SPRING 2026

NATIONAL SORGHUM PRODUCERS

SORGHUM Grower

FROM PLAINS TO PORTS

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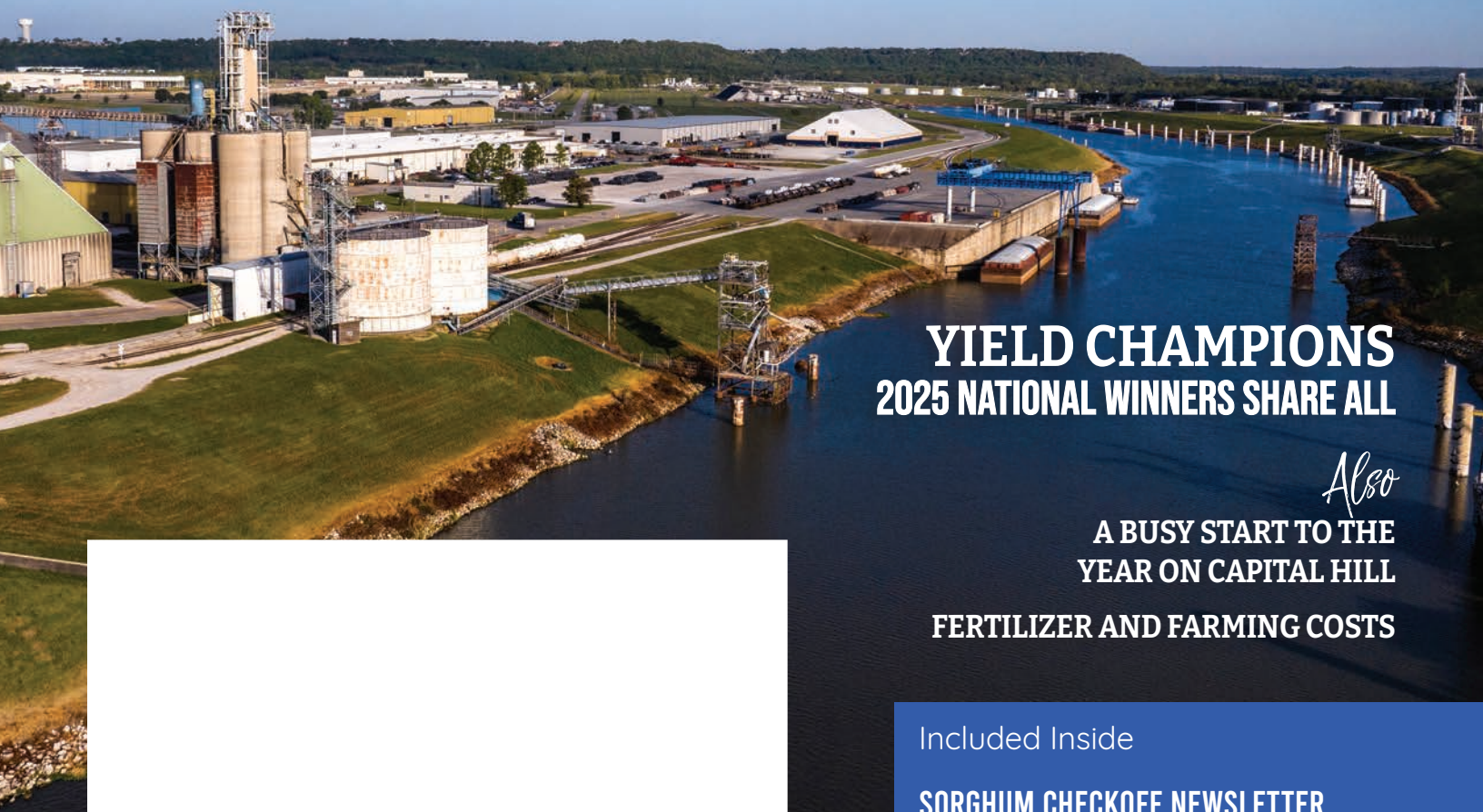

YIELD CHAMPIONS

2025 NATIONAL WINNERS SHARE ALL

Also

A BUSY START TO THE YEAR ON CAPITAL HILL

FERTILIZER AND FARMING COSTS

Included Inside

SORGHUM CHECKOFF NEWSLETTER
KANSAS SORGHUM NEWSLETTER

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CEO UPDATE

Strength in a Shifting Landscape

There are moments in agriculture when everything seems to be moving at once. Markets shift, policy evolves and new opportunities emerge just as new challenges take shape. That is where we find ourselves today.

Across this issue of *Sorghum Grower*, one theme stands out: getting the crop to market and capturing value along the way matters as much as ever. Whether it is global trade, domestic demand, transportation or new food uses, the path from the field to the end user is becoming more important and more complex.

For sorghum producers, that complexity brings both risk and opportunity.

We are seeing strong signals in global markets, with continued demand reinforcing sorghum's role in feeding and fueling the world. At the same time, new investments in infrastructure and market development are creating more efficient pathways to those markets. Innovation is also opening doors in areas like human food, expanding how and where sorghum fits into the modern marketplace.

But markets do not exist in a vacuum. They are shaped every day by decisions made in Washington. That is why National Sorghum Producers remains fully engaged on the issues that matter most to you, from advancing a strong farm bill to pushing forward biofuels policy and expanding demand for U.S.-grown sorghum.

At the farm level, we continue to see what is possible. The yield contest winners featured in this issue are a reminder of the performance and potential of this crop. Even in a challenging farm economy, sorghum continues to prove its resilience.

That resilience defines this industry.

While uncertainty remains, NSP's commitment is unwavering. We will continue to be at the table, advocating for sorghum producers and working to ensure you have the tools and opportunities needed to succeed.

Thank you for what you do every day. Stay engaged, stay informed and, as always, stay Sorghum Strong.

Tim Lust

Tim Lust, CEO

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SORGHUM Grower

SPRING 2026

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FEATURES

WHAT'S INSIDE

Advocating for Certainty in an Uncertain Time

By Elissa Gilliam, Legislative Director

As we move through the first half of 2026, one thing remains clear: uncertainty continues to define the policy landscape for agriculture. But alongside that uncertainty, we are seeing real movement on issues that directly impact sorghum producers.

From biofuels to farm bill negotiations to economic assistance, the work happening in Washington right now is not theoretical. It is shaping the decisions you are making on your farm this season.

National Sorghum Producers has remained fully engaged with Congress, USDA and the administration to make sure sorghum's priorities are not only represented, but understood in practical terms. That means pushing for policies that create demand, reduce risk and deliver timely support when it is needed most.

Biofuels: Strong Signals, More Work Ahead

Biofuels continue to be one of the most important demand drivers for sorghum, and recent developments have provided some positive momentum.

The administration's release of Renewable Volume Obligations (RVOs) recently was a key step in providing market certainty. The proposed volumes signal continued support for ethanol and reinforce the role of agriculture in the nation's fuel supply.

Just as important is how Small Refinery Exemptions are being handled. The partial reallocation approach, set around 70 percent, helps ensure that waived gallons are not simply lost, but put back into the system. That matters for maintaining demand consistency.

At the same time, NSP continues to push for a permanent, nationwide solution for year-round E15. Seasonal waivers have provided short-term access in recent years, but a legislative fix is needed to give producers and fuel retailers long-term certainty.

Looking ahead, the 45Z Clean Fuel Production Credit remains one of the biggest opportunities on the

▲ Sorghum farmers getting ready to head to the White House to participate in The Great American Agriculture Celebration.

▲ Sorghum growers meet with Senate Ag Committee Member Ben Ray Lujan (D-NM).

table. NSP has been actively engaged with the Treasury and USDA to ensure that guidance reflects real-world farming practices. A major focus has been making sure farmers can participate directly in the value created through low-carbon fuel markets, not just supply the feedstock.

What this means for producers: Biofuels policy is moving in the right direction, but implementation matters. The details of 45Z and E15 will determine how much of that value ultimately makes it back to the farm.

Farm Bill 2.0 and Economic Assistance

The push for a new farm bill continues, but in the meantime, economic assistance has become a critical bridge for producers facing tight margins.

The much needed Farmer Bridge Assistance (FBA) program is moving forward, with payments already reaching farmers. This was a vital program that allowed many farmers to keep the operation going through a rough farm economy.

At the same time, discussions around Farm Bill 2.0 continue to build. NSP is advocating for continued investment in conservation, research and trade promotion.

There is also a broader conversation underway about permanently moving Food for Peace under USDA, a change that would prioritize U.S.-grown commodities and create more reliable demand for producers.

What this means for producers:

FBA provides short-term relief, but a full farm bill is still needed to deliver long-term certainty. Both tracks are moving, and both matter.

Trade: Strong Demand, Focus on Diversification

Recently trade has improved for sorghum, particularly with continued strong purchases from China. In recent months, sales have exceeded 3 million metric tons, representing significant movement into export channels.

That demand is critical in supporting prices, but NSP is also focused on expanding beyond a single dominant market.

Recent progress on trade discussions with India is a notable step forward. After years of engagement, sorghum has been included in broader trade framework announcements, opening the door for future market access. NSP, alongside the U.S. Grains Council and United Sorghum Checkoff Program, has worked extensively to build those relationships.

At the same time, global dynamics remain fluid. Trade policy and geopolitical developments all influence how and where grain moves.

What this means for producers:

Exports are getting back to baseline, but diversification is key. Expanding market access helps reduce risk and creates more stable long-term demand.

Input Costs and Fertilizer

Input costs remain one of the most consistent concerns we hear from producers, particularly around fertilizer.

NSP has been engaged in multiple efforts to address this issue, including supporting legislative proposals

▲ NSP Vice Chair Garrett Love on the South Lawn with Rep. Glenn "G.T." Thompson (R-Pa.), chairman of the House Agriculture Committee.

aimed at increasing domestic fertilizer production and improving supply chain resilience. These efforts are designed to reduce dependence on foreign sources and bring more stability to pricing.

NSP has also signed onto industry letters and coalitions pushing for regulatory clarity and policies that support increased production capacity.

While these solutions take time, the issue continues to gain attention in Washington, driven in large part by consistent feedback from producers.

What this means for producers:

Relief is not immediate, but the issue is being heard. Continued pressure is critical to driving long-term solutions.

Sorghum Growers Take Washington

In March, NSP brought more than 25 sorghum producers to Washington, D.C., for a fly-in that put these issues directly in front of policymakers.

Over the course of the week, growers participated in nearly 40 meetings with congressional offices, sharing firsthand how policy decisions are impacting their operations. The group also participated in USDA Ag Day events and attended the White House's agriculture celebration.

These meetings focused on practical needs: passing a farm bill, strengthening biofuels policy, addressing input costs and ensuring timely economic assistance.

When growers show up, it changes the conversation. Lawmakers hear directly from the people affected by their decisions, and that makes a difference.

What this means for producers:

Your voice matters. Engagement at the local and national level directly impacts policy outcomes.

Looking Ahead

The months ahead will be critical.

Implementation of RVOs, an E-15 deal, development of 45Z guidance, progress on the farm bill and continued trade activity will all shape the landscape for sorghum producers.

While uncertainty remains, there is also clear momentum. NSP will continue to stay engaged, push for practical solutions and ensure that sorghum producers are represented in every conversation that matters.

As always, if you are interested in getting more involved, we encourage you to reach out. The strength of this organization comes from the producers behind it.

Sorghum Takes Center Stage at Commodity Classic

By Carly Watson

National Sorghum Producers enjoyed their time in San Antonio at the 30th Commodity Classic. Throughout the week, NSP engaged with growers, industry partners, media and stakeholders while showcasing the continued momentum of the sorghum industry. NSP put sorghum on full display, highlighting its growing role across food, fuel and feed markets, emphasizing its importance in human food applications, its value to producers and its future potential.

By spotlighting both growers and innovation, NSP reinforces that sorghum is more than a commodity, it's a versatile, sustainable and forward-looking crop. Whether in the field, on the trade show floor or on store shelves, sorghum is proving its importance to producers, consumers and the broader food system.

Honoring 70 Years of NSP

This year's Commodity Classic also marked a significant milestone as NSP celebrated 70 years of advocacy and leadership on behalf of sorghum producers. The anniversary provided an opportunity to reflect on the organization's history while looking ahead to the future.

Past chairmen were recognized for their contributions and the lasting impact they have had on the industry. Their leadership helped shape NSP into the organization it is today, building a foundation of advocacy, research support and market development.

The recognition highlighted the continuity and strength of NSP's leadership over time. While the industry has evolved, the organization's core mission has remained consistent: to promote, support and defend the interests of sorghum producers.

As part of the celebration, NSP introduced a new Industry Partner of the Year award. Tom Willis was named the first recipient, recognized for his contributions and ongoing partnership in advancing the sorghum industry. The award reflects the important role that industry partners play in supporting producers and driving innovation.

Elevating Sorghum in Human Food

A major focus of NSP's presence at Commodity Classic was the growing role of sorghum as a human food ingredient. NSP had a press conference dedicated to this topic, positioning sorghum as a U.S.-grown, resource-conserving grain that delivers both strong nutritional value and culinary versatility.

Lanier Dabruzzi, MS, RD, LD, director of nutrition and food innovation for Team Sorghum, led the discussion and provided insight into how sorghum is increasingly aligning with consumer demand. With nearly 15 years of experience across multiple agricultural commodities, Dabruzzi emphasized that today's consumers are more engaged than ever in understanding where their food comes from and how it contributes to overall health.

▲ NSP Chair Amy France and CEO Tim Lust are joined by past chairmen James Born, Toby Bostwick, Kody Carson, Jeff Casten, Craig Meeker, Dale Murden, Kenneth Rose, Gerald Simonsen, JB Stewart, Terry Swanson and Kenny Tevis during the 70th anniversary celebration at the Commodity Classic Yield Contest Gala.

▲ NSP CEO Tim Lust delivers the Sorghum State of the Union, highlighting industry progress and priorities during the Commodity Classic Yield Contest Gala, sponsored by Pioneer Seed.

Sorghum fits squarely within those expectations. As a non-GMO grain that is naturally gluten-free and rich in both protein and fiber, it offers a compelling combination of nutrition and sustainability. Dabruzzi highlighted that these attributes are not just marketing points, but real differentiators that resonate with consumers seeking transparency and functionality in their food choices.

Following the press conference, media attendees were invited to participate in a popped sorghum cooking demonstration. This hands-on experience allowed reporters to see and taste sorghum in action, reinforcing its adaptability in modern kitchens. From simple snacks to more complex applications, the demonstration illustrated how sorghum can be easily incorporated into everyday meals.

These efforts are part of a broader strategy to build awareness and demand for sorghum in human food channels. By engaging media directly, NSP continues to expand the conversation beyond traditional agricultural audiences and into consumer-facing spaces.

Innovation Driving Demand

In addition to highlighting sorghum's nutritional benefits, NSP also showcased how innovation is driving new demand across the marketplace. Product development and entrepreneurial investment are creating fresh opportunities for sorghum to enter new categories and reach new consumers.

One notable example is the launch of sorghum-based products through Cob Foods, founded by tennis champion Novak Djokovic and entrepreneur Jessica Davidoff. Their initial product line features popped sorghum snacks, positioning the grain within the fast-growing better-for-you snack segment. This type of high-profile investment signals growing confidence in sorghum as a viable and scalable ingredient for mainstream food products.

Sorghum's versatility plays a key role in this expansion. It can be processed and utilized in a wide variety of forms, including whole grain, flour, bran, puffed, extruded, popped and flaked. This flexibility allows it to fit into numerous product categories, from snacks and baked goods to cereals and beverages.

One area seeing particularly strong growth is the use of sorghum in baby and toddler foods. In puffed snack formats, sorghum provides a nutrient-dense option that aligns with the priorities of parents seeking healthier choices for their children. Its mild flavor and functional properties make it an ideal base for these products.

For producers, these developments represent more than just new uses. They signal the expansion of a complementary market that can exist alongside traditional feed and fuel demand. As human food applications continue to grow, they offer a pathway for diversification and the potential for additional value creation at the farm level.

Celebrating Excellence at the Yield Contest Gala

Commodity Classic provided an opportunity to recognize the hard work of sorghum producers through the Yield Contest Gala. The gala brought together growers and industry leaders to celebrate production accomplishments taking place across the country.

"The Yield Contest isn't just about numbers in a field," said NSP Chair Amy France, a farmer from Scott City, Kan. "It's about celebrating the hard work, innovation and passion that sorghum producers bring to the table every year."

The gala served as both a celebration and a reminder of the dedication required to achieve top performance in sorghum production. Attendees represented a wide range of regions and production systems, showcasing the adaptability of sorghum across diverse environments.

In addition to recognizing yield achievements, the event sorghum's role in human food. Guests enjoyed a menu featuring sorghum-based dishes, reinforcing the connection between production and consumption. This integration helped tell a more complete story of sorghum.

The evening highlighted the strength of the sorghum community, bringing growers together to share experiences and build a stronger future for the crop.

Engagement on the Trade Show Floor

Throughout Commodity Classic, NSP had a strong presence on the trade show floor. NSP's booth served as a hub for engagement and bringing the industry together.

Attendees had the opportunity to learn about sorghum's applications, sample sorghum-based products and discuss current market trends. These interactions provided insight into producer perspectives while also helping NSP share updates and initiatives.These conversations are central to NSP's work, helping build trust and keep efforts aligned with producer needs.

"Sorghum isn't just a crop, it's a story of innovation, sustainability and opportunity," a representative shared during the event. "Every conversation at our booth shows how this grain connects farmers, families and future markets in meaningful ways."

Advocating for Sorghum at General Session

NSP Chair Amy France also participated in Commodity Classic's general session, contributing to broader industry discussions and ensuring that the voice of sorghum producers was represented at the highest level.

Advocacy remains a central component of NSP's mission. Events like Commodity Classic provide a unique platform to engage with policymakers, industry leaders and other commodity groups on key issues affecting agriculture.

▲ Secretary Brooke Rollins joins NSP board member Dustin Borden on the trade show floor during Commodity Classic to sign up for the Farmer Bridge Assistance program.

From farm policy to market access, NSP continues to advocate for solutions that support producers and strengthen the long-term viability of sorghum. Participation in these discussions ensures that sorghum remains part of the national conversation and that its priorities are clearly communicated.

Celebrating 15 Years of Sorghum PAC

In addition to its broader advocacy efforts, NSP recognized the 15th anniversary of Sorghum PAC during Commodity Classic. The milestone highlights the important role the PAC plays in supporting policies that benefit sorghum producers.

The anniversary was celebrated during the annual PAC Casino Night, a popular event that brings together growers, industry leaders and partners in an engaging and informal setting. The event not only serves as a fundraiser, but also as a reminder of the importance of political engagement in agriculture.

Sorghum PAC helps ensure that producers have a strong and effective voice at the federal level. By supporting candidates and policies that align with the interests of the sorghum industry, the PAC plays a key role in advancing NSP's advocacy priorities.

The continued success of Sorghum PAC reflects the commitment of producers and partners to investing in the future of the industry. As policy challenges and opportunities continue to evolve, that engagement will remain essential.

Fertilizer, Freight and the Case for Sorghum

By Eric Washington

As farmers head into the 2026 growing season, the math is getting tighter.

Commodity prices have remained soft in many cases, while input costs continue to climb. Fertilizer, in particular, has become one of the biggest pressure points on the farm balance sheet, forcing growers to take a harder look at every acre and every input decision.

This is not a new story. But it is getting more complicated.

2026 Reality Check

Fertilizer prices rising across all major products

Supply tightening due to global shipping disruptions

Margins under pressure heading into planting

Fertilizer prices were already elevated heading into the spring. Now, global events are adding another layer of uncertainty. Disruptions in key shipping lanes, particularly in the Middle East, are slowing the movement of critical inputs like nitrogen and phosphates. Nearly half of global sulfur exports move through the Strait of Hormuz, and when that system backs up, the ripple effects are felt quickly across global fertilizer markets (see chart on next page).

The result is a combination of higher prices and tighter supply at the exact moment farmers need certainty the most.

When Inputs Drive the Decision

In years like this, crop selection becomes less about maximizing yield and more about managing risk.

That is where sorghum enters the conversation in a meaningful way.

Sorghum is not immune to rising input costs, but it is uniquely positioned to help manage them.

One of the biggest advantages is nitrogen efficiency. Sorghum's deep, fibrous root system allows it to access residual nutrients in the soil more effectively than many competing crops.

As Dr. Brent Bean recently noted in a United Sorghum Checkoff Program agronomy update, sorghum's root system is able to take advantage of residual soil nitrogen while also extracting more water from the soil profile, giving it a distinct advantage in input-constrained environments.

There is also flexibility in how nitrogen is applied.

According to research highlighted by Bean from Oklahoma State, sorghum can respond to nitrogen applications much later than traditionally assumed. In multiple locations, delaying nitrogen application up to 42 days resulted in little to no yield reduction.

> *"Sorghum's root system allows it to take advantage of residual nitrogen while accessing more water deeper in the soil profile."*
>
> — Dr. Brent Bean, USCP

Lower Risk Starts at Planting

Sorghum's cost advantages do not stop with fertilizer.

Establishment costs are also significantly lower. Seed costs typically range from $6 to $19 per acre, helping reduce upfront investment and financial exposure compared to many competing crops.

Lower upfront investment lowers the breakeven point.

Seed Cost Advantage

Sorghum: ~$6–$19/acre

Lower upfront risk versus competing crops

SOMKANAE SAWATDINAK / SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

And in today's environment, breakeven matters as much as yield.

As Bean and other researchers have pointed out, sorghum has also demonstrated strong stability in lower rainfall environments.

> *"In today's environment, logistics and policy are directly tied to farm profitability."*

A Crop Built for Uncertainty

Beyond input costs, broader global dynamics are also shaping farm-level decisions.

Shipping disruptions, rising fuel costs and geopolitical instability are all contributing to higher transportation costs and increased volatility across agricultural markets.

Recent reports show a growing backlog of vessels in the Persian Gulf, with millions of tons of fertilizer effectively stalled due to disruptions tied to the Strait of Hormuz.

> *"In a high-cost environment, the best opportunity may be the crop that helps you do more with less."*

The Opportunity in Front of Us

All of this points to a simple conclusion.

In a high-cost, high-risk environment, crops that reduce exposure to input volatility have an advantage.

Sorghum is one of those crops.

It requires fewer inputs. It offers more flexibility in nitrogen management. It carries a lower upfront cost. And it has demonstrated stability in less-than-ideal growing conditions.

As Bean put it in that same Checkoff update, this kind of environment is exactly when growers should be taking a closer look at sorghum's ability to reduce costs and manage risk.

Why Sorghum Makes Sense Right Now

- Lower fertilizer requirements
- Nitrogen application flexibility
- Lower seed cost and breakeven
- Strong performance in dry conditions
- Reduced exposure to input volatility

▲ From farm gate to railcar, each step in the supply chain adds coordination and cost while enabling grain to move at scale.

From Harvest to Harbor

By Florentino Lopez, Creando Mañana

The phrase "farm to fork" paints a comforting picture. It suggests a simple and direct path: grain harvested from a nearby field, delivered to a local mill, and eventually appearing on a dinner plate as a warm roll or slice of bread. The image evokes local farms feeding nearby communities and reinforces a sense of closeness between producers and consumers.

While appealing, this vision represents only a small portion of how the modern food system works. In the United States, direct or local farm-to-consumer channels account for roughly six percent of total food volume, according to the American Farm Bureau. The remaining majority moves through a far larger and more complex system, one that connects farms to markets across states, continents, and oceans.

For most major commodities, the journey from harvest to final use is rarely direct. Crops such as sorghum, corn, wheat, soybeans, and soybean meal enter an extensive supply chain that includes multiple stages of handling, storage, transportation, processing, and marketing. This system was not designed for simplicity; it was built for efficiency at scale, capable of moving millions of tons of grain to the locations where it is most needed.

As one of the world's largest exporters of agricultural commodities, the United States relies on this system every day. Grain moves by truck, rail, and barge to inland terminals and port facilities along major rivers and coastlines. From there, it is loaded onto ocean-going vessels bound for markets in Asia, Latin America, Europe, and Africa. For the export market alone, U.S. grain shipments in the 2025–26 marketing year are projected to total roughly 175 million metric tons, the equivalent of 6.8 billion bushels, nearly 3,000 Panamax vessels, or approximately eight million container loads.

Supporting exports of this magnitude requires expansive, widely available, and dependable infrastructure.

Grain often passes through farmer-owned storage, local elevators, regional terminals, export terminals, and port facilities before reaching its final destination. Along the way, it may be lifted, transferred, and stored multiple times. Each step adds coordination, cost, and complexity, but it also allows enormous volumes of grain to move efficiently through the system.

Many of the systems that support today's grain movement were designed decades ago, built for a different scale of production and a less interconnected global marketplace. As trade volumes grow and supply chains become more complex and strained, continued investment in expanded, modern, and high-capacity infrastructure will be essential. Upgraded ports, expanded loading and unloading capacity can increase efficiency, reduce congestion, and strengthen reliability across the supply chain. Expanding and modernizing export points improves farmers' access to global markets by reducing transportation bottlenecks and enhancing the competitiveness of U.S. agriculture.

Moving grain at this scale depends on a carefully coordinated transportation network. Trucks provide flexibility at the farm and local level. Rail offers efficiency over long inland distances. Barges move large volumes at relatively low cost along major river systems, while ocean vessels connect domestic production to international markets. Each mode plays a distinct role in balancing cost, speed, and capacity.

External factors constantly influence how and where grain moves. Weather disruptions, river water levels, rail availability, fuel prices, and shifts in global demand can all alter transportation routes and timing. The system must remain resilient and adaptable to these variables while continuing to deliver grain reliably to domestic processors and international buyers.

What may appear to consumers as a simple path from farm to table is, in reality, much more complicated. It operates across vast distances, manages immense volumes, and adapts continually to changing conditions. Yet maintaining this capability requires ongoing attention and investment. As global demand for food, feed, and renewable products continues to grow, the United States must ensure that its transportation and export infrastructure keeps pace with its growing agricultural productivity. Expanding export market opportunities and strengthening the network of ports and export facilities will be critical to maintaining U.S. competitiveness. For farmers, these gateways to the world are more than shipping points, they are essential connections that allow American agriculture to reach new markets, support rural economies, and help feed a growing global population.

2025 Sorghum Producers Yield Contest National Winners

By Carly Watson & Kyra Holt

In the 2025 National Sorghum Producers Yield Contest, growers from across the United States demonstrated the crop's versatility and performance across a range of growing conditions. Discover the management strategies and decisions that helped these producers achieve top yields and earn national recognition in this year's contest.

Chris Santini earned the 2025 National Sorghum Producers Yield Contest Bin Buster Award with an irrigated yield of 239.93 bushels per acre with Pioneer 85P58. On the Santini farm, sorghum is grown as part of a rotation that also includes corn and soybeans across approximately 1,600 acres in northwest New Jersey.

"Our main market here is birdseed," Santini said. "We have a large birdseed market, so that's where most of our sorghum goes."

Local wildlife activity also plays a role in how the crop is used in the area. With a strong pheasant hunting community nearby, sorghum fields are sometimes valued as cover for birds, making the crop beneficial beyond its grain value.

The Santinis typically aim to plant sorghum between May 10 and May 20 when conditions are favorable. The crop is planted in 15-inch rows, with seeding rates ranging from 100,000 to 150,000 seeds per acre depending on field conditions.

Ahead of planting, Santini applies approximately two tons of poultry manure per acre to provide base fertility. Additional nutrients are supplied during the growing season, including roughly 100 units of nitrogen to support crop development.

Disease protection is also an important component of the Santinis' management program. Fungicides are often applied once or twice during the season to help maintain plant health and protect yield potential.

"A lot of people don't believe in fungicide, but I definitely think you need to apply it at least once or twice," Santini said.

Weather conditions during the 2025 growing season included periods of heat and drier conditions than usual. However, timely rainfall helped the crop continue developing during key growth stages. Santini believes sorghum adapts well to the region's environment. Advances in sorghum genetics have also contributed to improved performance over time.

"It seems like it's doing better and better with the newer varieties coming out from the seed companies," Santini said.

Although the Santinis have entered the yield contest for at least 15 years, predicting sorghum yields can still be challenging.

"They looked great going into harvest," Santini said. "But it's always hard to look at a sorghum crop and know what it's going to yield."

Winning the Bin Buster Award represents both recognition and validation of the Santinis' long-term management approach.

"It's an honor," Santini said.

For growers hoping to improve their sorghum yields, Santini emphasizes careful preparation and attention to detail.

"Prepare the ground right and make sure the planter is set correctly," Santini said. "Getting the seed spacing right and managing disease can make a big difference."

Berks County, Pennsylvania, producer **Jon Stutzman** received first place in the 2025 National Sorghum Producers Yield Contest with a yield of 211.5 bushels per acre. Stutzman planted Pioneer 85P58 on May 25 in 15-inch rows at a seeding rate targeting 100,000 plants per acre, though final stands were closer to 110,000.

While sorghum is a newer addition to Stutzman's 160 acre eastern Pennsylvania farm, he said strong local markets and a favorable basis in the region made it an appealing option.

Stutzman applied two tons of pullet manure in early winter over a growing wheat cover crop to build fertility ahead of the season. In the spring, he broadcast about 100 pounds of nitrogen per acre prior to planting and followed with a sidedress application as needed in early July.

Operating in a no-till system, weed management started with a Roundup burndown before planting. He then applied a pre-emergence herbicide program of Bicep plus Sharpen, followed later in the season with a Huskie FX application to control broadleaf weeds.

2025

National Sorghum Yield Contest Winners

Bin Buster
IRRIGATED EASTERN
First Place and 2025 Bin Buster:
Chris Santini
Warren County, New Jersey
Variety: Pioneer 85P58
Yield: 239.93 bu/ac

DRYLAND-TILLAGE WESTERN
First Place: Stewart Family Farms
Washington County, Kansas
Variety: Pioneer 84G62
Yield: 213.30 bu/ac

DRYLAND-TILLAGE EASTERN
First Place: Jeffrey Barlieb
Warren County, New Jersey
Variety: Pioneer 85P58
Yield: 226.73 bu/ac

DRYLAND NO-TILL WESTERN
First Place: Gamble Farms GP
Kiowa County, Kansas
Variety: Pioneer 85Y88
Yield: 199.14 bu/ac

DRYLAND NO-TILL EASTERN
First Place: Jon Stutzman
Berks County, Pennsylvania
Variety: Pioneer 85P58
Yield: 211.15 bu/ac

IRRIGATED WESTERN
First Place: RK Farms
Cimmaron County, Oklahoma
Variety: Pioneer 85P75
Yield: 237.15 bu/ac

Stutzman also applied a fungicide at early heading to help manage anthracnose pressure, which is common in his area. He said the application likely played a role in the crop's final performance.

"We're in an area with a lot of anthracnose pressure," he said. "There's probably no fungicide that's great on it, but they definitely help. I don't think we would have had the same results without it."

The growing season brought fairly dry conditions, and the farm does not use irrigation. However, Stutzman said the crop benefited from timely rains and adequate heat units, which helped the sorghum develop despite the dry weather.

Bird damage remains a challenge in the region, with some localized areas experiencing heavier losses, though most of the field performed well.

Stutzman credits long-term soil health improvements as a major factor behind the strong yield. After nearly two decades of using cover crops and no-till practices, he believes his soils are better able to capture and retain moisture during dry periods.

"It just validates what we've been trying to do with improving our soils," he said. "I'm not just trying to win a contest. I want to grow high yields."

Jeffery Barlieb, a producer from Warren County, New Jersey, achieved a strong performance in the 2025 National Sorghum Producers Yield Contest, recording a yield of 226.73 bushels per acre with Pioneer 85P58.

Barlieb farms approximately 2,500 acres in northwest New Jersey, producing corn, soybeans, sorghum, hay and rye straw. Sorghum has been a consistent part of his crop rotation for more than 15 years, and he said the crop has proven to be a reliable performer on his operation.

"We've had great luck almost every year that we've been planting and harvesting sorghum," Barlieb said.

For his contest entry, Barlieb planted Pioneer 85P58 on May 18 in 15-inch rows at a population of 120,000 seeds per acre, following soybeans the previous season. He noted the hybrid's consistent performance and the

company's support as key reasons for its continued use on the farm.

"We like how much Pioneer stands behind their product, and it's always done really well for us," he said.

To support crop establishment and fertility, Barlieb applies poultry manure in the spring and uses biologicals and starter fertilizers at planting. Throughout the growing season, the crop received two fungicide applications to help protect plant health, along with a Bicep II Magnum herbicide program for weed control.

The 2025 growing season brought challenging conditions, including one of the hottest summers in recent years and a relatively dry start. However, timely rainfall later in the season helped sustain the crop through key developmental stages.

"It was probably one of the hottest summers we've had consistently in a while," Barlieb said. "We had a semi-dry beginning, but a lot of consistent moisture fell when needed."

Barlieb attributes much of his success to long-term soil management and continuous improvement across his fields.

"Starting from the ground up is what makes things successful," he said. "Preparing the soil year after year and finding the right herbicides, pesticides and fungicide program has been very beneficial. The poultry litter we spread to help build the soil is also a big part of that."

He also emphasized the importance of experience and trusted advisors in making management decisions.

"We rely on our agronomy team and results from the past to make key contributing factors," Barlieb said. "But in the end, Mother Nature is the boss."

The crop maintained a strong, consistent appearance throughout the season, and Barlieb reported no significant challenges during harvest.

Winning in his category is both meaningful and motivating as he looks ahead to future seasons.

"It obviously means a lot," he said. "We're always looking for ways to make things even better and hope for another great growing season to come."

Ki Gamble of Gamble Farms GP in Kiowa County, Kansas, earned national recognition in the 2025 National Sorghum Producers Yield Contest with a yield of 199.14 bushels per acre. Gamble planted Pioneer 85Y88 on June 22 at a population of 31,000 on an operation that spans more than 10,000 acres. The field followed three years of wheat, which Gamble said helped create a thick mulch layer ahead of sorghum planting.

Gamble said long-term residue management played a major role in the field's performance.

"No-till and strip-till practices, along with multiple years of wheat, built a tremendous mulch on the ground to conserve moisture," Gamble said.

A strong herbicide program also contributed to the field's success, including a quart of Lexar 30 days before planting, followed by two quarts of Lexar, or two quarts of a full pre-emerge program.

While the field delivered an impressive yield, Gamble said the season brought challenges that ultimately limited the crop's full potential.

"We had over 40 inches of rain, and the crop was not what it could have been," Gamble said.

He added that cooler weather also played a role.

"I really believe we were limited by the rainfall and the cooler weather," Gamble said.

Looking ahead, Gamble said his operation is focused on maintaining efficiency while managing input costs in a tight farm economy.

"We're going to cut our fertility by about 25% this year," Gamble said. "We already have a strong program in place, and we want to conserve some dollars in this tough farm economy."

Even with those challenges, Gamble said long-term success comes down to discipline and attention to detail.

"I'm a perfectionist by trade," Gamble said. "That's one of the reasons we've been able to win the yield contest year after year. It comes down to consistency, paying attention to the smallest details and trying to do everything exactly right."

Kenny Rathjen of Cimarron County, Oklahoma, achieved a yield of 237.15 bushels per acre in the 2025 National Sorghum Producers Yield Contest with Pioneer 85P75. The field followed wheat stubble and was planted in 30-inch rows.

Rathjen said crop rotation is key to the operation.

"We have corn, wheat and sorghum," Rathjen said. "Sorghum does really well on a little bit less water."

Rathjen added that hybrid selection has remained consistent over time.

"That's about the only hybrid we use," Rathjen said. "It's done well for us in the past five or six years. It's just done really well."

Fertility and planting practices also contributed to the field's performance.

"We strip-tilled it and put 30 gallons of 28-0-0-5 down with the strip-till, then planted it," Rathjen said. "We used 15 gallons of 10-34, with two to three gallons in-furrow and the rest off the back of the planter."

Weather conditions during the season required some adjustments, particularly with nutrient application.

"We got more rain than we were expecting, so we had to fertigate through the sprinkler instead of side-dressing," Rathjen said.

Weed pressure was minimal due to the wheat stubble, allowing for a simple management approach.

"We didn't have many weeds because it was in stubble," Rathjen said. "We sprayed it one time with a little bit of dicamba."

Despite strong management practices, Rathjen said there were moments of uncertainty during the growing season.

"I was kind of worried because heads just weren't popping out," Rathjen said.

He added that cooler conditions may have played a role.

"Sorghum likes heat, and last year we only had about two days at 100 degrees, which is very uncommon," Rathjen said.

Even so, the season ultimately delivered strong results of 213.30 bu/ac.

"We try to grow good crops, and last year was an unbelievable year," Rathjen said.

Rod Stewart of Stewart Family Farms LLC in Washington County, Kansas, achieved a top yield in the 2025 National Sorghum Producers Yield Contest with Pioneer 84G62. The field was planted May 20 following soybeans as part of a three-crop rotation that includes corn, soybeans and grain sorghum.

Stewart said that rotation plays an important role in the operation's success.

"We raise corn, soybeans and grain sorghum, so we just have a three-way rotation that we run," Stewart said.

The contest field was planted in 15-inch rows at a population of 91,000 seeds per acre, a decision Stewart said helps maximize efficiency in both moisture conservation and weed control.

"We use 15-inch rows, and our population was 91,000 seeds per acre," Stewart said. "That helps shade the ground, conserve moisture and reduce weed pressure."

Fertility management also played a key role, with a system tailored to each field's needs.

"We run anhydrous for the nitrogen and then use two different fertilizer products with our planter, one in-furrow and one out the back," he said. "We base that on what the soil tests show that we need for the field."

Stewart said favorable weather conditions throughout the growing season helped the crop reach its full potential.

"We had some timely rain starting about the first of July," Stewart said. "We didn't get excess moisture, but the rains came when we needed them, so the plants never really suffered. We never really saw any environmental stress."

In addition to weather, Stewart said adjustments to the fertility program helped push the crop to a higher yield.

"We made some adjustments to our fertility program with our planter," Stewart said. "I like to think that helped put the top end on it to achieve that extra high yield."

The win marks back-to-back success for Stewart and his family, something he said reflects their ongoing commitment to improvement.

"It means a lot to us. This is the second year in a row that we've won that category," Stewart said. "It lets us know we're doing something right, but we're always trying to achieve the highest yield we can."

That mindset carries into how the operation approaches each season.

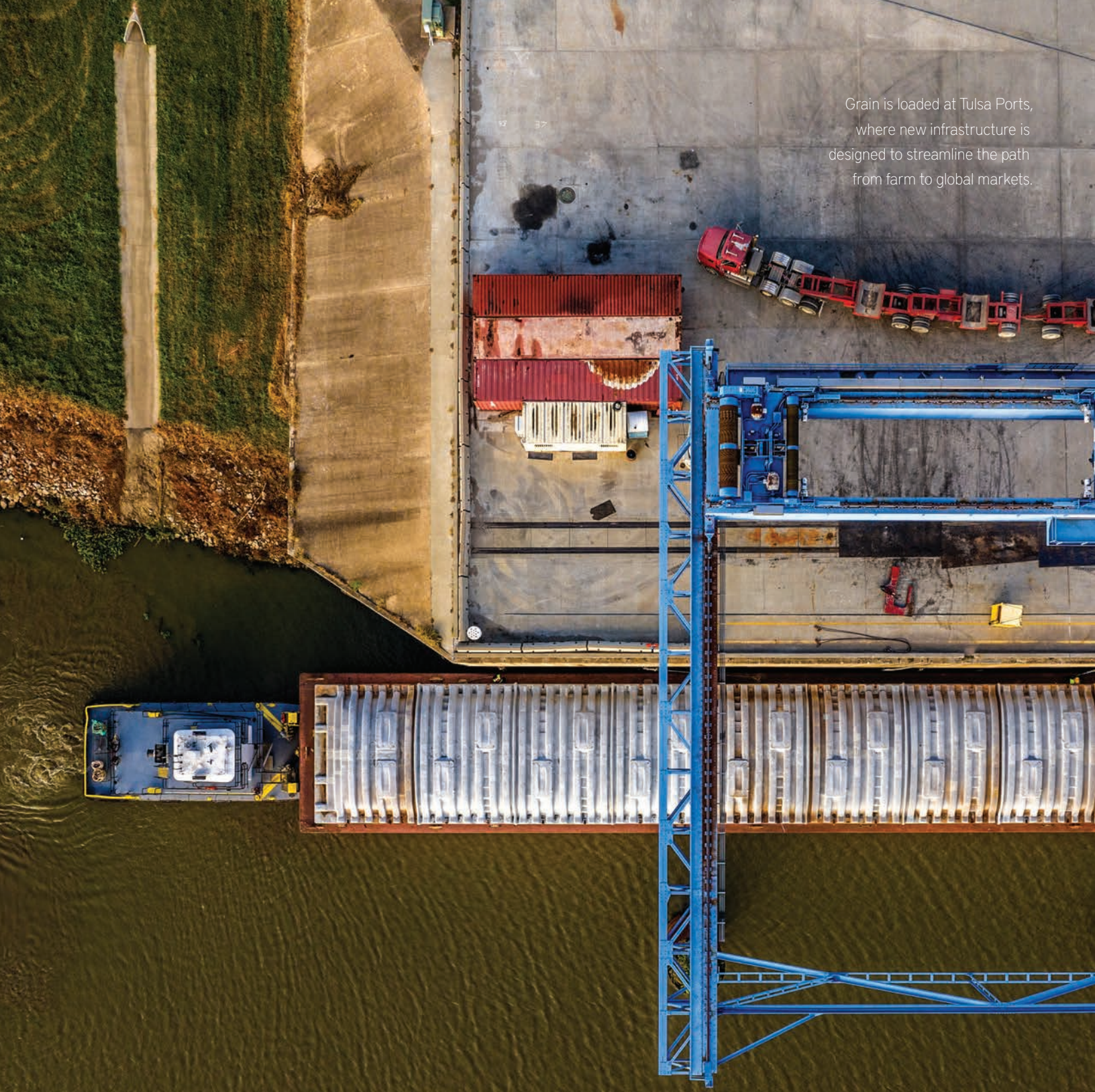
"Don't be afraid to plan for a good crop," Stewart said. "If you're going to plan for a failure, you might as well stay home. We do everything we can to shoot for the maximum yield, and Mother Nature will determine a lot of it, but if you don't have the plants and fertility program in place, you're not going to achieve what you hope to achieve."

Stewart added that the operation's legacy also plays a role in its long-term focus.

"My son farms with us, and he's the fifth generation on our farm," Stewart said.

Looking ahead, Stewart said the goal remains the same.

"We hope we can see if we can get another high-yield event this year," Stewart said.



Grain is loaded at Tulsa Ports, where new infrastructure is designed to streamline the path from farm to global markets.

Opening Markets for Mid-Plains Grain

By Tulsa Ports

Out across the countryside, farmers know a simple truth: growing the crop is only half the job. Getting it to market at the right time and at the right price is what really determines whether a season pencils out.

For years, producers across Oklahoma and the surrounding states have faced a familiar challenge. Grain grown in the heartland often travels a long road before it ever reaches an overseas buyer. Trucks haul it hundreds of miles to coastal ports, adding cost, time, and wear along the way. In a world where global markets move fast and margins are tight, those extra miles can make the difference between profit and loss.

"As farmers, we've always known that how we move grain matters just as much as how we grow it," said Zack Rendel, a northeast Oklahoma sorghum producer. "Every extra mile and every extra hand it passes through chips away at the value."

Now, a new project underway at the Tulsa Port of Catoosa aims to change that equation.

Construction began in October 2025 on a new rail unit train terminal designed to move agricultural commodities more efficiently from farms in the region to buyers across the globe, especially in fast-growing Asia-Pacific markets. When the project is completed, it will open the door to a new kind of shipping opportunity for farmers and agribusinesses across the central United States.

And for many producers, it could mean a shorter, more favorable path from fields to the global market.

An Idea Born from Farm Country Conversations

Projects like this do not appear overnight. They usually start the same way most good farm ideas do, with conversation among farmers, shippers, and industry partners.

For years, agricultural leaders and logistics providers across the region have been asking a simple question: how can we move grain more efficiently and stay competitive in global markets?

The challenge is that much of the Midwest and Southern Plains sit far from coastal export terminals. Producers often have to truck grain long distances before it ever touches a rail line or ocean vessel, adding cost at every step.

Out of those conversations came the idea of building a new rail terminal closer to the farms themselves, one that could connect truck, rail, and barge transportation in a single location. That location turned out to be the Tulsa Port of Catoosa.

For decades, the port has served as Oklahoma's gateway to the inland waterway system. Now, the new rail terminal will build on that legacy and expand what is possible.

What a "Matchback Terminal" Means for Farmers

The new facility will operate as an intermodal agricultural matchback terminal. Instead of long-haul trucking grain to distant export terminals, producers will be able to deliver product to the Port of Catoosa, where it can be loaded into containers, moved by rail to the West Coast, and shipped overseas.

The concept is simple. Fewer touches and more efficiency.

"Instead of making multiple stops, a farmer can deliver grain, have it containerized, and then turn around

▲ Grain is loaded for transport at Tulsa Ports, where producers will gain new options to reach export markets and backhaul inputs.

▲ Rail access at Tulsa Ports will play a central role in moving Mid-Plains grain more efficiently to domestic and global markets through the new matchback terminal.

and haul fertilizer back to the farm," said Zach Simon, director of ingredient utilization and pet food for the United Sorghum Checkoff Program. "That kind of backhaul makes a real difference in time and cost."

The terminal is designed to handle a wide range of products, from traditional grains and distillers dried grains (DDGs) to identity-preserved crops and specialty ingredients. That flexibility opens the door for more targeted marketing opportunities.

"Identity preservation is possible with containerized grain," Simon added. "If an end user wants a specific hybrid, grade, or color, producers now have the ability to deliver exactly that."

By creating a hub for these products, the project strengthens the transportation network connecting Oklahoma, Kansas, Nebraska, Missouri, and surrounding states.

For farmers, that means more shipping options and more competition in the transportation market, which often leads to better freight rates.

Bringing Market Power Closer to Home

One of the biggest advantages of improved transportation is the influence it gives producers in the marketplace.

When farmers have only one practical shipping option, they often have little room to negotiate. When multiple transportation routes are available, the balance begins to shift.

"That kind of connectivity creates optionality," said Rendel. "Optionality creates competition. When more buyers can access your crop, the entire system has to sharpen its pencil."

This new facility is designed to expand those options, connecting truck, rail, and global shipping channels while extending the Port of Catoosa's reach deeper into surrounding states.

For producers, that means more pathways for moving grain, whether to a domestic processor or an overseas customer.

In agriculture, flexibility is power.

"When you can reach more buyers and move grain more efficiently, you are no longer just taking the price you are given," said Rendel. "You are part of setting it."

Built with Efficiency in Mind

Transportation costs can quietly eat away at a farm's bottom line. Diesel fuel, driver time, equipment maintenance, and long-distance hauling all add up quickly.

That is why every aspect of the new terminal has been designed with efficiency at its core.

The facility will serve as a centralized location where commodities can move between trucks and multiple rail systems, improving flow across the network. Its location, at the crossroads of rail lines, highways, and the McClellan-Kerr Arkansas River Navigation System, offers flexibility in how grain is shipped.

▲ An aerial view of Tulsa Ports highlights its role as a multimodal gateway, positioning Mid-Plains agriculture closer to global buyers.

There is also a practical benefit farmers will appreciate: the ability to backhaul inputs.

"The same system that moves grain out can bring fertilizer and other inputs back in," said Rendel. "That keeps trucks from running empty and helps lower costs on the input side of the equation."

Looking Toward Global Markets

The world's appetite for grain continues to grow, especially across Asia-Pacific nations, where rising populations and expanding livestock industries are increasing demand.

Producers across the central United States are well positioned to help meet that demand, but reaching those customers requires a transportation system that can compete globally.

With improved access through Tulsa Ports, farmers can more closely align production with market demand.

"Global buyers are looking for specific traits and consistent quality," said Rendel. "With better access to export channels, we can grow with purpose instead of guessing what the market might want."

A Project Built by Regional Resolve

Big infrastructure projects take years of planning, partnership, and persistence. In many ways, that spirit mirrors the mindset of farmers themselves.

Agriculture has always been about adapting, innovating, and finding better ways forward. The new rail terminal at Tulsa Ports reflects that same determination.

It is a project built by people who believe the heartland deserves stronger connections to global markets and that farmers should have the tools they need to compete.

For Rendel, the impact is already clear.

"From my perspective, this is not just about moving grain," he said. "It is about transforming how we operate as farmers, connecting directly to global demand while improving the economics on both sides of the balance sheet."

When operational, the terminal will not just be another transportation facility. It will be a new gateway for agriculture across the region.

And for farmers looking toward markets across the Pacific, that gateway could make all the difference.

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Kansas GRAIN SORGHUM Commission

Sorghum *Update*

Brought to you by the Kansas Grain Sorghum Commission

The Kansas Grain Sorghum Commission's Dual-Track Strategy for Market Advancement

By Maddy Meier

Just as spring dawns over the High Plains, sorghum growers across the country should be sensing a positive shift as global trade momentum rebounds from 2025. While international exports lag behind historical trends on average, the recent sales trajectory this 2025/2026 Marketing Year remains solidly upward and trade momentum is steadily picking up speed, with approximately 8.2 million bushels shipped and an additional 3.9 million committed at the end of February. Through its investments, as in years past, the Kansas Grain Sorghum Commission ensures sorghum growers across the region, through its close collaboration with the United Sorghum Checkoff Program, can expect what you need most — markets for your reliable and high quality product.

This recovery was not by luck, but through hard work by farmers and their steadfast investments into building relationships with international customers. Last fall, *Sorghum Grower* readers will recall the U.S. sorghum industry organizations' actions to solidify sales through inbound trade team initiatives coinciding with the biennial Export Sorghum Conference. By hosting international delegations and meeting directly with international customers, the Commission showcased the reliability and quality (and of course the record-breaking quantity!) of the Fall 2025 Kansas sorghum crop to our international friends from many regions spanning the globe. These face-to-face interactions continue to transform your product into a catalyst for business. Looking ahead, the Commission is already preparing for a robust schedule of Fall 2026 trade teams to further cement these logistical handshakes.

While work to foster ever-critical export markets represents the "long game," the Commission is simultaneously doubling down on domestic market development to ensure a strong "home bid." By creating more places for your bushels of sorghum to go "right down the road," the industry gains more opportunities that will ultimately protect growers from the volatility of international trade dynamics.

Domestic diversification for sorghum is due in large part to the work of your state and national sorghum checkoff organizations and guided investments spanning nearly every inch of the sorghum supply chain, especially in this fiscal year's current investments.

The foundation of this domestic push is rooted in technical research designed to bolster farmer profitability, spanning from the seed bag to the feed bunk. One such example of this is the Commission's funding of legacy sorghum trait packages that focus on heat tolerance, pest resistance, yield consistency, and more; essential tools designed to lower the input costs and increase the "bushels per drop" for every grower. This technical edge extends into the livestock sector, where new in-vitro cattle studies are exploring the digestive efficiency of sorghum in Western Kansas beef cattle feedlots. By using laboratory simulations to prove sorghum's high-energy value to feedlots, the Commission is expanding the crop's prevalence in the area known as the "Protein Corridor" of Western Kansas. Truly, efficiency is the name of the game when it comes to improving the grower's bottom line.

Another area of investment for the Commission includes consumer markets through the promotion of sorghum as a premier ancient grain. Its gluten-free status and nutritional profile are opening doors in institutional settings, such as in K-12 cafeterias to college campus dining centers. The Commission has also placed a focus point on sorghum literacy, from young students all the way to food scientists and nutritionists, ensuring all Kansans understand the crop's resilience and its impact on our state's economy.

Simultaneously, the Commission continues to support ethanol feedstock data initiatives as sorghum remains an extremely competitive and lucrative option for High Plains ethanol plants. Bioethanol represents a strong market we need in the future and a stable market we currently have today. As Commission Chairman Brant Peterson recently stated in the Commission's 2025 Annual Impact Report, the work of the Commission is defined by a dual-track strategy: looking outward to global horizons while digging deep into the potential here at home.

While the industry continues to fortify the essential trade relationships that keep sorghum flowing through international ports, there is an equal and aggressive commitment to domestic channels as well. By balancing the push of global trade with strategic domestic investments—from cattle nutrition research to renewable energy partnerships—the Commission is building a more resilient economic foundation. These efforts ensure that whether a bushel is destined for a vessel on the coast or a feedyard in Kansas, every effort is calibrated to maximize the fiscal vitality and long-term prosperity of the U.S. sorghum farmer.

SORGHUM CHECKOFF NEWSLETTER
Spring Edition 2026

WHAT'S INSIDE

SORGHUM CHECKOFF

Sorghum: An Opportunistic Crop That Pays

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

For many growers, grain sorghum fits best as an opportunistic crop—one that can take advantage of timely rainfall, keep input costs in check and improve the performance of other crops in the rotation. With relatively low production costs and strong agronomic benefits, sorghum remains a practical option for farmers looking to manage risk while maintaining yield potential.

"One of sorghum's biggest advantages is its affordability."

One of sorghum's biggest advantages is its affordability. Seed costs typically range from $6 to $19 per acre, depending on seeding rate and seed treatments. That's significantly lower than many competing row crops, helping reduce upfront investment and financial risk.

Sorghum also tends to have few insect and disease issues. Concerns about sorghum aphid have been greatly reduced in the last few years, with many high performing hybrids having good sorghum aphid tolerance. If aphid populations are present, they can be effectively controlled with insecticides such as Sivanto Prime®, Transform® or Sefina®.

The dry climate across much of the Great Plains helps keep disease pressure low. In more humid regions like the Southeast, anthracnose is the primary concern, but selecting hybrids with good tolerance can greatly reduce the risk.

While known as a drought tolerant crop, sorghum will take advantage of timely rainfall, making it a good fit in areas where precipitation can be unpredictable. This flexibility allows farmers to plant sorghum knowing it can respond when conditions turn favorable while still tolerating short periods of stress.

Sorghum's value extends beyond the current growing season, providing measurable benefits when used in crop rotations. When rotated with cotton, disease cycles are broken, which can plague continuous cotton systems. Residue from sorghum also helps conserve soil moisture and protect emerging cotton seedlings from wind damage. A 2017 Texas A&M University study found cotton yields in-

creased 26% when rotated with sorghum compared to continuous cotton.

Research near Mead, Nebraska, showed that soybeans planted after sorghum produced a 16% yield increase compared to continuous soybeans. Improvements were linked to better soil fertility, improved soil structure, stronger weed control and fewer pest problems. Even corn can benefit from following sorghum. A five-year Kansas State University trial found corn yields increased over 8% when planted after sorghum compared to continuous corn.

These gains highlight how sorghum contributes to better soil health, rainfall retention and improved nutrient cycling in crop rotations.

Sorghum is most often grown as a dryland crop, but it also performs well under limited irrigation. Its ability to tolerate short periods without water gives growers flexibility when managing irrigation systems. When splitting a circle with corn or cotton, irrigation can be prioritized for the more water-sensitive crops while sorghum waits a few extra days without significant yield loss. That flexibility helps maximize water efficiency, especially in regions where irrigation capacity is limited.

For growers looking to manage costs and reduce risk, sorghum remains a practical choice. Its low seed cost, ability to capitalize on timely rainfall and benefits to crops that follow make it a valuable tool in many cropping systems.

2025/26 U.S. Sorghum Crop Graded At No. 1 Certification For Seventh Consecutive Year

The U.S. Grains & BioProducts Council (USGBC) released its 2025/26 Sorghum Quality Report, and for the seventh year in a row, U.S. sorghum was, on average, graded above the necessary requirements for U.S. No. 1 certification.

"The Council has built a reputation as a trusted partner and source of information for global grain and grain co-product purchasers, who can feel secure in knowing exactly what to expect when they choose U.S. agricultural goods to meet their needs," said Mark Wilson, USGBC chairman.

"We develop this report each year as a service to U.S. sorghum's international customers and to display the outstanding work U.S. sorghum farmers do every day to produce the world's finest sorghum."

The report, funded through the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Foreign Agricultural Service Agricultural Trade Promotion (USDA-FAS) program and the United Sorghum Checkoff Program (USCP), provides international customers and other interested parties accurate, unbiased information about the 2025/26 U.S. sorghum crop.

Data was drawn from 102 samples collected from 18 participating elevators and one farmer in the central and southern regions of the U.S., an area representing nearly 100 percent of all U.S. sorghum exports.

The samples were collected by the Amarillo Grain Exchange and analyzed at SGS North America in Vancouver, Washington, where scientists calculated averages and standard deviations for each quality factor tested and reported results for the U.S. aggregate.

Total sorghum damage came in at 0.1 percent in the aggregate and no heat damage was observed in the samples while protein content was registered at 11.6 percent. Starch concentration was tested at 72.8 percent and oil measured at 3.5 percent.

Additionally, tannins were absent from the sorghum samples for the seventh year in a row.

To download the full 2025/26 Sorghum Quality Report, visit *www.sorghumcheckoff.com/press-releases/2026/*.

Taking the ITCH OUT of Sorghum

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

Anyone who has ever read one of my articles or heard one of my presentations knows I am a strong advocate for the attributes of grain sorghum. However, one characteristic of sorghum grain that I could certainly do without is the skin irritation, or itchiness, caused by its grain dust at harvest. Dust from other grains can cause itchiness, but few would argue to the extent caused by grain sorghum. So, what causes sorghum grain dust to itch and is there anything we can do about it?

"Interestingly, dust from rice grown in the U.S. in the early 1900s was known to cause itchiness."

Researchers at Kansas State University asked this question and hypothesize that much of the itchiness is related to the structure of the glumes that surround each grain in the grain head. Grain sorghum glumes are covered by tiny, rigid, hair-like appendages called trichomes. These trichomes are known to be a primary contributor to the total dust produced by cereal grains at harvest.

Interestingly, dust from rice grown in the U.S. in the early 1900s was known to cause itchiness. The rice varieties grown at that time had "hairy" glumes like sorghum. In the 1920s, rice varieties with "hairless" glumes gained popularity and, as a result, the dust produced at rice harvest was greatly reduced! Currently, all U.S. rice varieties have hairless glumes. The technical term for "hairless" is "glabrous."

The researchers at Kansas State theorize that if sorghum glumes were hairless, then like rice, the reduction of dust produced at harvest would address the source of irritation, leading to less itchiness. The problem is that all commercial sorghum hybrids grown in the U.S. have hairy glumes! This led to the search for hairless sorghum glume germplasm that could be introduced into U.S. sorghum hybrids.

Following the screening of hundreds of diverse sorghum lines, representing all the major sorghum races, a few hairless glume lines were identified. Dust production from thrashed sorghum heads of a U.S. hybrid was then compared to one of the hairless glume lines. Dust production was found to be greatly reduced from the hairless glume line!

Armed with this discovery, the next step will be to use modern breeding techniques to insert the hairless glume trait into elite U.S. breeding lines to develop what will hopefully be low-dust, itch-free sorghum!

The sorghum molecular breeding program at K-State is positioned to make this a reality. They specialize in identifying novel sorghum genetics, such as glabrous sorghum, and devising strategies to rapidly translate into commercial sorghums with molecular breeding strategies and public-private partnerships.

Although taking the itch out of sorghum will likely not add any additional profit in growing sorghum, the relief from skin irritation will be much appreciated by sorghum growers!

Sorghum Checkoff Showcases Momentum at 2026 Commodity Classic

The United Sorghum Checkoff Program delivered a strong showing at this year's Commodity Classic in San Antonio, where more than 12,000 attendees gathered for one of agriculture's largest annual events.

The event created a key opportunity for Team Sorghum to connect with producers and industry partners from across the country. Conversations focused on sorghum's role in today's market and its expanding opportunities across food, feed and fuel.

The Sorghum Checkoff booth served as a central hub throughout the event. Growers stopped in for updates on current programs and initiatives while engaging in discussions on how sorghum continues to deliver value from the farm to emerging markets.

A highlight of the week included the debut of the new Sorghum Brand Anthem video. The video underscores the resilience, innovation and forward momentum driving the sorghum industry, while reinforcing a unified message for growers and partners nationwide. Scan the QR code to watch to full video.

Throughout the event, Team Sorghum engaged attendees with hands-on experiences and product demonstrations. Complimentary sorghum snacks drew steady traffic, while live popped sorghum seasoning demonstrations with Chef Chase showcased the grain's versatility in food applications.

The checkoff also partnered with the San Antonio Humane Society to host the Sorghum Puppy Patch. The activation offered attendees a place to recharge while spending time with adoptable puppies, while also highlighting sorghum's role in the growing pet food market.

The combined efforts helped reinforce sorghum's value across diverse end uses and created meaningful engagement with attendees across the industry.

The United Sorghum Checkoff Program extends its appreciation to Team Sorghum for delivering a successful presence at Commodity Classic. Continued collaboration and commitment from growers and partners remain essential as the industry works to expand markets and build long-term demand for U.S. sorghum.

Sorghum Industry Events

April 27-29	**Petfood Forum** Kansas City, MO
April 30	**Leadership Sorghum Class VIII Applications Due**
May 25	**Memorial Day-Office Closed** Lubbock, TX

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

SORGHUM CHECKOFF

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USCP Mission

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

@SorghumCheckoff

Sorghum Shortcuts

NSP Board Applications Open April 1

National Sorghum Producers is now accepting applications for its Board of Directors, with the application window open April 1 through May 1. Producer members interested in serving are encouraged to apply and help guide the organization's priorities on policy, trade and market development. Directors play a key role in shaping NSP's advocacy efforts and ensuring sorghum growers have a strong voice in Washington. Applicants must be current NSP members in good standing. Additional details and application materials are available at sorghumgrowers.com.

Sorghum Golf Tournament Returns

Registration is now open for the 6th Annual Sorghum Golf Tournament, set for Saturday, April 25, 2026, at Mariah Hills Golf Course in Dodge City, Kansas. The four-person scramble begins at 12 p.m., with check-in opening at 10 a.m. Entry is $120 per player or $480 per team and includes lunch, cart rental, green fees and a gift bag.

The event will also feature hole-in-one contest prizes, along with opportunities to sponsor a hole or register a team. Proceeds help ensure sorghum growers are represented in key policy discussions. Contact Jamaca Battin, Industry Relations Director, for information on registration Jamaca@sorghumgrowers.com.

2026 NSP Yield Contest Opens April 1

Entries for the 2026 NSP Yield Contest open April 1, giving growers another opportunity to showcase sorghum's performance across diverse environments. The contest features irrigated, dryland no-till, dryland tillage and food-grade divisions, with competition split between East and West regions.

Harvest reporting opens May 1, and entries must be submitted by Nov. 24, with final paperwork due Dec. 2.

Participants must be current NSP members and meet eligibility requirements, including FSA documentation and minimum acreage thresholds. The contest continues to highlight innovation and best management practices across the sorghum industry.

For official rules and the entry form, visit SorghumGrowers.com/yield-contest or contact NSP at 806-749-3478 or yieldcontest@sorghumgrowers.com.

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