

SPECIAL EDITION

NATIONAL SORGHUM PRODUCERS

# SORGHUM Grower

*Winner!*

# 2023

YIELD CONTEST WINNERS  
SHOW SORGHUM'S RESILIENCE AND POTENTIAL

2023 POLICY  
YEAR-IN-REVIEW  
AN UNUSUAL YEAR ON CAPITOL HILL

*Get Ready For*  
COMMODITY CLASSIC  
HOUSTON, FEB. 28 - MARCH 2

Included Inside

SORGHUM CHECKOFF NEWSLETTER  
KANSAS SORGHUM NEWSLETTER

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AUSTIN, TX 78744





Winter Special Edition 2024  
Volume 18, Issue 1

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*Sorghum Grower* is published by the National Sorghum Producers, an organization that represents U.S. sorghum producers and the sorghum industry. NSP is headquartered in Lubbock, Texas, in the heart of the U.S. Sorghum Belt. The organization serves as the voice of the sorghum industry coast to coast through legislative and regulatory representation and education. To subscribe, make address changes, or inquire about membership, please call 800-658-9808 or email our office at [jennifer@sorghumgrowers.com](mailto:jennifer@sorghumgrowers.com). For advertising, visit [SorghumGrowers.com/advertise](http://SorghumGrowers.com/advertise).  
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## From the CEO

### Reflection After One Year - And 30 - Lands On Gratitude



**A**s 2023 draws to a close and plans for 2024 begin to form, it's a time for reflection on the past year—or, in my case, the past 30 years. It seems inconceivable that I've spent such a significant portion of my career with NSP, yet three decades have gone by during which I have been working for sorghum farmers.

When I reflect on my initial days as the marketing and research director, my plan was to devote a couple of years to sorghum before returning to farming and ranching. However, I immediately saw the passion in the volunteer leaders and their dedication to effecting change for not only their own operations, but for sorghum producers nationwide. As they say, I drank the Kool-Aid and became even more passionate about helping a crop that I could see was going to be important to so many farms across the nation.

As I reflect on the wins and the challenges of this commodity and our organization since then, it is natural to look towards the mathematical exercise of score keeping. It's crucial to ask what associations and businesses have done for you, and done for you lately, and I believe that NSP can still proudly talk about projects and achievements like sorghum's price election finally being above corn and the sorghum silage insurance fix.

This experience has also taught me the value of relationships and how important relationships are in life. As I reflect back over the last 30 years, I have been blessed to develop long-term relationships with some of the best farmers and staff in America. As they say, time flies when you are having fun.

The word that keeps coming to mind is GRATITUDE. Thank you to all of the volunteer leaders, mentors, members, staff, as well as my family, who have supported our organization and me during my time here and given me the opportunity to serve a great group of people.

With that being said, there is still a lot of work that needs to be done to improve sorghum. After all, NSP has a farm bill that desperately needs an improved Title I safety net, and the checkoff has tremendous opportunities in the genetics and food markets that will continue to help our crop. I look forward to working with our producer leaders and staff to make a difference for sorghum in 2024 and beyond!

*Tim Lust*

Tim Lust, CEO

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### FEATURES

**6** 2023 Yield Contest Results

### WHAT'S INSIDE

**4** NSP Update

**10** USCP Newsletter

**14** Kansas Sorghum Newsletter



ON THE COVER: Chris and Santino "Sam" Santini Jr. of Stewartsville, New Jersey, earned top honors in two categories in the 2023 National Sorghum Yield Contest. Chris also was named the contest's Bin Buster winner with the overall top yield of 221.75 bpa. (Photo courtesy of Chris Santini)



## A(nother) Weird Year in Washington

By John Duff

For farm policy wonks both young and old, 2023 was one for the record books. For a year that didn't have a farm bill, there couldn't have been many more consequential, challenging or downright weird situations.

Most of the year's happenings weren't helpful for sorghum farmers. The ousting of Congressman Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) as Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives and the punting of the farm bill weren't bullish events—for lawmakers' ability to advance pro-farmer legislation nor for farmers' pocketbooks. These discouraging events aside, 2023 did see groundwork laid for several potentially historic opportunities for farmers in the sustainability space. While time will tell whether or not these opportunities can be fully realized, the year is ending with some reason for optimism.

After enduring 15 rounds of voting to become speaker in January, Congressman McCarthy was removed as speaker in a 216-210 vote on Oct. 3. Eight members of the Republican Party joined all 208 House Democrats in the historic motion to vacate, and Republicans quickly pivoted to the search for a new speaker. By the end of the saga, the House had been without a leader for 21 days, 21 hours and nine minutes, during which time four candidates had been considered, and four additional speaker votes had been held. The candidate who was ultimately elected speaker was Congressman Mike Johnson (R-LA).

Prior to his election, Speaker Johnson had a reputation for being a mild-mannered, respected member of Congress, which helped lead to his unanimous support from Republicans on the House floor. That unity after such a fractious process combined with his devout Christian faith seems to have helped heal a few of the wounds

inflicted by Republicans upon themselves during the process of removing and reinstalling a speaker. Time will tell whether cooler heads will prevail long-term, though that will be challenging with another extremely acrimonious presidential election on the horizon in the new year.

As demoralizing as that situation was, sorghum farmers also spent 2023 frustrated with the farm bill process and the implementation of disaster legislation. The Agricultural Improvement Act of 2018 was signed into law on Dec. 20, 2018, and expired on Sept. 30 of this year. Lawmakers responded to this expiration in November by passing a one-year extension of the 2018 Bill, which the four principals (majority and minority agricultural committee leaders in each chamber of Congress) said was in no way a substitute for passing a five-year farm bill. In the same statement, the four also expressed their commitment to working together to pass a five-year bill in 2024, a sentiment shared by virtually all of the ag sector.

But will 2024 see a farm bill? With the issues facing Congress, presidential politics already underway, and



▲ CONGRESS' FAILURE TO PASS a new farm bill this year has left farmers' questioning the future of agricultural legislation. But, progress in the sustainability space keeps hopes high. (David Halloran)



▲ HOUSE SPEAKER MIKE JOHNSON (R-La.)—standing alongside his wife, Kelly Johnson—was elected House speaker after a tumultuous election process. (Philip Yabut/Shutterstock)

presidential primaries beginning in January, it's hard to see a path forward unless lawmakers work quickly, enacting a new law before primary season reaches a crescendo in March. For all of U.S. agriculture, doing nothing or letting the presidential race bring the farm bill process to a standstill isn't an option.

With sorghum farmers in 2022 harvesting their smallest crop since 1944 and the Emergency Relief Program (ERP) intended to address the situation seeing a botched rollout, the financial certainty the farm bill helps to provide through the commodity and crop insurance titles is badly needed across the Sorghum Belt. In the short term (and at the very least), changes must be made to ERP as the current methodology punishes normal-sized family operations in the midst of one of the worst financial environments in decades.

All this said, there is positive news in the sustainability space for sorghum farmers. While there are risks, with many regulated program rules still unwritten, sorghum farmers are competitively positioned to make an impact in this area. This calendar year saw the number of options for farmers to monetize sustainability approaches grow dramatically—and away from one-size-fits-all programs focused myopically on carbon and requiring practices only a few farmers are capable of adopting.

With its budget enlarged from \$4.5 billion to \$8.5 billion, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) on Nov. 1 awarded 81 Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) grants totaling more than \$1 billion. The diversity of projects funded was incredible, with projects from nutrient management to precision irrigation receiving dollars. While carbon and cover crops certainly received their fair share of funding, they weren't the centerpiece as they have been in the past. This

is good news for farmers in the Sorghum Belt, where practices like cover crops are a distant third place (if that) behind conservation tillage and rotation with wheat as the most important sustainability practices.

In addition to these opportunities, Section 45Z of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) will effectively enact a low carbon fuel standard via the tax code, with a tax credit worth a maximum of \$1 per gallon of ethanol, or roughly \$2.85 per bushel. The rulemaking for such a sweeping effort has been a protracted process over much of the year and remains unconcluded. Once the program is in place, though, agriculture will likely reap the benefit of the head start on data collection because significant information already exists to show the positive impact sorghum farming practices have on the GHG emissions of ethanol. This will ultimately help capture the value of the tax credit at the farm level.

From the removal of the House Speaker to a farm bill that wasn't, 2023 had plenty of reasons for farmers to be discouraged. However, the sustainability space provided a great antidote, and barring unforeseen events in rulemaking, Section 45Z could be one of the most consequential public policies in history for sorghum farmers. As always, NSP is in DC so its members don't have to be, and in 2024, ensuring this potential becomes reality will be a key priority along with continuing to advocate for a new farm bill, the availability of crop protection technologies and other policies that directly impact farmers' operations. 🌾



▲ TEXT "NSP TEXT" to 52886 to receive alerts relating to important policy developments in 2024.



## New Jersey Grower Earns 2023 Bin Buster Award With 221.75 BPA Sorghum

By Jason Jenkins, DTN Crops Editor

On Tuesday, Dec. 12, the National Sorghum Producers announced the winners of the 2023 National Sorghum Yield Contest. Chris Santini of Stewartville, New Jersey, was named this year's Bin Buster Award recipient, producing sorghum in a no-till production system yielding 221.75 bushels per acre (bpa).

She bested her husband, Santino "Sam" Santini Jr., whose yield of 221.06 bpa took first place in the contest's Dryland Tillage Eastern category.

Organized by National Sorghum Producers since 1985, the yield contest initially began as a means of increasing membership and educating producers on new management techniques, said Tim Lust, the organization's CEO.

"As we look at the yield contest winners this year, not only was Chris Santini our Bin Buster, but this year's win also qualifies her for the Hall of Fame award, which signifies three national wins in the same category," Lust said. "Sam Santino also qualified for the Hall of Fame with his win in the Dryland Tillage Eastern Category."

"Sometimes Mother Nature shines on all of us one year, but it is impressive when individuals can push sorghum to yield extremes year after year," he continued. "We commend the Santini family for their efforts."

The Santinis farm about 1,700 acres in Warren County in northwest New Jersey, about 60 miles from New York City. Sam said they plant about 100 acres of sorghum each year as part of a rotation that also features corn and soybeans.

"Hunting is big in this area, and people from the city rent farms to hunt here," Sam said. "They really like to hunt in the cut sorghum."

The 2023 season in northwest New

Jersey began as it did for many growing sorghum in other regions -- dry.

"We usually try to push the envelope a little on our sorghum planting," Sam said. "For sorghum, you're supposed to wait until it gets pretty warm, but as soon as I'm done with corn and soybeans, I will start sorghum."

The Santinis used a John Deere 1795 planter to seed their sorghum at a rate of 120,000 to 140,000 seeds per acre on 15-inch rows. The previous crop in each field was soybeans. Sam noted he prefers to use the planter because it allows him to more precisely control the seeding rate.

"We treat our sorghum like corn," Sam said. "Whatever we use on the corn, we use on the sorghum. So, when it comes to fertility and nitrogen, we'll split apply with some before, some at-plant and then top dress some during the season."

While the dry conditions made for quicker planting, allowing the Santinis to finish by the middle of May, it led to worry as they waited for Mother Nature to turn on the tap. Typically, the region receives between 50 to 60 inches of precipitation annually.

"We felt like it was setting up for a real drought, and I'd say we were a week away from disaster," Chris said. "But then the rains came on June 5, and they kept coming."

Overall, the Santinis attributed their winning yields to a new sorghum variety, a new fungicide and the smoke from Canadian wildfires. After planting Pioneer 84G62

for nearly 15 years, they chose to plant Pioneer 85P58 this year at the suggestion of their seed rep. With a relative maturity of 113 days, the variety is characterized by Pioneer as having good standability, exceptional test weight and adequate head exertion in a moderately tall plant.

**"As we look at the yield contest winners this year, not only was Chris Santini our Bin Buster, but this year's win also qualifies her for the Hall of Fame award, which signifies three national wins in the same category."**

While Sam would not disclose the name of the foliar fungicide he used this year, he noted that he made two applications -- one prior to heading and one at heading. He said he believed it helped keep the plant healthier throughout the growing season.

"Then there was the smoke from the wildfires. We had days when it was complete cloud cover and almost like a really heavy fog because of the smoke," Sam explained. "I feel it put carbon into the crops. Our sorghum and our corn was probably the best overall we ever had."

With their wins, the Santinis will be recognized along with the other national winners at a contest gala held during the 2024 Commodity Classic in Houston.

The Santinis said they enjoy the opportunity to meet with other top producers and exchange ideas on sorghum production.

"People from different parts of the United States farm differently, so it's always interesting to hear how someone else handles their sorghum," Chris said. "You might hear something that you want to try next year."

National and state winners are below, and a complete list of the NSP Sorghum Yield Contest results, plus more information about the contest, can be found at [sorghumgrowers.com/yield-contest/](https://sorghumgrowers.com/yield-contest/).

## NATIONAL Winners

Note: National winners are selected from state first, second and third place winners

### IRRIGATED WEST

**1. 218.64 bu/ac**

**Bibb and Nighswonger Partnership**  
Comanche County, KS  
Dekalb DKS44-07

**2. 213.88 bu/ac**

**Amy Peterson**  
Stanton County, KS  
Channel 6B95

**3. 200.00 bu/ac**

**Grant Schutz & Canyon View Farm**  
Gosper County, NE  
Pioneer 86Y89

### DRYLAND-TILLAGE EAST

**1. 183.32 bu/ac**

**David Knoll**  
Charles Mix County, SD  
Pioneer 89Y79

**2. 176.06 bu/ac**

**Zack Rendel**  
Ottawa County, OK  
Golden Acres 4880R

**3. 159.32 bu/ac**

**R.C. Farms**  
Charles Mix County, SD  
Golden Acres 2620C

### DRYLAND-TILLAGE WEST

**1. 221.06 bu/ac**

**Santino Santini**  
Warren County, NJ  
Pioneer 85P58

**2. 196.94 bu/ac**

**Steven Helter**  
Davies County, IN  
Pioneer 84G62

**3. 177.90 bu/ac**

**HRB Farming Partnership**  
Livingston County, MO  
Dekalb DKS44-07

**1. 181.00 bu/ac**

**Mark Bloss**  
Pawnee County, NE  
Pioneer 84P72

**2. 171.85 bu/ac**

**Jason Chenoweth**  
Bon Homme County, SD  
Pioneer 88P71

**3. 168.96 bu/ac**

**Rope Creek Ranch LLC**  
Harlan County, NE  
Pioneer 85Y88

### DRYLAND-NO TILL WEST

### DRYLAND-NO TILL EAST

**1. 221.75 bu/ac**

**Chris Santini**  
Warren County, NJ  
Pioneer 85P58

**2. 197.55 bu/ac**

**Billy H Bowers Farm Trust**  
Davidson County, NC  
Pioneer 84G62

**3. 173.57 bu/ac**

**Carly Barlieb**  
Warren County, NJ  
Pioneer 85P85

*Top Yield!*

IRRIGATED EAST

1. 168.34 bu/ac

Howard DeShong  
Lancaster County, PA  
Pioneer 84G62

2. 163.35 bu/ac

Promise Land  
Farms LLC  
Warren County, NJ  
Pioneer 85P58

3. 155.96 bu/ac

Mitch Quillen  
Allegany County, MD  
Channel 6B95

1. 139.56 bu/ac

JnL Farms  
Appanoose County, IA  
Richardson G37

FOOD GRADE

STATEWinners

PLACE	STATE	COUNTY	NAME	YIELD (BU/AC)	SEED BRAND
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IRRIGATED WEST

1st	Colorado	Baca County	Double M Farms	153.59	Pioneer	84G62
1st	Kansas	Comanche County	Bibb and Nighswonger Partnership	218.68	Dekalb	DKS44-07
2nd	Kansas	Stanton County	Amy Peterson	213.88	Channel	6B95
3rd	Kansas	Stanton County	Brant Peterson	178.19	Channel	6B95
1st	Nebraska	Gosper County	Grant Schutz & Canyon View Farm LLC	200.00	Pioneer	86Y89
2nd	Nebraska	Gosper County	Grant Schutz & Canyon View Farm LLC	196.65	Pioneer	86Y89
3rd	Nebraska	Harlan County	Jewett Farms LLC	168.88	Pioneer	85P75
1st	Texas	Dallam County	Four Way Farms	178.50	Pioneer	86Y89
2nd	Texas	Hutchinson County	Roger Buchanan	169.22	Pioneer	85P75

DRYLAND-NO TILL WEST

1st	Colorado	Kit Carson County	Tim Stahlecker	122.47	Dekalb	DKS29-28
2nd	Colorado	Kit Carson County	Livingston Farms	111.96	Pioneer	88P71
3rd	Colorado	Baca County	XF Corporation	94.52	Alta ADV	G2168IG
1st	Kansas	Sott County	Vulgamore Family Farms	152.73	Pioneer	85Y88
2nd	Kansas	Marshall County	Duever Farms	136.54	Pioneer	85P58
3rd	Kansas	Labette County	Mathes Farms	130.92	Pioneer	84P68
1st	Nebraska	Pawnee County	Mark Bloss	181.00	Pioneer	84P72
2nd	Nebraska	Harlan County	Rope Creek Ranch LLC	168.96	Pioneer	85Y88
3rd	Nebraska	Harlan County	Robinson Brothers Land & Cattle LLC	157.81	Pioneer	85Y88
1st	Oklahoma	Kingfisher County	Vilhauer Farms	144.42	Dekalb	DKS44-07
1st	South Dakota	Bon Homme County	Jason Chenoweth	171.85	Pioneer	88P71
2nd	South Dakota	Charles Mix County	R.C. Farms	166.56	Dekalb	DKS28-05
3rd	South Dakota	Hyde County	Cole Baloun	163.35	Millborn Seeds	MS6500
1st	Texas	Ochiltree County	Tregellas Family Farms	140.02	Pioneer	85Y88
2nd	Texas	Ochiltree County	James & Dana Born	133.28	Pioneer	86P20

STATEWinners

CONTINUED

PLACE	STATE	COUNTY	NAME	YIELD (BU/AC)	SEED BRAND	VARIETY
IRRIGATED EAST						
1st	Maryland	Allegany County	Mitch Quillen	155.96	Channel	6B95
1st	New Jersey	Warren County	Promise Land Farms LLC	163.35	Pioneer	85P58
1st	Pennsylvania	Lancaster County	Howard DeShong	168.34	Pioneer	84G62
DRYLAND-TILLAGE EAST						
1st	Illinois	Clark County	Ned Heltsley	146.11	Dekalb	DKS38-16
1st	Indiana	Daviess County	Steven Halter	196.94	Pioneer	84G62
1st	Kentucky	Hopkins County	Weir Farms	148.59	Dyna-Gro	M60GB31
2nd	Kentucky	Hopkins County	Basham Farms LLC	135.69	Dyna-Gro	M60GB31
3rd	Kentucky	Hopkins County	J Ashby Farms	101.98	Dyna-Gro	M60GB31
1st	Missouri	Livingston County	HRB Farming Partnership	177.90	Dekalb	DKS44-07
2nd	Missouri	Audrain County	Aime Cummins	168.03	Pioneer	84G62
3rd	Missouri	Audrain County	Andrew Cummins	167.18	Pioneer	84G62
1st	New Jersey	Warren County	Santino Santini	221.06	Pioneer	85P58
DRYLAND-TILLAGE WEST						
1st	Kansas	Sumner County	Don Applegate	142.93	Pioneer	84G62
1st	Nebraska	Pawnee County	Matthew Bloss	110.01	Sorghum Partners	SP 45A45 DT
2nd	Nebraska	Harlan County	Jewett Farms LLC	86.75	Pioneer	85P85
1st	Oklahoma	Ottowa County	Zack Rendel	176.06	Golden Acre	4880R
2nd	Oklahoma	Texas County	Cody Fischer	134.75	Pioneer	86P20
3rd	Oklahoma	Texas County	Roger & Marilyn Fischer	94.32	Pioneer	85Y34
1st	South Dakota	Charles Mix County	David Knoll	183.32	Pioneer	89Y79
2nd	South Dakota	Charles Mix County	R.C. Farms	159.32	Golden Acres	2620C
3rd	South Dakota	Charles Mix County	Curt Soulek	139.99	Pioneer	87P10
1st	Texas	Dallas County	Brad Justiss	143.01	Dekalb	DKS44-07
2nd	Texas	Ochiltree County	Sell Grain, Inc.	118.61	Dekalb	DKS37-07
DRYLAND-NO TILL EAST						
1st	Maryland	Queen Annes County	Chestnut Manor Farms	164.65	Sorghum Partners	SP 58M85 DT
2nd	Maryland	Montgomery County	William F Willard Farms LLC	159.01	Pioneer	84G62
1st	New Jersey	Warren County	Chris Santini	221.75	Pioneer	85P58
2nd	New Jersey	Warren County	Carly Barlieb	173.57	Pioneer	85P58
3rd	New Jersey	Warren County	New Village Farms LLC	169.45	Pioneer	85P58
1st	New York	New York County	Robert Pawlowski	132.48	Channel	6B02
1st	North Carolina	Davidson County	Billy H Bowers Farm Trust	197.55	Pioneer	84G62



## Sorghum Checkoff Board and Staff – What Do We Do?

By Sorghum Checkoff Agronomy Director Brent Bean, Ph.D.

This last summer, I started my ninth year as the Director of Agronomy for the United Sorghum Checkoff Program. Prior to joining the Checkoff, I had what I thought was a good understanding of what they did, and in reality, I had no idea of the depth of what the Checkoff does for sorghum growers.

The Sorghum Checkoff is a producer-funded organization dedicated to improving the sustainability of the sorghum industry through research, promotion and education. Checkoff funds come directly from producers by an assessment of 0.6% of the net value of grain sorghum and 0.35% of the net market value of sorghum forage. The assessment is collected by the first purchasers. For example, if grain is sold to the local elevator at \$5 a bushel, then the Checkoff is paid 6 cents per bushel. A significant portion of these funds is then passed back to the sorghum state organizations to fund their programs.

The Checkoff is directed by a 13-member Board of Directors composed of sorghum growers, ensuring funds are used efficiently and meet grower objectives. They do not get paid for their service and, given a chance, I hope you will thank them for unselfishly giving of their time

and expertise. A testament to the fantastic work that they do is from the last referendum on the Checkoff, in which sorghum growers overwhelmingly supported its continuation by a 96.5 percent approval vote!

This year marks 15 years of the United Sorghum Checkoff Program. Over the past decade-and-a-half, the Checkoff has made significant strides on behalf of producers. Successes include funneling resources into cutting-edge research to advance production techniques.

One of the key agronomic contributions was the rapid reaction to the sugarcane aphid, now known as the sorghum aphid, which had the potential to devastate the sorghum industry. The Checkoff quickly mobilized seed and crop protection companies, along with university and ARS scientists, to work together to develop aphid tolerant hybrids, label effective insecticides and establish best management practices to control the pest. Information to combat the aphid was quickly passed to growers through the many channels developed by the Checkoff communications team.

A recent milestone that the board worked tirelessly on was the advancement of over-the-

## WHAT'S INSIDE

### 1

**Sorghum Checkoff Board and Staff – What Do We Do?**  
By Brent Bean

### 2

**Sorghum Checkoff Elects Kendall Hodgson as New Chairman and Swears in New Board Members**

### 3

**Cultivating Growth: US Sorghum's Trade Mission to China**  
By Kim Baldwin



top grass control in sorghum. As of 2023, we now have three technologies–Double Team™, Inzen and igrowth–that are very effective in postemergence grass control in sorghum.

There are many current projects now being funded by the Checkoff that have the potential to significantly impact and increase sorghum grower profitability. One project is the development of sorghum germplasm with tolerance to iron deficiency. A second is a fundamental examination of the

traits needed in sorghum to enhance yield under both limited water and more optimum growing conditions. These are what I call 'big swing projects' that are not easy to accomplish and will take time, but have the potential to move the needle forward for the industry as a whole.

For more information on what the Sorghum Checkoff is all about, visit our website at [sorghumcheckoff.com](http://sorghumcheckoff.com).

## Sorghum Checkoff Elects Kendall Hodgson as New Chairman and Swears in New Board Members

During the United Sorghum Checkoff Program's (USCP) annual December meeting, four new Board directors, appointed by U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack, were sworn in. Two other producers assumed their second terms having been reappointed to their roles by Secretary Vilsack. The Board also elected Kendall Hodgson of Little River, Kansas as the 2024 Chairman.

"I am honored to lead this organization into a new era of growth and innovation," newly elected USCP Chairman Kendall Hodgson said. "Sorghum is a crop with incredible potential, and I am excited to work alongside our leaders and producers to further elevate its impact. Together, we will cultivate opportunities, foster sustainable growth and strengthen the sorghum industry."

The newly elected USCP Executive Committee and newly appointed Board Directors include:

- Chairman - Kendall Hodgson, Little River, Kansas
- Vice Chairman - Ethan Miller, Columbia, Missouri
- Treasurer - Kim Baldwin, Inman, Kansas
- Secretary - Zack Rendel, Miami, Oklahoma
- At-Large Member - James Jay Haase, Eads, Colorado
- At-Large Member - Ethan J. Miller, Columbia, Missouri
- At-Large Member - Tracy Zink, Indianola, Nebraska
- Kansas Member - David K. Schemm, Sharon Springs, Kansas
- Texas Member - Brian Adamek, Victoria, Texas
- Texas Member - Scott Irlbeck, Lubbock, Texas, (2-Year Term)

"Amidst the challenges of the persisting drought, innovation thrives in the heart of challenges," USCP Executive Director Norma Ritz Johnson said. "We are ecstatic that this group of producers and board members embody the resilience that will steer the sorghum industry towards a horizon of groundbreaking possibilities."

Five of the newly appointed or reappointed directors to the Board will serve three-year terms and one member will serve a two-year term. The terms of the members appointed to three-year terms start December 2023 and end December 2026. The term of the member appointed to a two-year term starts immediately and ends in December 2025.

The 13-member USCP board is composed of nine sorghum farmers who represent the three states with the largest sorghum production – Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas – and four at-large national representatives. More information about the board is available on the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) United Sorghum Checkoff Program webpage and the board's website, [sorghumcheckoff.com](http://sorghumcheckoff.com).



Pictured from left to right is and Kahl Sesker - USDA Agricultural Marketing Specialist, Tracy Zink - newly appointed director, Scott Irlbeck - newly appointed director, David K. Schemm - newly appointed director and Norma Ritz Johnson - Executive Director



# Cultivating Growth: U.S. Sorghum's Trade Mission to China

By Sorghum Checkoff Board Director Kim Baldwin

In April 2023, I was privileged to represent U.S. sorghum producers as a member of the first U.S. Grains Council Trade Mission Team to return to China since 2019. Four individuals representing different parts of the sorghum industry throughout the Sorghum Belt, as well as three U.S. Grains Council staffers, traveled throughout South China including stops in Shanghai, Xiamen, Shenzhen and Guangzhou during this trade mission. Chinese buyers have kept their interest in U.S. coarse grains and co-products. Moreover, these buyers have worked to maintain partnerships with U.S. suppliers for future business.

China ended its "zero-covid policy" in December 2022, and the market has gradually returned to business as usual.

Our team began in Shanghai where we met with a researcher from Jiangnan University who is currently studying the properties of U.S. sorghum for Chinese liquor production.

This liquor, known as baijiu, is a colorless, traditional spirit that is widely consumed in China. By some estimates, baijiu accounts for nearly 70% of the total alcoholic beverages available in China. While traveling through South China on this trade mission, the marketing of various baijiu brands dominated billboards, display cases and any surface one might or might not expect to find an advertisement—including pillars at airports and display screens at luggage carousels.

Baijiu is produced using a unique fermentation process. While other grains including wheat, corn, rice and sticky rice can be used as raw materials in the making of baijiu, sorghum accounts for roughly 50% of the grain used in the production of this distilled spirit.

Researchers at Jiangnan University have been testing U.S. sorghum samples to identify the preferred varieties of sorghum from different sorghum-producing areas within the United States for baijiu production. While the research is based on a number of factors that identify the preferred varieties and location from which the varieties originate, one key area of focus is identifying how the type of sorghum and its origin that impacts baijiu's aroma profiles and flavor compounds. The study will see its final three fermentation batches

at the end of February 2024, and the final report is expected by mid-2024.

Baijiu is a spirit that is consumed primarily in social settings, and since China's "zero-covid policy" ended in December 2022, one expects to see increased consumption due to increased social gatherings. This is a market for U.S. sorghum producers to keep aware of.

South China is an impressive trading hub that is important for U.S. agriculture. Nearly 40% of the world's leather footwear is produced within this region. More than 60% of the world's denim production is also located in South China. Moreover, South China leads its country in swine, broiler (chicken and duck), and aqua feed production. Most impressive is that of all U.S. sorghum exported to China annually, approximately 74% of that sorghum enters through South China.

While traveling throughout South China, our trade mission team met with nine companies during one-on-one visits. During these visits, we highlighted findings from the 2022/2023 U.S. Grains Council Sorghum Quality Report which provides unbiased information about the quality of the U.S. sorghum crop. The report identified the results from 97 samples taken from outbound shipments from 15 country elevators and one large sorghum producer. The samples were analyzed for grade factors established by the USDA, chemical compositions, and other quality characteristics not reported elsewhere.

The report ultimately showed U.S. sorghum was, on average, graded above the necessary requirements for U.S. No. 1 certification. It also showed an absence of tannins and a protein content that averaged 11%. Moreover, the report showed that broken kernel and foreign material were lower than last year's study results, suggesting the ability of U.S. sorghum to withstand handling and storage threats.

As our team discussed these results with many of the buyers, it was clear that the quality report was not a surprise to many of them. Multiple times during our conversations, buyers would note that U.S. sorghum is preferred over competing countries because the U.S. sorghum "quality is stable."

The groups we visited consisted of suppliers/distributors for China's animal feed manufactur-

ers, animal feeders, and suppliers for liquor industries, as well as those directly involved in animal feed (livestock and pet food) production and aquatic products.

It was clear that the U.S. is not the only source considered when it comes to sourcing grain sorghum for Chinese consumption. That said, it was also clear that we have strong relationships established that have been nurtured for well over a decade with Chinese buyers and have been beneficial to the U.S. sorghum industry.

Dedicated, long-term efforts to maintain lines of communication with Chinese buyers were evidenced while on this mission. The work individuals within the United Sorghum Checkoff Program and the U.S. Grains Council have done to keep open lines of communication over the years was clear. Following the pandemic, it was clear that those

relationships remain as the buyers we visited were happy to see us, happy to host us, and happy to engage in discussions centered around U.S. sorghum that would benefit everyone.

While U.S. sorghum has generally been utilized by Chinese buyers to fulfill the feed production needs of swine, broilers and layers, there is a number of other areas seeing tremendous growth that highlight the importance of shipping U.S. sorghum to South China.

For example, as Chinese consumer demands on protein evolve to include beef, opportunities to increase U.S. sorghum in ruminant feed rations are a possibility. Opportunities within China's aquaculture and pet food sectors also show great promise given feed production trends and impressive year-over-year growth models.



## SORGHUM INDUSTRY EVENTS

**Jan 30-1** International Production & Processing Expo  
Atlanta, GA

**Jan 30-1** Leadership Sorghum Class VI Session 5  
Washington, DC

**Feb 28-2** 2024 Commodity Classic  
Houston, TX

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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## Sorghum Update

Brought to you by the Kansas Grain Sorghum Commission

### Sorghum: The Ultimate New Year's Resolution

By Maddy Meier

**W**e've reached that time of year when there is one question on everyone's mind: "What should my New Year's resolution be?"

If you're still thinking of ideas, I'll share a few of mine for inspiration. Since living on my own, I've made it a mission to learn new recipes, eat healthier and simply say 'yes' to trying new things. It may just be a coincidence, but sorghum checks all of these boxes. As I continue to learn more about sorghum in the consumer space, I've been amazed at all the different brands and companies that utilize sorghum and recognize the grain for its nutritional benefits. Some of you may already be familiar with sorghum's role in this aspect, but I'd like to share a few highlights I've learned thanks to the efforts of the Sorghum Checkoff marketing team.

I first became more aware of the gluten-free market in the mid-2010s when my grandmother discovered she could no longer tolerate gluten. Looking back, the options on grocery store shelves seemed less prominent than they are today. Thankfully, the number of brands tailored to those who are gluten-intolerant has and continues to rise, with many of them including sorghum on the ingredient list.

"How can I cook with sorghum?" This is one of the most popular questions I receive when attending a trade show or conference. It can be a bit mind-boggling to some when they think of the same feedstuff for livestock found in the feed bunk can also find its way into the kitchen as a great addition to any meal or snack.

Popular forms of sorghum that are served include sorghum flour, used for baked goods; cooked sorghum grain, which makes a great addition to grain bowls; and puffed or popped sorghum, either of which make a great on-the-go snack.

Forms can also vary by region. For example, in certain parts of the southern United States, sorghum syrup takes center stage. Whereas, in the plains regions, sorghum grain is more recognized. With so many options, it can be overwhelming at first. However, if you're looking for an easy addition, try adding sorghum grain to your favorite chili, soup, or stew—it'll make the perfect addition to any cozy winter meal.

Sorghum is nicknamed *Nature's Supergrain™*, and for good reason: A single serving of cooked whole-grain sorghum provides 12 essential nutrients and provides almost double the iron as a three-ounce serving of steak. Talk about mouth-watering and jaw-dropping. These are just two of many reasons to consider adding sorghum into your diet if you're looking to up the nutrition factor in your everyday meals.

If you're ready to begin dishing up sorghum, there are plenty of great resources online available at your fingertips. Here are just a few of many to get you started:

**The Sorghum Checkoff** - [SorghumCheckoff.com](http://SorghumCheckoff.com)

**Nu Life Market** - [NuLifeMarket.com](http://NuLifeMarket.com)

**Kansas Farm Food Connection** - [KansasFarmFoodConnection.org](http://KansasFarmFoodConnection.org)

One of my favorite aspects of my role at Kansas Grain Sorghum is being able to tell the story of sorghum and share with others how versatile this grain can be. As we turn the page of the new year, I look forward to helping tell the success stories of sorghum for years to come. If you're looking to make a change in the upcoming year, consider giving sorghum a try. Similar to how we have seen its role across other sectors, sorghum truly proves itself as an adaptable grain over and over again, making it a perfect addition to the recipes you already know and enjoy.

Kansas Grain Sorghum, PO Box 618 Colwich, KS 67030  
785-477-9474, [www.ksgrainsorghum.org](http://www.ksgrainsorghum.org)

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# SORGHUM THAT TURNS HEADS.

Winners of the National Sorghum Producers Yield Contest know that out-yielding the competition takes exceptional management to get yields that turn heads.

Congratulations to all the 2023 NSP Yield Contest winners and a special recognition goes to Pioneer grower Chris Santini who took top honor as this year's Bin Buster Award recipient with a yield of 221.75!

## 2023 NSP YIELD CONTEST RESULTS

PLACE	WINNER	COUNTY, STATE	PIONEER® BRAND PRODUCT	YIELD BU/A
DRYLAND-NO TILL EAST				
1	CHRIS SANTINI* BIN BUSTER AWARD	WARREN, NJ	85P58	221.75
2	BILLY H BOWERS FARM TRUST	DAVIDSON, NC	84G62	197.55
3	CARLY BARLIEB	WARREN, NJ	85P58	173.57
DRYLAND-NO TILL WEST				
1	MARK BLOSS	PAWNEE, NE	84P72	181.00
2	JASON CHENOWETH	BON HOMME, SD	88P71	171.85
3	ROPE CREEK RANCH LLC	HARLAN, NE	85Y88	168.96
DRYLAND-TILLAGE EAST				
1	SANTINO SANTINI	WARREN, NJ	85P58	221.06
2	STEVEN HALTER	DAVIESS, IN	84G62	196.94
DRYLAND - TILLAGE WEST				
1	DAVID KNOLL	CHARLES MIX, SD	89Y79	183.32
IRRIGATED TILLAGE EAST				
1	HOWARD DESHONG	LANCASTER, PA	84G62	168.34
2	PROMISE LAND FARMS LLC	WARREN, NJ	85P58	163.35
IRRIGATED TILLAGE WEST				
3	GRANT SCHUTZ & CANYON VIEW FARM LLC	GOSPER, NE	86Y89	200.00



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