

70TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

NATIONAL SORGHUM PRODUCERS



SORGHUM Grower

70 YEARS STRONG

40 YEARS OF
BIN BUSTIN'
2025 Yield Contest Winners

Included Inside

SORGHUM CHECKOFF NEWSLETTER
KANSAS SORGHUM NEWSLETTER

NATIONAL SORGHUM PRODUCERS, 4201 INTERSTATE 27, LUBBOCK, TX 79403



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From the CEO

Looking Ahead, Built on 70 Years



As we close out 2025 and look ahead to a new year, it's also worth pausing to recognize an important milestone for our organization. This year, National Sorghum Producers marks its **70th anniversary**—seven decades of growers coming together to ensure sorghum has a voice in policy, markets and research.

When NSP was formed in 1955, the issues were different, but the motivation was the same as it is today. Sorghum producers understood that if they didn't organize and advocate for themselves, their crop would be overlooked. That lesson has proven true time and again, and it continues to guide our work 70 years later.

The past year reinforced why engagement matters. The One Big Beautiful Bill Act delivered meaningful improvements for sorghum and agriculture, including a stronger safety net, enhanced crop insurance provisions, continued investment in trade, and extended biofuel incentives that support demand for sorghum. These outcomes were not the result of a single meeting or a single year of effort, but of sustained advocacy and relationships built over time.

At the same time, we know many growers are still facing real challenges. Trade disruptions, delayed assistance programs and continued pressure on commodity prices are creating uncertainty across the Sorghum Belt. NSP remains actively engaged on each of these fronts—working every day to ensure sorghum producers are treated fairly and equitably as decisions are made in Washington.

Away from Capitol Hill, our focus continues to be on building opportunities for the long term. From advancing genetic improvement and strengthening crop insurance tools, to supporting domestic demand through ethanol and expanding food and feed markets, the work we are doing today is about positioning sorghum to compete and thrive for the next generation.

One of the most encouraging things I see is the continued leadership of producers—both those who have been involved for decades and those stepping forward for the first time. Their willingness to engage, ask tough questions and help shape the future of this organization and the sorghum industry is what has sustained NSP for 70 years.

This anniversary is not just a reflection on where we've been, but a reminder of what is possible when growers work together. Thank you for your membership, your support and your trust in National Sorghum Producers. It is a privilege to serve this industry, and I look forward to continuing this work alongside you in 2026 and beyond.

Tim Lust, CEO

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FEATURES

- 6** 2025 Yield Contest Results
- 10** Seventy Years of Sorghum

WHAT'S INSIDE

- 4** NSP Policy Update
- 14** USCP Newsletter
- 18** Kansas Sorghum Newsletter



NATIONAL SORGHUM PRODUCERS

SORGHUM
Grower

70TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION



ON THE COVER: For 70 years, the National Sorghum Producers have represented and supported the sorghum community and industry. This collection of images is a small slice of the people and events that helped shape NSP over the last seven decades.

Signals of Movement: Trade, Relief, and the Road Ahead

By Elissa Gilliam

As 2025 came to a close, sorghum producers were met with a familiar mix of uncertainty and cautious optimism. While broader political divisions in Washington remain, the final weeks of the year delivered several tangible developments that matter to growers—particularly on the trade, assistance, and energy fronts.

For an industry that depends heavily on export markets and timely policy support, these signals are meaningful.

Encouraging Movement on Trade

One of the most positive developments for sorghum late in the year came on the export front. Secretary of Agriculture Brooke Rollins recently highlighted significant new U.S. agricultural sales to China, including 123,000 metric tons of American sorghum.

These shipments are welcome news for sorghum producers and the broader feed grain sector. While one week of vessel activity does not resolve long-term trade uncertainty, it represents a meaningful step forward and a signal that the U.S.–China trade channel is beginning to reopen in tangible ways.

NSP remains hopeful these shipments mark the beginning of a steadier, more predictable flow in the weeks and months ahead. China has historically been one of sorghum's most important export destinations, and renewed access has the potential to provide much-needed demand as producers continue navigating tight margins and large stocks.

Trade remains a long-term effort built on reliability and sustained engagement. NSP continues working with USDA, the U.S. Trade Representative, and partners across agriculture to support market access and reduce disruptions that directly impact growers at the farm gate.

Farmer Bridge Assistance Program Provides Needed Relief

In early December, the Trump Administration announced more than \$12 billion in emergency assistance for U.S. farmers through the Farmer Bridge Assistance (FBA) Program, providing short-term relief as producers continue to face financial pressure. According to USDA, approximately \$11 billion is being directed to eligible row crops, with additional funding reserved for other commodities. USDA has since announced per-acre payment rates under the program, including a \$48.11 per-acre payment for sorghum based on 2025 planted acres. Payments are expected to be issued by the end of February, helping bridge producers into the 2026 season and provide needed certainty. NSP welcomed the announcement and emphasized the importance of timely and efficient implementation. Many sorghum producers have endured multiple years of weather-related losses, declining prices, and rising input costs. This program represents an important



▲ Sorghum Farmers Barry Evans, Garrett Love and Brian Adamek pictured with President Trump and cabinet members in the Oval Office after discussing the Farmer Bridge Assistance Program.

opportunity to stabilize operations while longer-term policy solutions are debated. NSP remains actively engaged with USDA to help ensure the program works as intended for sorghum growers and will continue providing updates as additional details become available.

Energy Policy: E15 and 45Z Continue to Matter

Energy policy remains one of the most immediate opportunities to strengthen domestic demand for sorghum.

Year-round E15 continues to be among the fastest ways to increase feed grain demand. NSP has long supported expanded E15 access, and recent regulatory progress reinforces the importance of maintaining momentum toward permanent, nationwide availability. Expanded E15 supports rural economies, enhances U.S. energy security, and creates additional demand closer to home for sorghum producers.

On the clean fuels front, the U.S. Treasury Department recently advanced proposed rulemaking for the Section 45Z Clean Fuel Production Credit to the Office of Management and Budget for review. While the guidance currently under review is expected to apply only to the 2025 tax year, it represents an important procedural step in providing near-term clarity for fuel producers and other eligible entities.

Progress on 45Z slowed earlier this year as Treasury worked to incorporate changes enacted under the One Big Beautiful Bill Act. Prioritizing 2025-specific guidance reflects an effort to ensure the credit can be utilized in the current year, even as broader rules for 2026 through 2029 are developed. NSP continues engaging with Treasury, USDA, and industry partners to help ensure sorghum producers are positioned to benefit as these policies take shape.

Regenerative Agriculture: New Pilot Program Focused on Cost Reduction

USDA also recently announced a new \$700 million Regenerative Pilot Program, aimed at helping farmers adopt soil health practices that reduce production costs, improve resilience, and strengthen long-term productivity. The announcement positions regenerative agriculture as part of the Administration's broader Make America Healthy Again (MAHA) agenda.

Administered through USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the pilot is designed to address longstanding concerns from producers about complexity and administrative burden in conservation programs. The new approach allows growers to bundle multiple regenerative practices into a single, whole-farm application under EQIP and CSP, rather than navigating multiple overlapping programs.

For fiscal year 2026, USDA will dedicate \$400 million through EQIP and \$300 million through CSP to support the pilot. The program emphasizes flexibility, outcome-based conservation, and accessibility for both beginning and experienced producers.

NSP is closely monitoring implementation to ensure the program works in a practical, farmer-focused way for sorghum producers. Sorghum's inherent efficiency and adaptability position the crop well within conservation and regenerative systems, and NSP will continue engaging with USDA to help ensure growers can access opportunities that make sense at the farm level.

Recognizing Excellence: 2025 Yield Contest Results

Even as growers navigate market uncertainty and policy challenges, the results of the 2025 National Sorghum Producers Yield Contest serve as a powerful reminder of what sorghum producers continue to achieve in the field.

NSP officially announced this year's national winners in December, with outstanding performances recorded across every production system and region of the country. The contest's highest honor, the Bin Buster Award, went to Chris Santini of Warren County, New Jersey, who achieved an impressive 239.93 bushels per acre in the Irrigated Eastern division.

Top yields were recorded coast to coast, with national division winners representing Oklahoma, Kansas, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey. These results reflect strong management, careful hybrid selection, and a continued commitment to innovation by sorghum growers.

Full results, including national and state winners, are featured later in this issue of Sorghum Grower. National winners will also be formally recognized during 2026 Commodity Classic, where NSP looks forward to celebrating their accomplishments alongside growers from across the country.

Looking Ahead

The close of 2025 did not bring resolution to every challenge facing agriculture—but it did deliver important signals of progress. Ships moving to China, emergency assistance on the way, continued momentum on E15, and advancing energy and conservation policy all point toward opportunities that matter for sorghum producers.

As always, National Sorghum Producers remains committed to representing growers' interests, providing timely information, and advocating for policies that support long-term stability and growth. We appreciate the engagement, trust, and support of our members as we move into 2026. ¶

NEW JERSEY GROWER EARNS 40TH SORGHUM BIN BUSTER AWARD WITH 239.93 BPA ENTRY

BY JASON JENKINS, DTN CROPS EDITOR

SUCCESSFUL ROW-CROP FARMERS know that improving production lies somewhere between “if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it,” and “betting the farm.” Making gains means finessing the fundamentals while adding innovation that bins more bushels year over year.

Chris and Santino “Sam” Santini Jr. of Stewartsville, New Jersey, have embraced this philosophy, and it’s led to award-winning yields – again.

On Thursday, Dec. 11, the National Sorghum Producers (NSP) announced the winners of the 2025 National Sorghum Yield Contest. Chris Santini was named this year’s Bin Buster Award recipient, producing sorghum that yielded 239.93 bushels per acre (bpa) in an irrigated production system. It was her second time in the past three seasons to receive the honor.

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. This year’s 18 national winners represented no-till, conventional till and irrigated production systems in 10 states from coast to coast. Their entries averaged 196.16 bpa, with seven entries exceeding 200 bpa.

“I want to congratulate all of the 2025 National Sorghum Yield Contest winners on their outstanding achievements,” NSP CEO Tim Lust said. “It’s inspiring to see growers like Chris achieve such impressive yields. These accomplishments reflect the dedication, innovation and resilience that continue to move our sorghum industry forward. I’m incredibly proud of what these farmers have achieved and look forward to celebrating their success at Commodity Classic.”

GROWING IN THE GARDEN STATE

Sam’s grandfather, Dominic, immigrated to the United States from Italy more than a century ago and established the farm. Today, he and Chris are the third generation to run the operation in Warren County in northwest New Jersey, about 60 miles from New York City. In addition to sorghum, they raise corn and soybeans on about 1,600 acres.

“We don’t have a big market here for sorghum, but we’re able to sell it for bird seed,” Chris said. “We just like having it in the rotation.”

The field where Chris’ winning entry was planted had produced yield contest winners in the past, both corn and sorghum. For the third consecutive year, they planted Pioneer 85P58, a variety with a relative maturity of 113 days that the company describes as having good standability, exceptional test weight and adequate head exertion in a moderately tall plant.

Prior to planting, 2 tons of poultry manure and 150 pounds of potash were applied per acre to the field, which had been in soybeans last year. Though early rains slowed planting this spring, the Santinis were able to get into the field in May. They used a John Deere 1795 planter to plant into the bean stubble at a rate of 140,000 seeds per acre on 15-inch rows. At planting, a 30% liquid nitrogen was applied at a rate of 30 gallons per acre. They also treated the seed with Pioneer’s Nexta Biologicals C3 speedbox on the planter.

“We really pay close attention to our singulation when planting, and our final stand ended up at about 135,000,” Sam said. “A long time ago, we learned that we needed to treat

the sorghum like we treat our corn. People don’t realize that. They think sorghum is a cheaper crop to plant.”

A preemergent herbicide pass containing atrazine and S-metolachlor ensured that the crop wouldn’t have any competition for resources, which was especially important for water in 2025. While the region typically receives around 50 inches of precipitation annually, this year is running nearly 10 inches behind.

“It seemed like almost every time, we’d catch a shower just when we needed it,” Sam said. “We did have to furrow irrigate some – not a lot, maybe 2 inches for the season.”

A tried-and-true part of the Santini’s sorghum production is a two-pass fungicide program. This year, Miravis, a Group 7 fungicide, was applied after the flag leaf appeared. Then, Adastrio, which contains three active ingredients from different groups, was sprayed when the crop reached the flowering stage.

“We just want to keep that plant happy and disease free so that it can grow to its potential,” Chris added.

While aphids can be an occasional issue, insect pressure this season never reached threshold levels that required the application of an insecticide.

After taking every step possible to produce high yields, the Santinis want to ensure that as much of that grain as possible gets into the bin. So, they tend to harvest toward the top end of moisture recommendations, around 20%.

“We have on-farm dryers, so getting it a little wet isn’t an issue,” Sam said. “It helps with test weight, and we don’t have to worry about heads shattering or the birds eating it.”

Chris Santini will be recognized along with the other national winners at a contest gala held during the 2026 Commodity Classic in San Antonio, Feb. 25-27. Though Sam admits he enjoys competing (and winning when it happens), the couple agreed that meeting other top growers just helps them get better at growing sorghum.

“I’m really looking forward to meeting up with everyone in San Antonio,” Chris said. “It’s a special group. There’s always something to learn.”



▲ Chris (right) and Santino “Sam” Santini Jr. Between the two of them, the have won eight national awards in the last five growing seasons.

NATIONAL Winners

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

Showcasing Top Sorghum Yields for 40 Years

In 1985 the National Sorghum Producers Yield Contest was started in increase membership, and educate producers on best practices and new techniques.

Today, the yield contests continues to provide sorghum farmers the opportunity to showcase their crop, competing with growers across the nation. This contest allows our industry to recognize the best growers in the US and helps farmers grow and learn from one another.

IRRIGATED WEST

1. 237.15 bu/ac

RK Farms
Cimarron County, OK
Pioneer 85P75

2. 197.14 bu/ac

Luke Van Ruiten
Sutter County, CA
Pioneer 85P75

3. 193.14 bu/ac

Gordon Lassen
Phelps County, NE
Pioneer 84P94

DRYLAND-TILLAGE WEST

1. 213.30 bu/ac

Stewart Family Farms LLC
Washington County, KS
Pioneer 84G62

2. 172.75 bu/ac

Dylan Knoll
Charles Mix County, SD
Pioneer 89Y79

3. 165.06 bu/ac

Curt Soulek
Charles Mix County, SD
Pioneer 89P52

DRYLAND-TILLAGE EAST

1. 226.73 bu/ac

Jeff Barlieb
Warren County, NJ
Pioneer 85P58

2. 209.15 bu/ac

Robert Santini
Warren County, NJ
Pioneer 85P58

3. 200.72 bu/ac

Billy H Bowers Family Trust
Davidson County, NC
Pioneer 84G62

DRYLAND-NO TILL WEST

1. 199.14 bu/ac

Gamble Farms GP
Kiowa County, KS
Pioneer 85Y88

2. 185.02 bu/ac

VFF-Dry Lake Farms
Scott County, KS
Pioneer 86P70

3. 183.66 bu/ac

VFF-Tip Off Farms
Scott County, KS
Pioneer 86G32

DRYLAND-NO TILL EAST

1. 211.15 bu/ac

Jon Stutzman
Berks County, PA
Pioneer 85P58

2. 195.20 bu/ac

Sharon Santini
Warren County, NJ
Pioneer 85P58

3. 171.35 bu/ac

HRB Farming Partnership
Livingston County, MO
DEKALB DKS54-07

IRRIGATED EAST

1. 239.93 bu/ac

Chris Santini
Warren County, NJ
Pioneer 85P58

2. 180.78 bu/ac

Michelle Santini
Warren County, NJ
Pioneer 85P58

3. 149.52 bu/ac

Adam Fisher
Cross County, AR
Alta Seeds Adv G2168IG

Top Yield!

STATE *Winners*

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

1st	California	Sutter County	Luke Van Ruiten	197.14	Pioneer	85P75
1st	Kansas	Seward County	Ormiston Farms	181.03	Pioneer	85P75
1st	Nebraska	Phelps County	Gordon Lassen	193.14	Pioneer	84P94
2nd	Nebraska	Harlan County	Jewett Farms	188.36	Pioneer	84P94
1st	Oklahoma	Cimarron County	RK Farms	237.15	Pioneer	85P75
2nd	Oklahoma	Texas County	Melvyn Williams, Jimmy Williams	136.32	Dyna-Gro	M62GB36
3rd	Oklahoma	Texas County	Neil & Michelle Hyer	100.61	Dyna-Gro	M57GB35 DT

IRRIGATED EAST

1st	Arkansas	Cross County	Adam Fisher	149.52	Alta Seeds	Adv G2168IG
1st	Delaware	Sussex County	Fred Daley	139.56	DEKALB	DKS51-01
1st	Mississippi	Sunflower County	Triple Run Farms	121.53	DEKALB	DKS54-07
1st	New Jersey	Warren County	Chris Santini	239.93	Pioneer	85P58
2nd	New Jersey	Warren County	Michelle Santini	180.78	Pioneer	85P58

DRYLAND-NO TILL WEST

1st	Colorado	Kit Carson County	Livingston Farms, LLC	130.31	Channel	5B78
2nd	Colorado	Kit Carson County	Farms S Inc.	111.47	DEKALB	DKS29-28
1st	Kansas	Kiowa County	Gamble Farms GP	199.14	Pioneer	85Y88
2nd	Kansas	Scott County	VFF-Dry Lake Farms	185.02	Pioneer	86P70
3rd	Kansas	Scott County	VFF-Tip Off Farms	183.66	Pioneer	86G32
1st	Nebraska	Harlan County	Robinson Brothers Land & Cattle LLC	132.60	Pioneer	85Y88
2nd	Nebraska	Pawnee County	Mark Bloss	118.21	Pioneer	84P72
3rd	Nebraska	Pawnee County	Matthew J Bloss	111.17	Pioneer	84P94
1st	New Mexico	Curry County	Garret Johnson	98.76	Alta Seeds	AG1301
2nd	New Mexico	Roosevelt County	JG Farms	70.90	Dyna-Gro	M62GB36
1st	Oklahoma	Kingfisher County	Vilhauer Farms	126.34	DEKALB	DKS44-07
2nd	Oklahoma	Texas County	Roger & Marilyn Fischer	117.28	Pioneer	86P20
3rd	Oklahoma	Texas County	7 Windy Farms	102.17	Dyna-Gro	DG 742C
1st	Texas	Ochiltree County	Sell Grain Inc	146.72	DEKALB	DKS37-07
2nd	Texas	Lipscomb County	Lane Born L&L Farms	138.39	DEKALB	DKS36-07
3rd	Texas	Ochiltree County	JC Sell Farms	120.74	DEKALB	DKS37-07

PLACE	STATE	COUNTY	NAME	YIELD (BU/AC)	SEED BRAND	VARIETY
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DRYLAND-TILLAGE EAST

1st	Illinois	Clark County	Williams Bros. Farms	185.69	DEKALB	DKS44-07
2nd	Illinois	Clark County	Allen Walters	174.21	DEKALB	DKS44-07
1st	New Jersey	Warren County	Jeff Barrieb	226.73	Pioneer	85P58
2nd	New Jersey	Warren County	Robert Santini	209.15	Pioneer	85P58
1st	New York	Oneida County	Zennyll Farms	121.04	Channel	5R54
2nd	New York	Oneida County	Mark Pawkowski	120.98	Channel	5B70
1st	North Carolina	Davidson County	Billy H Bowers Farm Trust	200.72	Pioneer	84G62
1st	Pennsylvania	Adams County	Howard Deshong	195.57	Pioneer	85Z65
2nd	Pennsylvania	Bucks County	Nathan Cooke	166.93	Channel	5R45

DRYLAND-TILLAGE WEST

1st	Kansas	Washington County	Stewart Family Farms LLC	213.30	Pioneer	84G62
2nd	Kansas	Stanton County	Marty Cook	119.19	Dyna-Gro	M62GB36
3rd	Kansas	Wichita County	Steve Berning	108.59	DEKALB	DKS36-07
1st	Nebraska	Pawnee County	Matthew J Bloss	115.72	DEKALB	DKS36-07
1st	Oklahoma	Texas County	Austin & Payton Newlon Farms	128.42	Pioneer	86P20
2nd	Oklahoma	Texas County	Flatland Farms LLC	125.30	Sorghum Partners	43M80
3rd	Oklahoma	Beaver County	Austin & Payton Newlon Farms	124.32	Pioneer	86P20
1st	South Dakota	Charles Mix County	Dylan Knoll	172.75	Pioneer	89Y79
2nd	South Dakota	Charles Mix County	Curt Soulek	165.06	Pioneer	89P52

DRYLAND-NO TILL EAST

1st	Delaware	Sussex County	Kenneth Stevenson II	136.79	DEKALB	DKS51-01
2nd	Delaware	Kent County	Vogl Brothers	126.69	Pioneer	85Z65
1st	Maryland	Talbot County	Robert Diefenderer	100.41	Pioneer	85P58
1st	Missouri	Livingston County	HRB Farming Partnership	171.35	DEKALB	DKS54-07
1st	New Jersey	Warren County	Sharon Santini	195.20	Pioneer	85P58
2nd	New Jersey	Warren County	Santino Santini	170.38	Pioneer	85P58
3rd	New Jersey	Warren County	Robert Santini Jr.	147.09	Pioneer	85P58
1st	North Carolina	Davidson County	Billy H Bowers Farm Trust	184.86	DEKALB	DKS54-07
1st	Pennsylvania	Berks County	Jon Stutzman	211.15	Pioneer	85P58
2nd	Pennsylvania	Bucks County	Nathan Crooke	158.08	Channel	6R65
1st	Tennessee	Wayne County	Jeremy Robbins	112.83	DEKALB	DKS54-07



SEVENTY YEARS OF STANDING UP FOR SORGHUM

BY ERIC WASHINGTON

Where It Began, and Why It Still Matters

In 1955, five sorghum producers gathered around a table in Hereford, Texas, with a shared concern: sorghum had no seat at the table as federal farm programs were taking shape. Other commodities were represented. Sorghum was not.

That meeting, led by producers who understood the stakes, set in motion what would become the National Sorghum Producers. Their



▲ Early leaders of National Sorghum Producers gather.

goal was straightforward but ambitious: organize, be heard, and ensure sorghum growers were not left behind.

Within a year, they succeeded. In 1956, sorghum was included in the Federal Farm Program for the first time. It was an early win, and it established a defining trait of the organization that still holds true seven decades later: progress comes from producer leadership and persistence.

NSP was built by growers who worked all day in the field, then drove miles to meet late into the night. They transitioned, often reluctantly but

“Some of the very reasons this association was formed in 1955 are issues we’re still working on today.”

— TIM LUST



▲ One of the early editions of sorghum newsletter updates.

effectively, from producers to advocates. Their work was rooted in practicality, promoting the crop, improving demand, and influencing policy not for prestige, but for survival.

Over time, the challenges evolved. The mission did not.

As hybrid sorghum emerged in the late 1950s, yields surged and the crop's potential expanded. What had once averaged fewer than 20 bushels per acre doubled in just a few years. Production increased, acres expanded, and sorghum's role in U.S. agriculture grew rapidly.

That growth demanded markets—and NSP helped build them.

Working alongside other feed grain organizations, early leaders helped establish what would become the U.S. Grains & BioProducts Council, laying the groundwork for international market development. Export education, feeding trials, and relationship-building overseas began decades before most growers ever saw the results.

By the 1960s and 1970s, sorghum was no longer just a regional crop. It was becoming a global one.

But progress was never linear.

NSP Chair Wall of Fame



Reagan "R.G." Peeler
1955-1957



Frank Moore
1958-1961



Elbert Harp
1962-1968



AW Dub Anthony
1969-1976



Mobry Foreman
1977-1988



Billy Bob Brown
1989-1990



Jeff Casten
1991-1992



Gary Bright
1993-1995



The Work: Milestones That Changed the Crop

1960S-1970S

PRODUCERS INVEST IN THEMSELVES

As demand grew, producers recognized the need to reinvest directly in their crop. State checkoffs began emerging, starting in Texas, allowing growers to fund research and market development. This producer-led investment model spread gradually across the Sorghum Belt, reinforcing collaboration between state organizations and the national association.

At the same time, agronomic challenges demanded attention. Greenbug pressure threatened yields across the Plains, prompting NSP to work closely with public researchers and private industry to accelerate the development of resistant hybrids. The result was not just improved varieties, but a model for cooperation that remains central to sorghum research today.



▲ Sorghum grower leaders meet in Washington D.C.

1985

A POLICY WAKE-UP CALL

The 1985 Farm Bill brought major change to U.S. agriculture, including the creation of the Conservation Reserve Program. While CRP provided environmental and economic benefits, it also removed millions of sorghum acres from production in a short period of time.

The impact was stark—and instructive.

For sorghum growers, it underscored a reality NSP continues to emphasize: policy decisions, even well-intended ones, can have bad consequences on our industry if we are not fully represented.

LATE 1980S-1990S

A STRONGER VOICE

In the years that followed, NSP expanded its advocacy footprint. The organization became increasingly active on regulatory issues, pesticide access, and trade negotiations. Dedicated representation in

“You have to be able to show value back to growers—over time, not just once.”

— TIM LUST



▲ L-R: Larry Richardson, Jeff Dahlberg, Congressman Henry Bonilla, Tim Lust, and Bill Kubecka

Washington strengthened NSP's ability to respond quickly and effectively as policy debates intensified.

Leadership development also became a priority. Producers were not just funding the organization, they were stepping forward to testify, negotiate, and speak for their crop at the highest levels.

That emphasis on leadership would prove critical in the years ahead.

1998-2002

LEVELING THE PLAYING FIELD

By the late 1990s, farm policy again came into sharp focus. Financial pressures mounted, and growers made clear what mattered most: fairness.

In the 2002 Farm Bill, NSP secured one of its most consequential policy

victories with the equalization of the sorghum loan rate to corn. This change helped producers weather the very low prices in 2004 and 2005—resulting in over \$231 million of increased price support in those two years.

It was a reminder that sustained advocacy delivers measurable results.

2006-2008

BUILDING FOR THE LONG TERM

Recognizing that traditional trade association models were not sufficient for a smaller commodity, NSP's board made a pivotal decision: diversify funding and modernize organizational structure.

For-profit subsidiaries were approved as an alternative revenue stream, followed soon after by the establishment of the National Sorghum Checkoff. Driven by growers in a grassroots movement, the checkoff created a national framework for investment in research, promotion and market development.

The checkoff did more than fund projects. It allowed sorghum to compete for matching dollars, leverage partnerships, and stretch producer investments further than ever before.

NSP Chair Wall of Fame



Bill Kubecka
1996-1997



Kenny Tevis
1998-1999



Leo Bindel
2000-2001



Kenneth Rose
2002-2003



James Vorderstrasse
2004-2005



Greg Shelor
2006-2007



Dale Murden
2008



Toby Bostwick
2009



▲ International sorghum growers gather following Export Sorghum.

The Future: What Seventy Years Built

GENETICS, ENERGY, AND NEW DEMAND

As NSP entered its seventh decade, genetics emerged as a defining priority. Advances in genome sequencing opened doors for accelerated improvement, while collaboration across public and private sectors positioned sorghum to compete in a rapidly evolving landscape.

At the same time, domestic demand expanded. Sorghum's recognition as an advanced biofuel strengthened its role in renewable energy. Ethanol plants across the Sorghum Belt increasingly utilized the crop, reinforcing demand closer to home.

Food, feed, and fuel—once separate conversations—began to converge.

TRADE: STILL CENTRAL, STILL CRITICAL

Trade remains a cornerstone of the sorghum economy. While markets have shifted over time, NSP's approach has remained consistent: diversify, build relationships, and stay engaged.



▲ Sorghum leaders meet with Senate Agriculture Committee Chair John Boozman in Washington, D.C., in 2025.

“They’re evaluating what matters for their future—and they’re good at articulating it.”

— TIM LUST



▲ Leadership Sorghum participants meet in New Orleans.

Through leadership programs, advocacy training, and hands-on involvement, young growers are shaping the future of the organization and the industry it represents. Their ability to learn quickly, communicate effectively, and leverage technology is changing how sorghum's story is told.

SEVENTY YEARS—AND COUNTING

From five producers in Hereford to a national organization navigating global markets, complex policy, and evolving consumer demand, NSP's history is defined by adaptation without losing purpose.

The issues will continue to change. Markets will rise and fall. Policy battles will be won, and revisited.

But the principle that launched the organization in 1955 remains intact: sorghum growers are strongest when they stand together.

As National Sorghum Producers marks its 70th anniversary, the focus is not on nostalgia. It is on momentum—built by generations of producers who understood that the future of their crop was worth fighting for.

The future is bright. And it was earned. ↗

NSP Chair Wall of Fame



Gerald Simonsen
2010-2011



Terry Swanson
2012-2013



JB Stewart
2014-2015



James Born
2016



Don Bloss
2017-2018



Dan Atkisson
2019-2020



Kody Carson
2021-2022



Craig Meeker
2023-2024



Amy France
2025-2026



2025 Top Tier Legislative Supporting Members of the National Sorghum Producers

Legislative Champions

Barry Evans - Kress, TX
Amy & Clint France - Scott City, KS
Scott Frazier - Chapman Ranch, TX
John Georg - LaCrosse, KS
Matthew Lansford - Clovis, NM

Brant & Amy Peterson - Johnson, KS
J.B. Stewart - Keyes, OK
Todd Straley - Plainview, TX
Tregellas Family Farms - Perryton, TX
Verity Ulibarri - Clovis, NM

Legislative Partners

Dale Artho - Wildorado, TX
Ty Askew - Tahoka, TX
Daniel Atkisson - Stockton, KS
Kelsey Baker - Scott City, KS
Michael Baker - Trenton, NE
Ted Bannister - Alexander, KS
Jon Bass - Plainview, TX
Jon Berning - Scott City, KS
Clark Bibb - Coldwater, KS
Stephen Bigge - Stockton, KS
Anthony Bleumer - Ingalls, KS
Madison Bolay - Perry, OK
Dustin Borden - Gruver, TX
James Born - Booker, TX
Sarah Bowser - Mayetta, KS
Kody Carson - Olton, TX
Chris Cogburn - Hale Center, TX
Larry Dahlsten - Lindsborg, KS
Steve Downer - Cambridge, NE
Dale Durler - Wright, KS
Robert Durler - Dodge City, KS
Marvin Estes - Melrose, NM
Karen Frazier - Chapman Ranch, TX
Justin Garrett - Dumas, TX
Ryan Georg - La Crosse, KS
Tom Gregory - Petersburg, TX
Brad Haynes - Hays, KS
David Hendricks - Bird City, KS
Cord Heenson - Marmaduke, AR
Don Hineman - Dighton, KS
Donald Houser - Taft, TX
Scott Irlbeck - Lubbock, TX
Shayne Johnson - Stratford, TX
Eric Kahle - Newkirk, OK
Monty Kahle - Newkirk, OK
Harrison Krey - Hugoton, KS
Daniel Krienke - Perryton, TX

Darrell Lawhon - Bishop, TX
Greg Love - Montezuma, KS
Lee Lubbers - Gregory, SD
Tony Mans - Spearman, TX
Dylan Marks - Portales, NM
Matt McCune - Plainville, KS
Justin McCune - Plainville, KS
Bill McCune - Plainville, KS
Jerry McReynolds - Woodston, KS
Mitch Meyer - Vega, TX
Ethan Miller - Columbia, MO
Lance Ohnmacht - Sterling, KS
Aaron Paris - Dighton, KS
John Payne - Ransom, KS
Brant & Amy Peterson - Johnson, KS
Todd Pope - Shallowater, TX
Leon Richards - Turpin, OK
Earl Roemer - Scott City, KS
Rex Rush - Clovis, NM
Cedar Rush - Melrose, NM
Levi Salmans - Hanston, KS
Clay Schemm - Sharon Springs, KS
David Schemm - Sharon Springs, KS
John Sorensen - Lincoln, KS
Jared Stieben - Brownell, KS
Jason Stoffer - Abilene, KS
Jeremy & Christi Stulp - Granada, CO
Peter Teichroeb - Ingalls, KS
Lukes Thielenhaus - Bison, KS
Mitch Urban - Wellington, KS
Clint VenJohn - Mt. Hope, KS
Brandon Walker - Lubbock, TX
Conner Watts - Slaton, TX
Lee Whitaker - Claude, TX
Jordan Willeke - Otis, CO
Kirk Zerr - Quinter, KS
Jeff Zortman - Fowler, KS

Each year, we recognize the members who pay dues beyond the contributor level.
Thank you to the above members for your generous support of NSP.

Choosing a Sorghum Hybrid for 2026

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

Timely rainfall in 2025 resulted in exceptionally good yields in many sorghum fields across the sorghum belt. These yields are a reflection of better hybrids sold by seed companies. One of the most important decisions growers can make is which hybrid to plant. Historically, the release of new sorghum hybrids has been slower than some of the other crops, but that has not been the case in recent years.

A study published in *Crop Science*, conducted by scientists at Corteva™ Agriscience and Kansas State University, revealed that yield gain of Pioneer® commercial hybrids increased 24 lbs/acre per year from 1963 to 2017. It is especially noteworthy that yield gain accelerated in the most recent years of the study (see bar graph), and I have little doubt that this yield increase has continued in recent years.

In the coming years, growers should expect the rate of yield gain to increase as new breeding techniques are adopted. We read a lot about how artificial intelligence is going to increase the rate of technological gains in all areas of our lives, and I believe this will also be true in sorghum hybrid development.

Our knowledge of the genetic makeup of sorghum through sequencing and mapping has

helped us identify genes with valuable traits. Marker-assisted selection is helping breeders select desirable plants much earlier in the breeding process than ever before. This knowledge can now be used in predictive models to help breeders select which parents to cross that will have the highest probability in producing superior hybrids. AI can then be used to analyze massive data sets collected by drones and even satellites to assess plant traits quickly and accurately. What all of this means is better hybrids for your farm arriving faster than ever before.

Higher yield is always the goal and is accomplished in two ways. First, by simply having a higher yield potential under optimum conditions, and second, by having better defensive traits that equip the hybrid to better withstand abiotic (nonliving) and biotic (living) stress.

Abiotic stress is typically caused by drought and high temperatures. Since sorghum tends to be grown in dry environments, sorghum breeders spend a large portion of their efforts developing hybrids that can withstand periods of drought and still maintain yield potential. Often overlooked by growers is the importance of heat stress. Much of the U.S. has experienced elevated

WHAT'S INSIDE

1

Choosing a Sorghum Hybrid for 2026

2

Sorghum Checkoff Elects Kim Baldwin as Board Chair

3

Leadership Sorghum Spotlight: From Comfort Zone to Crop Innovation.

4

Kendall Hodgson and Jeff Zortman complete Sorghum Checkoff Board Terms



temperatures over the last few years, and this is not expected to change any time soon. More effort is going into breeding for heat stress than in the past.

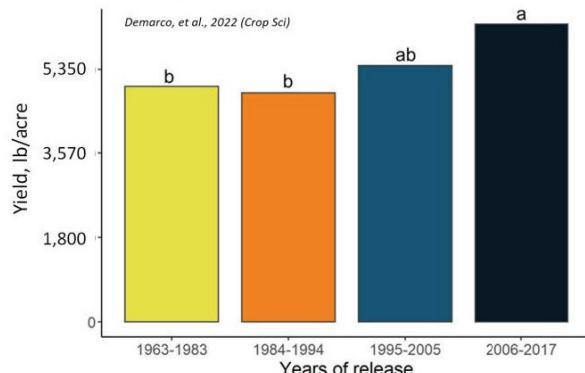
Biotic stress is usually from insects or diseases. Sorghum companies have placed considerable effort into identifying hybrids and parent lines with sorghum aphid tolerance. Most new hybrids now have tolerance to sorghum aphid. For those regions where diseases are an issue, better anthracnose resistance has been incorporated in some of the new hybrids.

Hybrids with specific herbicide tolerances were introduced by the industry a few years ago. We are now seeing these traits incorporated into elite genetics.

As plans are being made for the 2026 season, contact your seed company representative and ask

what new hybrids are in their lineup, and consider planting at least a few acres of a new hybrid on your farm.

U.S. Sorghum Yield Gain 1963-2017



Sorghum Checkoff Elects Kim Baldwin as Board Chair

The United Sorghum Checkoff Program elected Kim Baldwin of McPherson, Kansas, as chair during its annual December board of directors meeting.

Baldwin brings 15 years of farming experience to the role and previously served as vice chair. She farms with her husband and their two children and plays an active role in her family's wholesale and retail popcorn and sorghum business.

She holds a bachelor's degree in agricultural extension education from New Mexico State University and a master's degree in educational leadership and administration from William Woods University. Baldwin is also a graduate of the Kansas Agriculture and Rural Leadership Program.

Originally from New Mexico, Baldwin is a citizen of the Delaware Tribe of Indians and the Cherokee Nation. She spent nearly two decades in public education and continues to serve her community through several local boards.

"The board plays a critical role in shaping the future of the sorghum industry," Baldwin said. "Sorghum offers real opportunity, from supporting human health to expanding value-added innovation. I'm excited to work with the board to help position this crop for long-term growth and relevance in the marketplace."

"Kim brings a rare combination of producer experience, leadership and education," said Norma Ritz Johnson, executive director of the United Sorghum Checkoff Program. "Her perspective and

commitment will serve sorghum farmers well as the board continues investing in research, markets and demand for U.S. sorghum."

The board also elected Zack Rendel as vice chair, Scott Irlbeck as secretary and Dale Stoltzfus as treasurer.

USCP recognized outgoing board members and past chair Kendall Hodgson and Jeff Zortman for their service as they roll off the board.

The 13-member USCP board includes nine sorghum farmers from Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas, along with four at-large national representatives. Learn more at SorghumCheckoff.com.



Pictured from left to right is Norma Ritz Johnson - Executive Director, Zack Rendel - Vice Chair, Kim Baldwin - Chair, Scott Irlbeck - Secretary, Dale Stoltzfus - Treasurer and Ethan Miller - Past Chairman

Leadership Sorghum Spotlight: From Comfort Zone to Crop Innovation - Joel Huesby's, Class VI

By Sorghum Checkoff, Kyra Holt

Joel Huesby, an organic sorghum farmer from Touchet, Washington, took an uncommon path into sorghum production. His approach to farming has always been shaped by a willingness to learn, adapt and try something new, which eventually led him to be a member of Leadership Sorghum Class VI.

"Life begins at the edge of your comfort zone," Huesby said.

That belief has guided him throughout his career and is reflected in his focus on stewardship, innovation and long-term sustainability.

In 1994, Huesby decided to reshape his farm. He shifted entirely to organic production at a time when few others in his region were doing so. Huesby said the move felt right to him and he found success in understanding the people he serves.

"Who is my customer, and what do they want?" Huesby said. "That drives every decision I make."

That approach led him to build direct relationships with regional flour mills and distillers, who valued the organic grains he produced.

While researching alternative crops, Huesby began looking for something that could thrive in the Pacific Northwest and offer new value to his buyers. That search led him to sorghum.

"Being a horse of a different color, I am always looking for something that someone else is either unable or unwilling to do," Huesby said.

Sorghum aligns with Huesby's long-term vision for his operation. He said the crop is resilient, efficient and suited for the dry conditions common in his region.



"Water conservation is huge to me," Huesby said. "And sorghum fits that bill."

The farm has also become home to four generations of the Huesby family, who share daily life and family meals regularly.

"Most of those meals are all ingredients that we produced: the milk, the beef, the eggs and the flour," Huesby said. "We eat better than the fancy restaurants in town."

For Huesby, the farm is more than a business. It is a responsibility to the generations who came before and those who will come after.

"You have a heritage that is behind you and a legacy that is in front of you," Huesby said. "I take that really seriously."

His time in Leadership Sorghum strengthened that perspective by expanding his understanding of the influence producers have in shaping the future of the industry, Huesby said.

"The Sorghum Checkoff instilled in me the importance of marketing, research and promotion," Huesby said.

The lessons he learned in Leadership Sorghum continue to guide his decisions today, he said. Huesby focuses on growing markets through relationships, experimenting with new opportunities and building a resilient operation that honors both the history of his family and the needs of the next generation. To learn more about Leadership Sorghum, visit LeadSorghum.com.



Kendall Hodgson Completes Sorghum Checkoff Board Term

The Sorghum Checkoff thanks Kendall Hodgson for his leadership and long-standing service to the sorghum industry. A fourth-generation farmer from Little River, Kansas, Hodgson served on the United Sorghum Checkoff Program board, including as chairman, and brought a steady, producer-focused perspective shaped by decades of farming and community leadership.



Jeff Zortman Completes Sorghum Checkoff Board Term

The Sorghum Checkoff thanks Jeff Zortman for his service and leadership on behalf of the sorghum industry. A producer from Fowler, Kansas, Zortman brought a data-driven mindset and strong interest in technology and innovation to his work on the United Sorghum Checkoff Program board. His perspective as a full-time farmer and advocate for progressive production practices helped support the checkoff's mission and future-focused efforts.

SORGHUM INDUSTRY EVENTS

January 27-29 International Production & Processing Expo
Atlanta, GA

February 3-5 Leadership Sorghum VII – Session V
Washington, DC

February 26-28 2025 Commodity Classic
San Antonio, TX

For more events, visit sorghumcheckoff.com/news-and-events/



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USCP MISSION

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



@SorghumCheckoff



Sorghum Update

Brought to you by the Kansas Grain Sorghum Commission

Cultivating Resilience: Kansas Sorghum Forges Ahead in a Dynamic Market

By Maddy Meier

With the 2025 harvest now concluded and the final bushels tucked away, the Kansas sorghum industry enters the new year following a standout year for yields. While the sheer volume of the crop is a testament to your management decisions and the crop's modern capability, we recognize that high yields alone do not tell the full story. We have heard the concerns of growers across Kansas from planting to cutting season: the frustration of a record-setting harvest meeting a marketplace that doesn't always reflect what was invested. We know that in the current economic climate, the distance between a full bin and a profitable bottom line can feel wider than ever.

But despite these very real concerns, a palpable momentum now invigorates our industry. We are no strangers to navigating obstacles, from unpredictable weather to trade disruptions. The lessons learned, particularly from challenging periods like the sugarcane aphid in the mid-2010's, the 2018 trade disputes, or the 2022 megadrought, have forged a resilient spirit within our sector. This unwavering determination now positions us to capitalize on emerging opportunities, transforming high-quality bushels into action-potential.

For the first time in a year, a significant development this fall underscored this resilience and determination by our sorghum industry groups: a reported purchase of 123,000 metric tons of U.S. grain sorghum by China during the week of Thanksgiving and reported on by USDA in December. While the official government sales reporting faced delays, industry sources quickly confirmed the sale, sending hope for future large-scale purchases by our dominant export market over the past decade. This isn't an event that happened overnight; it's a direct result of sustained engagement and proactive outreach by sorghum leaders, like you.

This past fall, readers may recall our team hosted impactful trade delegations from nearly 15 nations totalling over 50 international grain-buying companies. These visits, bookended by extensive travel touching both eastern and western borders of Kansas, originated with the 2025 Export Sorghum Conference in San Antonio, Texas, which allowed us to showcase the full scale of our state's sorghum production, research and logistics capabilities. We brought international customers into the fields of Kansas, where they saw firsthand our consistently high-quality crop, and converted multiple sales we have seen born out in diversified purchase destinations including Mexico, Saudi Arabia, Spain, and many others we expect as delayed official reporting this fall catches up to date.

For growers, renewed trade momentum with longtime trade partners like China and Mexico, and other global customers is critical. Export demand plays a vital role in supporting farm profitability, bolstering the health of local grain supply infrastructure, and ensuring long-term market stability with price signals locking in planted acres next season. As an organization, we are not letting up. We are actively working to ensure your crop achieves multiple competitive homes, both domestically and internationally, creating diversified

markets that buffer against future uncertainties. This targeted engagement directly contributes to securing and expanding export opportunities, ultimately putting more value in your pocket at the farm gate.

In order for the Kansas Grain Sorghum Commission to realize stable market diversification, the Fiscal Year 2026 budget, which took effect October 1, 2025, pushes forward on an aggressive domestic front. The Commission is allocating over \$1.5 million in investments toward a strategic portfolio designed to move the needle on sorghum profitability through new strategies that include weaving market development outcomes into each of its investment buckets, like education and research. While a large portion of investment is dedicated strictly to research, the focus intertwines on outcomes that help Kansas farmers manage modern challenges through facilitating end-use or chipping away at costs of production. This includes updating processing options to better support the livestock feeding sector and collecting the necessary data to prove sorghum's unmatched ability to preserve the High Plains Aquifer or turning on dormant genes that can enhance nutrient uptake in sorghum roots. We know how to commercialize the research you fund because we have a ten-year proven track record prioritizing commercial translation already in the books.

A cornerstone of this future-focused strategy is the formal approval and securing of funding for CSIP 2.0. This past year, the Kansas Grain Sorghum Commission leadership successfully completed the final installment of its initial \$2 million commitment to the Collaborative Sorghum Investment Program (CSIP)—a foundational effort that began from visionary sorghum growers across the U.S. in 2016. That successful track record paved the way for the securing millions in additional public and private funds to unlock a second decade of focused sorghum improvement investments, ensuring this new CSIP 2.0 initiative will drive advanced research and rapid genetic improvements through 2036 and beyond. By leveraging farmer dollars with significant matching investments, this program is designed to deliver high-impact traits directly to the farm gate, ensuring Kansas remains the epicenter of sorghum innovation for the next decade.

As we look toward the 2026 planting season, we carry this momentum forward with a clear sense of purpose. We understand that your success is the only true measure of our own. While market challenges persist, we remain steadfast in our commitment to work alongside you, sharing your battles and striving toward the progress your operation deserves.

By combining world-class research with aggressive market diversification, we are not just waiting for better days; we are building them together. Our industry's story is one of grit and innovation, and by working as one, we ensure Kansas and the rest of the Sorghum Belt, from South Dakota all the way down to the Texas Panhandle, remains the global leader in sorghum opportunity for generations to come.

WHAT ONE GENERATION LEARNS, THE NEXT GROWS.



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February 25-27, 2026

San Antonio, TX

30

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THE BEST KNOW. AND THEY PLANT IT.

Farmers don't leave their yield to chance. They demand performance, and the best choose the sorghum seed that delivers it. Congratulations to the 2025 NSP Yield Contest winners! Their incredible achievement is a testament to their management skills and the powerful Pioneer® brand genetics they put into action.

1st **Chris Santini**
Warren Co., NJ
85P58 **239.93** bu/A
Eastern Irrigated

2025 NSP BIN BUSTER AWARD RECIPIENT!

2nd **Robert Santini**
Warren Co., NJ
85P58 **209.15** bu/A
Eastern Dryland - Tillage

1st **RK Farms**
Cimarron Co., OK
85P75 **237.15** bu/A
Western Irrigated

2nd **Luke Van Ruiten**
Sutter Co., CA
85P75 **197.14** bu/A
Western Irrigated

3rd **Gordon Lassen**
Phelps Co., NE
84P94 **193.14** bu/A
Western Irrigated

1st **Gamble Farms GP**
Kiowa Co., KS
85Y88 **199.14** bu/A
Western Dryland - No Till

2nd **Michelle Santini**
Warren Co., NJ
85P58 **180.78** bu/A
Eastern Irrigated

3rd **Tip Off Farms**
Scott Co., KS
86G32 **183.66** bu/A
Western Dryland - No Till

1st **Jon Stutzman**
Berks Co., PA
85P58 **211.15** bu/A
Eastern Dryland - No Till

2nd **VFF**
Scott Co., KS
86P70 **185.02** bu/A
Western Dryland - No Till

3rd **Curt Soulek**
Charles Mix Co., SD
89P52 **165.06** bu/A
Western Dryland - Tillage

1st **Stewart Family Farms LLC**
Washington Co., KS
84G62 **213.30** bu/A
Western Dryland - Tillage

2nd **Sharon Santini**
Warren Co., NJ
85P58 **195.20** bu/A
Eastern Dryland - No Till

3rd **Billy H Bowers Farm Trust**
Davidson Co., NC
84G62 **200.72** bu/A
Eastern Dryland - Tillage

1st **Jeff Barlieb**
Warren Co., NJ
85P58 **226.73** bu/A
Eastern Dryland - Tillage

2nd **Dylan Knoll**
Charles Mix Co., SD
89Y79 **172.75** bu/A
Western Dryland - Tillage

For the full list of winners,
visit pioneer.com/NSP

