hired as Precision Ag & Conservation Specialist in June 2021. Her time in the conservation space as allowed her to build a considerable network of partners, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs), state agencies, federal agencies, farmers, landowners and other PF&QF chapters and resources.

In her new role, Smith will work one-on-one with growers to help them identify strategic opportunities for the implementation of conservation practices in a way that contributes to the farm's environmental sustainability, while also improving the operation's profitability and bottom line. To her, this approach is key to identifying win-win solutions, and the analytical tools

offered by precision agriculture are a great way to achieve that.

"I remember when I was working as a wetland person, the best way to show the benefits of a wetland program was



to talk about return on investment and profitability, because wetlands just aren't profitable to farm," she said. "This program is a great way to be able to address both the needs of our producers and our landscapes. We are addressing the financial

aspects, but doing so in a way that also benefits the landscape."

Smith has spent her first months in her new role becoming better oriented with the defined target production region and working with partnership team members from both PF&QF and the Sorghum Checkoff to fully align her work with partnership priorities. She will begin working with farmers later this summer with conservation programs aimed at western Kansas sorghum producers.

"Ideally, a year from now, I want to feel like we have a good network of producers that I've been working with," she said. "I want to know that we have been helping them enroll in programs that contribute to their farm's profitability and have been getting to know their operations to identify where the opportunities are. That's what we're wanting to get started here."

Sorghum's Sustainability Traits Reveal New Market in Better-For-You Beer

Launched in June 2021, Soonish - Natural Beer, is aiming to diversify the traditional beer market. Founders Chip Welsh and Greg Maiatico desired to create a beverage that reflects beer traits while having the digestive benefits of natural ingredients.

One of Sorghum Checkoff's goals is to break into emerging domestic markets and diversify sorghum use in existing markets. Sorghum was selected by Soonish as one of the product's primary ingredients because of its gluten-free and all-natural value-added traits.

Soonish Head Brewmaster Jon Carpenter was introduced to unique, globally brewed beverages traditionally made with sorghum by one of their brew advisers, Sam "Chewy" Chawinga. Carpenter, Welsh and Maiatico realized it would pair well with the beer's previously selected ingredients.

The team dove into investigating sorghum including its sustainability metrics, impact on the environment and natural biological traits. After researching sorghum's protein levels, and starch and sugar content, the



team concluded the product would ferment well, and, sorghum was added to their innovative ingredient list in addition to millet, banana and honey.

"The Soonish brand is dedicated to developing a naturally 'better-for-you' option that has minimal impact on the environment," Carpenter said. "All of our ingredients are naturally grown and environmentally favorable. Sorghum is a responsible, drought-tolerant grain."

Carpenter said the benefits sorghum offers as an environmentally sustainable ingredient allow Soonish to create a product that aligns with their personal values. Sorghum's drought and heat tolerance are perfectly in line with the goals Carpenter has for their beer and is an important purchasing factor for their target market.

To capitalize on the market of gluten-free or gluten-intolerant individuals, Soonish and other brands have been utilizing sorghum to maintain a product with the nutritional benefits of grain without including gluten. Carpenter said using sorghum in their mixture allowed them to reflect "old world" brewing strategies with Soonish, which was one of the reasons sorghum was a beneficial and a crucial element of their ingredient list.

"It was simply one of the heritage grains that resonated with our team as we were developing Soonish with heritage brewing techniques as an inspiration," Carpenter said.

While the initial decision was based on sorghum's nutritional and environmental benefits, sustainability and

heritage grain title, the final call was made based on taste.

"In the end what made sorghum a primary ingredient in our final recipe was the fact that it tasted great," Carpenter said.

Due to the high level of fermentability and robust flavors that come with these ingredients, Soonish can also have a very light and relatively low carb (< 110 calories/ 6.2g carbs) natural beer that is gluten free, as well.

"We tested a plethora of grains but always came back to sorghum," Carpenter said.

To learn more about Soonish and their spotlight on sorghum as a key ingredient, visit SipSoonish.com.

mance. New feed trial data will be used by staff to extract and develop marketing products for distribution to targeted end-users from the global poultry and feedstuffs industry.

As a subsequent study to this poultry nutrition project, the Sorghum Checkoff board of directors invested in a poultry layer nutrition project studying the effects of replacing corn with sorghum in laying hen diets by observing their performance, behavior and welfare. The project is being led by Clemson Animal and Veterinary Sciences Department Professor Ahmed Ali, Ph.D., and a subject-matter expert from the University of Georgia's Department of Poultry Science will also contribute as an investigator.

The intent of this project is to address key data gaps associated with the use of sorghum in laying hen diets and to

compare sorghum in place of corn as the primary ingredient representing the cereal grain fraction in diet formulations. The layer nutrition project will utilize 700 commercial laying hens that will receive diets containing 50 percent sorghum in the grain fraction of the ration.

Sorghum that contains two different protein levels will be utilized to represent a low-protein sorghum diet with less than 12 percent crude protein and a high-protein sorghum diet with more than 12 percent crude protein to evaluate production performance.

Canthaxanthin pigment supplementation will be added to the sorghum based diets to add color to the egg yolk to provide similar consumer visual appeal as diets containing corn. Hens will be distributed to represent each daily diet to evaluate parameters that

include feed intake and hen behavior using observations pertaining to feeding times, foraging and feather pecking for each respective hen. Hen welfare will be randomly assessed to evaluate basic physical health and well-being using a modified version of the Welfare Quality® scoring system.

The layer nutrition project also includes an industry advisory panel with representatives from seven commercial operators and nutrition product providers. As with the initial poultry nutrition project, industry advisors provide the project team with commercial industry advice to ensure research being conducted is in accordance with commercial application guidelines. The project is scheduled to be completed in 2023.

Feed Ingredient Utilization - Poultry Update

The United States poultry industry is a global leader in the production of broiler and layer chickens that provide a valuable source of protein for human consumption. Alltech's 2021 Global Feed Survey indicates global broiler production utilizes approximately 335 million metric tons of feed annually, and global layer production uses another 160 million metric tons. The U.S. poultry industry, alone, uses approximately 54 million metric tons of feed to support broiler and layer chicken production.

Despite the large volumes of feed required to support the industry, grain sorghum pro-

vides a limited fraction of the cereal grains currently used in the production of poultry feeds with a market value of over \$200 billion each year, but there is opportunity to use more.

Through the regional development program, the United Sorghum Checkoff Program board of directors initiated a project in 2018 targeting sorghum as a feedstuff for broilers and gamebirds in the southeast. The project, led by Mireille Agulles-Ramos, Ph.D., from the Animal and Veterinary Sciences Department at Clemson University in South Carolina, was initially delayed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic,

but the project is now coming to a close and the Sorghum Checkoff looks forward to reviewing the final project report. According to Clemson University, preliminary data suggests modern grain sorghum types showed potential for replacing corn at complete substitution in broiler diet formulation without negatively affecting perfor-



SORGHUM INDUSTRY EVENTS

Sept 7 Labor Day
Office Closed

Sept 13-15 Leadership Sorghum Program II
Lubbock, TX

Oct 19-21 Sunbelt Ag Expo
Moultrie, GA

For more events, visit 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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Sorghum Update

Brought to you by the Kansas Grain Sorghum Commission

Dominate the Field by Telling the Sorghum Story

By Adam York

Think of the most common task farmers undertake on farms every day to produce grain sorghum. Producers have probably discussed so many processes many times with fellow farmers that neither party gave them a second thought. However, detailing our farming processes and practices to someone utterly uninitiated to U.S. agriculture could produce a very different—and exciting—reaction. An advertising pioneer once stated, “tell the pains you take to excel. Tell factors and features which others deem too commonplace to claim. Your product will come to typify those excellencies.”

That advertising pioneer, Claude C. Hopkins, wrote in his 1927 work *My Life in Advertising* about visiting a Wisconsin beer company in the early 20th Century. He was startled at the incredible processes the brewer considered exceedingly common. All brewers at the time used the same processes, just as all brewers advertised their products in the same way: pure. None, however, explained the processes in attaining a pure product in detail to an outside audience.

Hopkins saw plate-glass rooms with beer dripping over pipes. He asked about the purpose of the rooms and the brewer explained how those rooms contained filtered air, cooling the beer in purity. He saw great filters filled with white-wood pulp, and the brewer detailed how the pulp filtered the beer. The brewer showed Hopkins how he cleaned—twice daily—every pump and pipe to avoid contaminations; how machinery cleaned every bottle four times, how 4,000-foot artesian wells produced the brewery with pure water; how the large vats aged the beer for six months before it went out to the end-user; and, how the lab containing the original mother yeast cell (developed by 1,200 experiments to bring out the purest flavor) produced every other yeast cell used throughout the entire brewing process.

Hopkins was amazed. He then made that brewery—one many readers today would still recognize—a leader in its

industry by telling and advertising its story, which the brewer considered so common, mundane and widespread that no one on the outside would be interested in hearing it. Hopkins recounted shortly after the ad campaign went live how a teetotaling (but influential) publisher flipped through a magazine containing the story on his traincar and immediately bought a bottle in order to experience the pure, quality product produced from the processes about which he had just learned. In Hopkins’ eyes, the producer was too close to the product and saw only ordinary methods. The producer did not realize the world would marvel at his methods but that the common tasks, facts, and stories of his operation would yield him prestige, instead.

Flashing forward, Gallup released a poll last year showing agriculture topping a list of favorable industry sectors in the eyes of Americans, the first time agriculture prevailed in the poll’s 20 year history. Why? Consumers’ fears about pandemic food shortages were abated by the success story of American agricultural production. Certainly within agriculture, sorghum growers have many more stories to tell about their crop.

Sorghum growers’ stories have changed their own economic outlook as foreign markets demand what their trade teams toured on Kansas farms or virtual showcases last season. Domestically, sorghum growers are telling another story by sharing their conservation practices to build out data and capture premiums in low carbon fuel markets just as American consumers hear about the health, nutrition, and traceable sustainability benefits of sorghum as new food products pop up in stores everywhere.

Continue telling the sorghum story. Claude C. Hopkins said it best in 1927, “few who dominate a field have any exclusive advantage. They were simply the first to tell certain convincing facts.”



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Sorghum Shortcuts

National Sorghum Foundation Awards 2021-2022 Scholarships

The National Sorghum Foundation awarded scholarships to three students for the 2021-2022 academic year, totaling \$4,500.

- Max Harman - Bruce Maunder Memorial Scholarship winner: Harman is a senior biochemistry and global food systems leadership major at Kansas State University.
- John McCurdy - Darrell Rosenow Memorial Scholarship winner: McCurdy is a junior agronomy major at Texas A&M University.
- Alexis Ghromley - Bill Kubecka Memorial Scholarship winner: Ghromley is a senior agriculture economics major at Texas A&M University.

These scholarships provide students with \$1,500 to help with education expenses. To learn more about this year's scholarship winners go to SorghumGrowers.com/newsroom. For information about the National Sorghum Foundation visit SorghumGrowers.com/foundation-scholarship.

Sorghum PAC Breaks Fundraising Record in 2021

National Sorghum Producers 2021 Sorghum PAC Series generated a record-breaking \$133,000 this year. Sorghum Partners was the premiere event sponsor, and the series included three rounds of fundraisers that took place throughout the spring, including two online auctions and an inaugural golf tournament. The keystone event was the



inaugural Sorghum PAC Golf Tournament, which took place at the Wellington Golf Club in Wellington, Kansas. Read more about the tournament and winners at SorghumGrowers.com/newsroom, and save the date for the 2022 Sorghum PAC Golf Tournament to be held April 30, 2022, at the Wellington Golf Course, once again.

The Sorghum PAC promotes worthy legislators who understand and advocate on behalf of sorghum priorities, and it serves as an influential alliance of NSP members and sorghum associations working to uphold and protect the interest of growers across the country. More information about the Sorghum PAC can be found at SorghumGrowers.com/sorghum-pac/ or by contacting Sorghum PAC Events Coordinator Jamaca Battin at jamaca@sorghumgrowers.com.

Commodity Classic is Back and so are Sorghum's Cornerstone Events

The 28th Annual Commodity Classic will return in person next year in New Orleans March 10-12, 2022. This is the largest farmer-focused, farmer-led agricultural and education opportunity for sorghum, corn, soy and wheat farmers plus equipment manufacturers.

The NSP Annual Yield Contest Gala and the Sorghum PAC's famous Casino Night will also return to New Orleans. During the casino night, there will be raffles, auctions and casino games for the guests to enjoy. More information about Commodity Classic can be found at CommodityClassic.com or SorghumGrowers.com/commodityclassic.



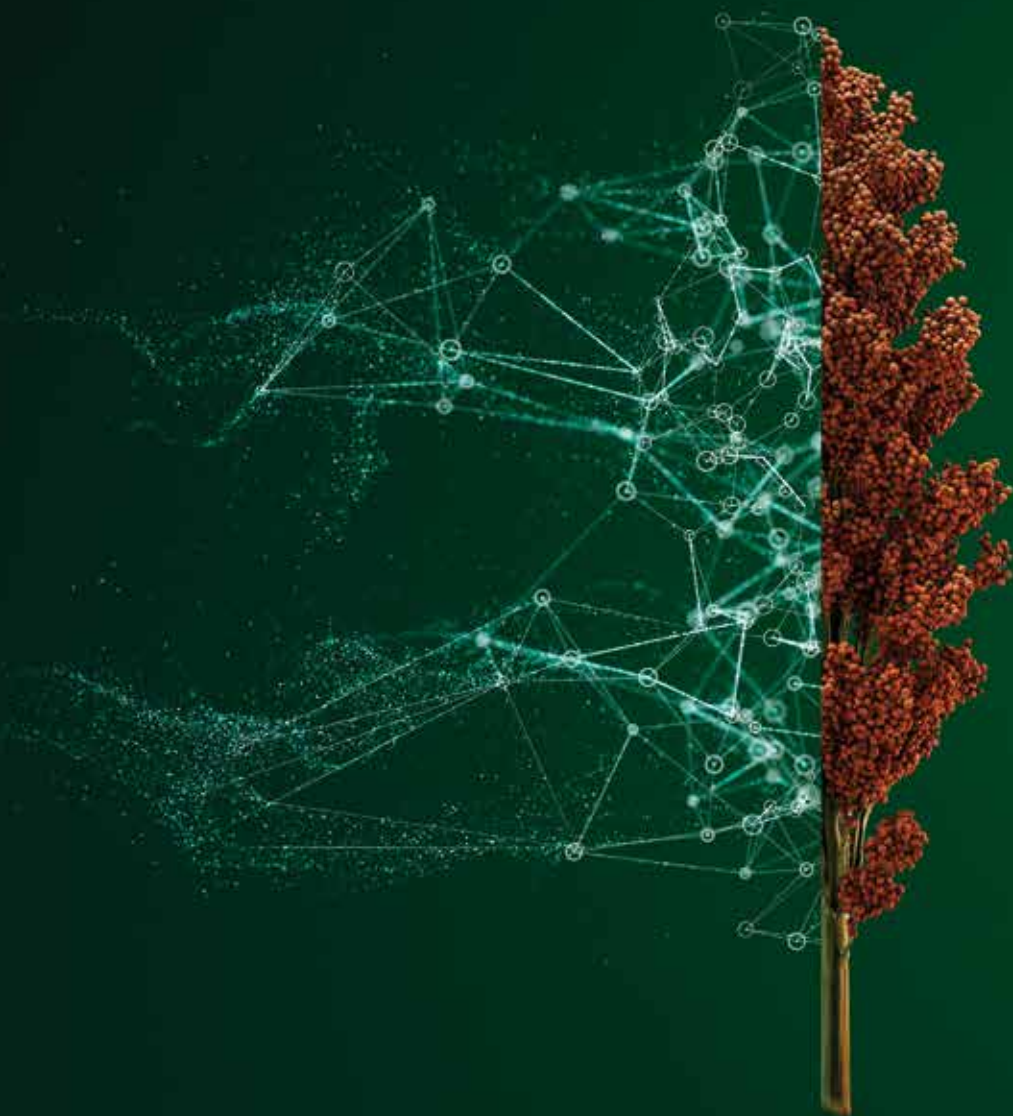
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