

Nebraska Sorghum



The quarterly newsletter of the Nebraska Grain Sorghum Board, the Nebraska Sorghum Producers Association, and the Sorghum

Army

www.nebraskasorghum.org



NGSB/NeSPA Events: Fall/Winter 2020

NGSB Quarterly Meeting - December 3, Kearney

NeSPA Quarterly Meeting - December 4, Grand Island

2021 Sorghum Symposium and Catalyst Presentations - January 22, 2021, Kearney (May be subject to change due to COVID-19)

Resources and Initiatives:

The Sorghum Army Outpost

[Click Here](#)

Catalyst:

[Click Here](#)

US Drought Monitor:

[Click Here](#)

Grain Basis Maps:

[Click Here](#)

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COVID-19 Resources

NGSB and NeSPA thank our federal, state, and local leaders for their extraordinary service during the COVID-19 pandemic. Click here for additional resources from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):

[Click Here](#)

Catalyst: Meet the 2020 Teams

The first-ever Catalyst competition is underway in Nebraska! On September 1st, teams kicked off efforts to create new products using sorghum that can be processed right here in our state. Two teams consist of graduate students at the University of Nebraska. Three teams consist of undergraduate students in the Agricultural Sciences program at Concordia in Seward.

Their projects include:

- 1) Sorghum crackers and snack foods
- 2) Ready-to-eat South Korean-style deserts
- 3) Aquaculture feed
- 4) Bison feed
- 5) Feedstock for mushrooms used in athletic supplements

The Catalyst program is an annual competition which intends to add extra on-farm revenues for Nebraska sorghum growers and create economic opportunities in towns across the state by leveraging the high-premium domestic markets that exist for our crop. Sorghum is well-positioned in those markets due to naturally occurring attributes like; Gluten-free, Non-gmo, water/wildlife/soil sustainability, Low glycemic content, and High antioxidants.

Nebraska Sorghum is extremely grateful to our partners at the Engler Program, The Food for Health Center, The Combine, The University of Nebraska Foundation and Concordia University. Stay tuned for updates!

It isn't too late for teams to sign up! If you are an entrepreneur, or know one, please visit: www.nebraskasorghum.org/catalyst for more details!



**Learn More about
Catalyst!**

Participants in the 2020 Catalyst Program share their concept pitches via Zoom

At Nebraska Sorghum

At Nebraska Sorghum, we are committed to transparency as stewards of Nebraska sorghum grower's dollars. Telling our story not only reaffirms the value that we provide to farmers, but also showcases the good works that we do in the community through the Nebraska Sorghum Producers Association.

Further, we know that building domestic and international demand for sorghum means building an image and relationships with end-users that goes beyond the numbers. Nebraska sorghum farmers work hard, care for their communities, and are good stewards of the resources that God has given.

In order to communicate these ideals, we've developed the first promotional video in the history of Nebraska Sorghum. We call it simply, "At Nebraska Sorghum". Check it out using the link below. Feel free to drop us a line to tell us what you think...and share it on your social media pages.

We're proud of the work we do for you!



NGSB Executive Director, Nate Blum listens to Southeast Nebraska Farmer, Don Bloss' concerns in this clip from "At Nebraska Sorghum"

At Nebraska Sorghum

Ag Entrepreneurship and Trade: Conversations with Secretary Sonny Perdue and Ambassador Doud

Nebraska Sorghum was honored to meet with US Trade Ambassador, Greg Doud and Secretary of Agriculture, Sonny Perdue in Nebraska on September fourth.

Ambassador Doud visited the Nebraska State Fair in Grand Island for an invitation-only event to discuss the Administration's recent and future trade deals. Prior to his presentation, the ambassador spent a few minutes with Executive Director Nate Blum and NeSPA Board Member, Tracy Zink. He detailed the positive impacts of the Phase 1 deal with China, as evidenced by total volume of sales and increase in cash bids. Ambassador Doud also discussed continuing negotiations with Kenya, which are expected to yield yet another free-trade agreement. Blum pressed the ambassador to include language specific to sorghum, recognizing that country as an emerging market for the crop.



Blum and Zink with Amb. Doud

Following the event in Grand Island, Blum traveled to Lincoln to participate in the "Entrepreneurialism in Agriculture" roundtable, at the invitation of Congressman Jeff Fortenberry. Blum discussed the Catalyst Program and the importance of capturing value-added processing for agricultural products proximately to crop production as a means by which to increase on-farm revenues and create economic opportunities in rural communities. Nebraska Sorghum is grateful to Congressman Fortenberry, and to Ms. Amelia Breinig, Assistant Director of the Nebraska Department of Agriculture, for their gracious invitations to participate in these events.



Blum with Sec. Perdue

Blum also presented both men with hats emblazoned with the image of Sergeant Sorghum, welcoming them to as honorary members of the Sorghum Army!

You can get your very own Sorghum Army gear by clicking [here](#) and visiting the Sorghum Army Outpost. We'd love to see pictures of you sporting the Sarge!

The Sorghum Army
Outpost

2020 NeSPA Virtual Field Days: Trenton and Albion



A view of Mike Baker's plot near Trenton, NE



Klint Stewart shows off some food-grade sorghum at his field day near Albion, NE

The Nebraska Sorghum Producers Association sponsored two field days in Nebraska in September.

As in previous years, Mr. Mike Baker, Chair of the Nebraska Grain Sorghum Board, hosted a dryland plot near Trenton, Nebraska. The plot featured 34 sorghum varieties, including Advanta's new i-Growth herbicide-resistant variety. The event was held in-person by approximately 40 producers and industry partners. Presentations were also recorded. Results of the varieties will be reported after harvest is complete.

Mr. Klint Stewart, Vice-Chair of the Nebraska Grain Sorghum Board and member of the United Sorghum Checkoff Board, hosted Nebraska's first-ever food grade only sorghum plot near Albion, Nebraska. His plot featured six varieties, two of which are experimental. A trained agronomist, Klint recorded information about the varieties in his plot.

The video presentations can all be found at www.nebraskasorghum.org, or by clicking the button below.

[2020 NeSPA Field Day Presentations](#)

Sorghum Cares: The First Official Public Dedication Honoring the United States Space Force

State and Federal dignitaries, alongside the community of Seward, celebrated the dedication of the first official public installation honoring the newly-formed United States Space Force (USSF) on Saturday, August 22, 2020. The event, which was held at the Seward Kiwanis Parade of Flags at 2698 McKelvie Road, was attended by Governor Pete Ricketts, Senator Mark Kolterman, Seward Mayor Josh Eickmeier, and Mr. Nate Blum (Executive Director of the Nebraska Sorghum Producers Association). Special remarks were made by Lt. Col. Corey Trusty of USSTRATCOM and letters were read on behalf of Nebraska's congressional delegation. An additional letter of support is expected from the White House in the coming days. All of the letters will be archived at the Nebraska National Guard Museum for posterity.

The USSF flag was dedicated by Mr. Nate Blum on behalf of Nebraska's Sorghum Growers.

"We are so humbled to be involved with this historic dedication. Nebraska Sorghum has long supported all of America's active duty and retired service men and women. We thank them, and their families, for the tremendous sacrifices made on behalf of our great country," Blum stated. "Mankind has been growing sorghum for nearly as long as we have surveyed the heavens. Just as space is integral to the future of our species, so too is sorghum integral to the environmental, ecological, and economic sustainability of our planet. How appropriate that the Nebraska Sorghum Producers Association take the lead in recognizing the United States Space Force in this historic way. We are extremely thankful to the Office of Congressman Don Bacon for helping to secure approval from the Pentagon, Mr. Marv Taylor and the Seward Kiwanis Club for their exemplary work in creating the Parade of Flags, and Mr. Jonathan Jank and his team at the Seward County Chamber & Development Partnership for their fine work in shepherding this worthy project."

"We're grateful for Nate and Nebraska Sorghum's generosity to donate and install the USSF flag at the Seward Kiwanis Club's Parade of Flags," said Jonathan Jank, President & CEO for Seward County Chamber & Development Partnership and President-Elect for Seward Kiwanis Club. "Many partners came together to make this historic day happen in Seward and we thank them for their spirit of collaboration. The Parade of Flags serves to honor those who faithfully serve our country in various branches of the U.S. military and celebrate our community's 4th of July patriotism all year round."

See media coverage of the event by clicking the button here:



The USSSF Flag

[USSF Flag Dedication](#)

Harvest 2020: Nebraska Sorghum Quality and Cash Bids Exceed Expectations

2020 is a good year in which to be a sorghum farmer in Nebraska! Increased purchases by China have resulted in higher cash bids and increased demand for our crop. While Nebraska farmers don't realize the full premiums in the market due to lack of proximity to shipping in the Gulf of Mexico, sorghum bids in Nebraska have been as much as 90 over cv in parts of nonetheless. In the Texas, Sorghum was at 200 over cv on October 2nd, with contracts a full year out. Given the importance of sorghum to China, both as a non-gmo crop as well as the key ingredient in baijiu, we anticipate that this trend will continue in the near future. In fact, China's purchases in 2020 alone account for nearly 80% of the entire sorghum crop in the United States.



Sorghum is in high demand

Sorghum in Nebraska also has mostly evaded the worst of the drought conditions which have plagued much of the Sorghum Belt. Quality reported as of October 1st in Nebraska is quite good as a result.

Chinese purchases of sorghum are definitely a bright spot for our crop. However, the Nebraska Grain Sorghum Board is reticent to rely solely on the successes generated by those purchases. Our continued focus remains on further development of new and value-added markets for sorghum domestically and internationally.



Food-Grade sorghum commands a premium in specialty markets

If you, or a producer you now, are considering taking advantage of the increased demand for sorghum in the 2021 growing season, please contact the Nebraska Grain Sorghum Board for resources, research, and field guides. Additionally, the Nebraska Grain Sorghum Board has begun to build a database of sorghum grower's email addresses so that we can connect farmers directly with the brokers whom regularly contact us, such as S&G Commodities near Hastings and OPINS COOP near North Bend.

If you would like to have your contact information added to this list, please email: sorghum.board@nebraska.gov.

Message from the Director



Nebraska Sorghum Executive Director, Nate Blum

On Who's Authority?

In 2014, the Vietnamese Refugee Community in Lincoln, Nebraska came together, as they do every year, to commemorate the 39th anniversary of the fall of Saigon. That event is rightly of extreme importance to their community as it marks the moment in which homes, friends, and family...not to mention their country, were lost forever. As an invited attendee, I was moved. I felt a calling to be more than a mere participant at the 40th anniversary the following year.

What began as a brief conversation about plans for the event to commemorate the 40th anniversary with the president of the Vietnamese Refugee Community, quickly became an ambitious project to publicly recognize the tumult caused by the Fall of Saigon and the contributions to America made by those refugees, while also bringing together (for the first time in Nebraska) Vietnam Veterans and the Vietnamese peoples whom they bravely fought for. The project required a full year of planning with a dedicated and diverse team consisting of local Vietnamese leaders, Vietnam Veterans, members of the media, education professionals, and non-profit community foundations.

As work began on the commemoration, I was presented with a question that still causes pause even now, six years later. "You're undertaking this project? On who's authority?" I was taken aback by the question. Did I need overstep some boundary? Did I need permission from some unknown entity to take this project on?

After a brief moment of reflection, I confidently responded, "On my own authority, of course!" It was at that moment that I began to understand that my own authority is enough. I also began to understand that operating on one's own authority does not come naturally to all people. Something I had taken for granted to that point.

Continued Below

All too often, we become over reliant on the authority of others. Seeking permission, rather than forgiveness, so to speak. It makes sense that we crave this type of validation. Relying upon the authority of others provides 'cover' in a sense. We can utilize it as a shield from criticism when things are received poorly or results are less than expected. Moreover, exercising our own authority requires courage, the ability to accept criticism and less than desirable outcomes.

Moving away from the protective barrier of ceded authority is scary. It means shifting from operating under existing structures of authority. We are forced to construct new structures, for which we ourselves become personally responsible. Others begin to look to us for answers and we in turn begin to understand that we've become stewards of trust which our partners have placed in us. In this scenario, we are faced with two choices: Either rise to the challenge, or shrink back to comfortable obscurity.

If we muster the courage to exercise our own authority, we quickly find that the benefits outweigh the costs. In so doing, we take a critical step toward actualizing our personal potential. We learn to create and drive new narratives and visions. Importantly, we gain new appreciation for the authority of others, under which we do at times still all operate.

So what does this have to do with sorghum?

The limited size of the sorghum industry is undeniable. As uncomfortable as it may be, there is no way to sugarcoat this fact. Our industry has lost approximately 15.5 million acres of production nationally since 1979; A result of a number of several well-documented and widely bemoaned factors ranging from technological advances in competing industries, to irrigation, to federal policy. Concurrently, American Agriculture has become predisposed to a limited variety of crops, resulting in an unfair disadvantage to sorghum.

At Nebraska Sorghum, we operate with the fundamental philosophy that diverse farms are healthy farms. Thus, we work together with our fellow commodity groups holistically for the benefit of all producers. Yet, we also recognize that a system which unduly favors narrowly defined cropping systems, and is so deeply entrenched in the institutions of Ag lending, federal policy, and even day-to-day farm culture, necessarily handicaps the economic and ecological sustainability of farm operations both now and in the future.

Continued Below

Sorghum cannot afford operate solely under the authority of the current structures within American agriculture. Sorghum is unique. Attributes such as being gluten-free, non-gmo, low in sugars, and important to water wildlife and soil sustainability, ought to generate high-premium, high-demand markets both domestically and internationally. In order to leverage those opportunities, we must proudly and boldly champion NEW structures which work to increase on-farm revenues through diversification, vertical integration of processing for consumer-ready goods, and create economic opportunities in rural communities proximate to sorghum production. We must be confident in recognizing the power, validity, and value of our own authority.

The sorghum industry must create a new set of rules, rather than continue to play a game in which it is disadvantaged to win. This is the banner which Nebraska Sorghum has taken up. We hold it high and with unwavering resolve. It is with this goal in mind that we undertake all action and initiative.

Ultimately, the Commemoration of the 40th Anniversary of the Fall of Saigon was a success. Our team created a four-part series of public events which took place in April of 2015.

These events were well-attended, well-received, and well-covered in local, national, and international media. There were more high points than we have time for here, but amongst the most meaningful were the numerous healing connections formed between the Vietnamese Refugees and our Vietnam Veterans. Welcome home, gentlemen.

You can read more about those events in this article reprinted by the Omaha World Herald in April of 2020. Still making an impact five years later.

Nate Blum



Executive Director

Nebraska Grain Sorghum Board
Nebraska Sorghum Producers Association

Omaha World
Herald