

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:

Spring/Summer 2021

NGSB Quarterly Meeting - June 3, Lincoln

NeSPA Quarterly Meeting - TBD

2021 Hybrid Plot Tours - Trenton, Albion, Sterling - September

Resources:

**The Sorghum Army Catalyst
Outpost**

[Click Here](#)

[Click Here](#)

**US Drought
Monitor**

[Click Here](#)

**Grain Basis
Maps**

[Click Here](#)

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Catalyst: Gearing up for Another Year of Innovation

The first year of the Catalyst Program was largely a success. Together with our partners at the University of Nebraska's Engler Program, The Food for Health Center, Concordia University at Seward, and Invest Nebraska, five teams of students were introduced to the exciting potentials of sorghum-based businesses. These entrepreneurs worked to develop new value-added products with applications in the culinary and industrial spheres.



Catalyst Teams at the University of Nebraska Lincoln

Plans are underway to launch the second year of the Catalyst Program. Nebraska Sorghum is seeking to expand our partnerships with other post-secondary and economic development institutions. Listening to feedback from our first-year participants, we are working to make the program even better in 2021-2022. We also are considering seeking grant dollars to better support these teams in the future.

If you know of an institution which would be a good partner, or an entrepreneurial individual for the 2021-2022 Catalyst Program, drop us a line at: sorghum.board@nebraska.gov

You can also learn more here: www.nebraskasorghum.org/catalyst for more details!



Catalyst Teams at the University of Nebraska Lincoln

The Catalyst program is an annual program 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, Carbon sequestration, Low glycemic content, and High antioxidants.

Sorghum Army Gear Now Available at the From Nebraska Gift Shop



Getting your Sorghum Army gear is now easier than ever for Lincoln residents. In March, the Nebraska Sorghum Producers Association teamed up with Ms. Barb Ballard and her team at the from Nebraska Gift Shop. Located in Lincoln's historic Haymarket, the shop offers unique items from Nebraska and frequently caters to tourists.

While the Sorghum Army Outpost will continue to be available online, having an in-person retail option will continue to help spread the word about sorghum to the general public...ultimately generating increased domestic demand for our amazing crop.

Haven't gotten your Sorghum Army gear yet? No problem! Click here to visit The Outpost!



Ballard and Blum Pose with Sorghum Army Gear Outside the From Nebraska Gift Shop

[**Click Here**](#)

Recognizing the 2020 TAPS Winners



Highest Input Use Efficiency: Scott Jewett, Holdrege

The Testing Ag Performance Solutions (TAPS) awards ceremony was held virtually on Saturday, January 16, due to continuing Covid-19 restrictions. The TAPS program was created by University of Nebraska educators and specialists four years ago, as an innovative way of connecting producers to industry professionals and offering a way of testing out new advancing technologies through farm management competitions facilitated in North Platte at the West Central Research, Extension, and Education Center. The United Sorghum Checkoff Program and the Nebraska Sorghum Board have both given substantial support to the sprinkler irrigated sorghum competition in its three years.

The sorghum competition had 12 teams this year, including 10 producers. These participants made management decisions for their plots including insurance coverage, hybrid selection, seeding rate, nitrogen amount and timing, irrigation timing and amount, and marketing.

Chuck Burr, UNL Crops & Water Extension Educator and TAPS Leadership Team Member, commented, "2020 was a very different year compared to the last several years." He added that, "Irrigation application was a huge component on yields, and the late season rally in the grain markets and positive basis made a huge difference in profitability."

Recognizing the 2020 TAPS Winners (continued)

The yields ranged from 126 to 176 bushels per acre. The Greatest Yield award & cash prize was won by Marc Rasmussen of Cambridge, NE. Rasmussen planted Channel 6B55 at 110,000 seeds per acre. He applied 170 pounds of nitrogen and 9.63 inches of irrigation throughout the season.

In the Highest Input Use Efficiency category, the award and \$1,000 cash prize went to Scott Jewett of Holdrege, NE. Jewett chose to use Channel 6B55 at 90,000 seeds per acre and applied 135 pounds of nitrogen and 7.43 inches of water.

Paul Hoyt of Culbertson, NE took home the highest recognition of Most Profitable, which came with a \$2,000 cash prize. Hoyt took advantage of the high prices at the end of the marketing window and earned \$278 per acre, over \$100 more than the second place team. Hoyt used Dekalb DK45-23 at 90,000 seeds per acre, 200 pounds of nitrogen, and 8.63 inches of irrigation. Hoyt sold his crop at an average price of \$5.45 per bushel. The full recording of the awards ceremony, and/or a presentation of the data, can both be found on the TAPS MediaHub Channel.



Greatest Yield: Marc Rasmussen, Cambridge



Most Profitable: Paul Hoyt, Culbertson

Founded in 2017, the Testing Ag Performance Solutions (TAPS) program is an innovative program developed by University of Nebraska research and extension specialists and educators. Rather than the typical teacher and student paradigm, the program facilitates a number of interactive real-life farm management competitions. For more information visit:

[**Click Here**](#)

Bacon Bits: NeSPA Hosts Congressman Bacon in Western Nebraska



NGSB and NeSPA board members Mike Baker, David Junker, and Tracy Zink pose with Congressman Bacon and NGSB/NeSPA Director, Nate Blum

On February 18, the Nebraska Sorghum Producers Association (NeSPA) hosted Congressman Don Bacon (R-NE 02) during two stops in Western Nebraska. Bacon, who is the Ranking Member of the House Agriculture Committee's Subcommittee on Nutrition, Oversight, and Department Operations, visited Pennington Seeds in Sidney and the West Central Extension and Research Center (WCERC) in North Platte. The Congressman learned about the importance of sorghum in consumer and industrial uses, the TAPS Program, and conducted a town-hall style meeting with over thirty educators, producers, and industry partners.



NeSPA board member, Tracy Zink, presents TAPS Director, Chuck Burr with the Sorghum Industry Award

At the WCERC event, NeSPA board member, Tracy Zink presented Chuck Burr with the "Sorghum Industry" award for his work with the TAPS Program. The award traditionally is given at the Annual Sorghum Appreciation Banquet, which was cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic.



NeSPA Virtual Day on the Hill

Covid-19 forced the cancellation of in-person legislative advocacy in 2021. However, the Nebraska Sorghum Producers Association, and the National Sorghum Producers, did conduct virtual meetings with Congressman Smith, Congressman Bacon, and Congressman Fortenberry's offices in January and February. Unfortunately, meetings with Senator Fischer and Senator Sasse did not take place due to impeachment proceedings in the Senate. The Nebraska Sorghum Producers Association works with all of the members of Nebraska's delegation on a frequent basis throughout the year.

Topics of interest discussed during this round of legislative meetings included sorghum's place in environmental sustainability policy and nutrition systems. Those topics are of particular importance to the Biden Administration, and to Senator Stabinow, Chair of the Senate Ag Committee, as expressed during a meeting with her staff. You can expect NeSPA and NSP to keep sharing the benefits of sorghum in regard to water, wildlife, soil sustainability, carbon sequestration, and nutrition in the months ahead!



The U.S. Capitol at dusk

NeSPA has also prioritized championing policies which encourage economic sustainability on American farms. We believe that promoting a model that supplements the commodity marketing model with value-added processing for domestic consumer good proximate to the production of sorghum can increase on-farm revenues, diversify farm operations, and create jobs in rural communities.

2021 Virtual Sorghum Symposium - Sorghum Producers Resources



Sun, sorghum, and serenity

Regretfully, the ongoing pandemic also forced the cancellation of the 2021 Sorghum Symposium and Sorghum Appreciation Banquet. Despite this, providing ongoing value and resources to producers remains a top priority at Nebraska Sorghum. In February we posted virtual seminar content for new and returning sorghum producers. This content included: Agronomy with Dr. Brent Bean, marketing with NGSB Board Chair, Mike Baker, a climate outlook with Mr. Michael McMahon, Chief Hydrometeorologist at HDR, two different crop insurance presentations, and a link to the newest Sorghum Field Guide. These materials can be found on our website here:

[Click Here](#)

While virtual meetings will never be ideal, providing information in this way was the best alternative to keep our growers safe. We will (hopefully) resume the in-person Symposium and Banquet in 2022 in Kearney and Grand Island respectively. In the meantime, always feel free to contact us directly if you need additional resources or have questions! (sorghum.board@nebraska.gov)



Panorama of NGSB Board Chair, Mike Baker's 2020 hybrid plot near Trenton

Outreach in the Age of Covid: Nebraska Ag Expo, AgCeptional Women's Conference, and Community Meetings

Not everything has been cancelled due to Covid-19, thankfully. In February and March Nebraska Sorghum met with producers and industry partners at two in-person trade shows.

The Nebraska Ag Expo was held in Lincoln on February 23-24. Due to cancellations of other trade shows like Commodity Classic, the Nebraska Ag Expo became the de facto largest Ag trade show in North America in 2021 to date. Hundreds of people visited the Nebraska Sorghum booth during the three day show.

Nebraska Sorghum also participated in the AgCeptional Women's Conference in Norfolk on March 12. While smaller than in previous years, the show included about 200 attendees in person. Nebraska Sorghum was the only commodity group present in-person for this show.

We've also resumed our monthly outreach to producers, consumers, media, industry partners, local leaders, and students. In February Nebraska Sorghum visited the communities of Holdrege, McCook, Imperial, Sidney, and North Platte. In March, we visited with media partners in Norfolk and had the distinct honor of announcing the Norfolk FFA Officers at their meeting. All of the outreach we do is important, but visiting with young people at the secondary and post-secondary levels is far and away the most fun. If you'd like us to visit your classroom, drop us a line at sorghum.board@nebraska.gov!

Blum and members of the Norfolk FFA Chapter



Nebraska Ag Expo attendees pose with Sgt. Sorghum



NGSB and USCP Board Member, Klint Stewart and Director Nate Blum pose for the Nebraska Daily News

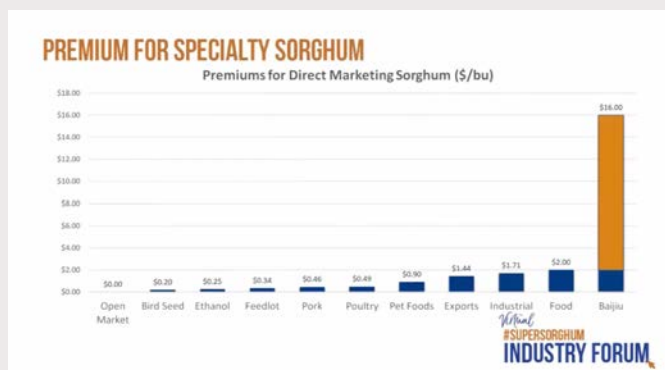


Consider Sorghum: 2021 Markets Outlook and NeSPA Board Opportunities

Sorghum prices saw a significant rebound in the past year. Bids for as much as 300 over corn in Texas in December for 2021-2022 crop were historic in both price and duration. Never before has the industry seen contracts for a full year out at such a level. For the 2020-2021 crop, bids remain as high as \$6.70 per bushel or more in parts of Nebraska. This turnaround is largely driven by Chinese purchasers who utilize sorghum for feeding fowl and for making a distilled spirit known as Baiju. In fact, China has purchased 244 million bushels of the current crop, or 82% of all sorghum grown in the United States.

Sorghum is also seeing wider usage in the American domestic markets. Between new gluten-free products using the crop, a rise in animal and pet feed applications, and emerging bioplastics and aquaculture markets, the future for sorghum is bright. Nebraska Sorghum maintains a list of brokers looking for grain. If you would like to leverage that list to market your crop, send us an email at sorghum.board@nebraska.gov.

Premium comparisons for specialty sorghum

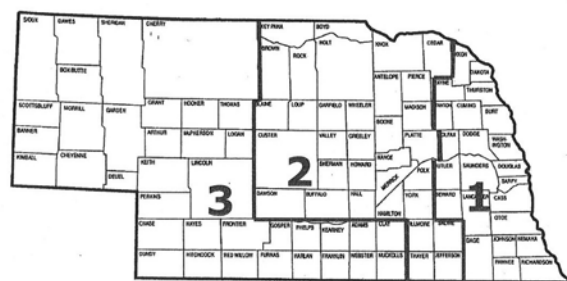


It is more exciting than ever to work in Sorghum. So much potential on the horizon. If you'd like to get more involved, consider joining the Nebraska Sorghum Producers Association (NeSPA) either as a member or as a member of the board. NeSPA currently has an at-large seat and a District 1 seat available. NeSPA typically meets quarterly to discuss policy priorities and other business. Members also have opportunities to participate in events like the Nebraska State Fair and Husker Harvest Days each year.

Click here to join and send us an email if you are interested in becoming involved at the board member level!

[**Click Here**](#)

The NeSPA District Map



Nebraska Sorghum Welcomes Mr. Phil Glader



Mr. Phil Glader, NGSB intern responsible for international markets development specifically pertaining to aquaculture

I'm a native of West River South Dakota and I'm moving back to Sioux Falls from Iowa to work in marketing sales and project management. I'll be married two years in 2021 and I'm also in Graduate school part-time through ISU's "Seed Technology and Business" program. I have a passion for food security through aquaculture development and the introduction of improved seed varieties.

I've been serving as your Market Development Intern these recent months under Nate's leadership. I chose to serve with Nebraska Sorghum in this role because I'm fascinated with the potential of Sorghum to become the non-GMO staple food and feed product. After a few conversations with Nate, he invited me to officially do this exciting internship which also benefits my career and hopefully helps farmers. I'm really encouraged by the whole Sorghum community's growth and I'll continue promoting Nebraska Sorghum as we keep exploring new markets together

"Phil is an excellent addition to our team," stated Blum. "His work, while done remotely, compliments the mission of Nebraska Sorghum and serves as a reminder that in the digital age, internships don't have to be done in person to be successful. Phil, and Kristine Dvoracek, our Business Development Intern, continue to provide value to Nebraska's Sorghum Growers, while also deepening their own educational experiences." If you, or someone you know, is interested in serving in an internship role with Nebraska Sorghum, email: sorghum.board@nebraska.gov

Message from the Director:

Can Sorghum save the Planet....and the Family Farm?



I suspect that the term "sustainability" has largely become a buzzword which elicits fatigue among many producers. Not to imply that agriculturalists are apathetic to sustainability. On the contrary, farmers are the original conservationists. Our very livelihoods, families, and legacies depend upon proper stewardship of the land, livestock, and resources.

No. What has fatigued farmers is the weaponization of the word "sustainability" as a leverage point by some of our urban cousins and policymakers who hope to gain greater regulatory control over agriculture in America. Such wariness is warranted. We've seen this movie before. The reality is that much of the push for sustainability in Ag is well-intentioned, but misguided. Ag policy in regard to sustainability NEEDS to be informed by those with a working knowledge of Ag; Just as policy affecting a nuclear plant ought to be informed by those with advanced knowledge in nuclear physics.

Placing blame for climate change squarely on agriculture is low-hanging fruit, and frankly lazy policy. Climate change is a real issue. Outside of the politicization of the topic, data clearly indicates that the global climate is changing at a much more rapid pace than in previous epochs. However, the real issue isn't caused by any American industry (Ag included). In fact, American emissions have been in decline for decades. Meanwhile, much of the world continues to build more and more dirty fossil fuel-burning infrastructure which increases carbon emissions. Until countries like China and India, and other parts of the developing world are held to account for reckless environmental abuses, American efforts to curb climate change will do little more than to help the uninformed sleep a better at night.

The truth is that there are areas of overlap, mutual priorities, shared by both the Ag producer and the average citizen concerned about climate.

The Ag industry cannot afford to allow societal dividers and activists to force us onto a purely defensive footing. Its not a good look for us. Every defensive response only reinforces anti-ag messaging.

Instead, we must find ways to work together with the average consumer. Pivoting away from a spirit of famine in which the 'us versus them' mentality thrives, to a spirit of plenty in which we all might win. That conversation starts with honest and open dialogue about daily production practices. Telling our story from a factual operational standpoint, and how those operations indeed serve to preserve and protect the environment on, and adjacent to, our agricultural lands.

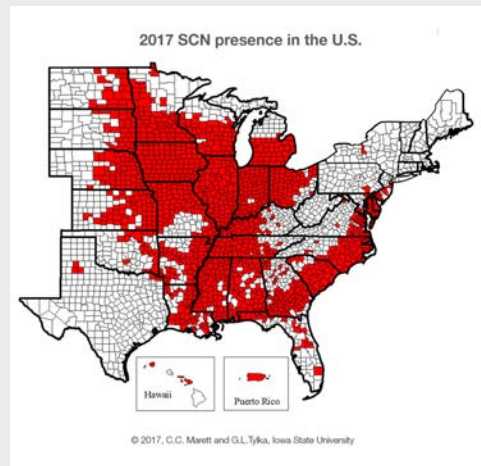
At the same time, we have to recognize that adjustments in Ag practices CAN make a difference at the local and regional level. Promotion of water, wildlife, and soil health are local and regional issues that are indeed very real. Sorghum has a great story to tell in this regard.

Let's start with water issues. The depletion of the Ogallala Aquifer has caused severe shortages in Texas, Oklahoma, and parts of Kansas already. While Nebraska's aquifer levels are in much better shape than our neighbors to the south, we are not immune to overuse of this vital resource. Other issues, like water rights in the Republican River Basin, have resulted in long-term legal battles between states like Nebraska and Kansas. Sorghum may not be the cure-all to these water woes, but given that the crop uses much less water than others means that including it in corn/soybean rotations can help to mitigate the depletion of water resources.

Maintaining environments for wildlife and biodiversity are also important local and regional issues. Those, who like me, grew up in the eastern part of Nebraska during a time when sorghum acres were far more prevalent, remember well the abundance of pheasant and quail in the area. It is no coincidence that as acres from the Missouri River to Kearney have transitioned largely to two crop rotations (absent sorghum) in the past thirty years, those species have become harder and harder to find. Birds love sorghum. Not only as a food source, but also for the protection provided by the thicker cover from predators.



Next, let's discuss pest and soil management. Soybean Cyst Nematode (SCN) has spread dramatically across the American Midwest in recent decades, largely due to two-crop rotations that disadvantage soil health and the disruption of disease and pest cycles. Here again, sorghum has a great story to tell.



Spread of SCN as of 2017

Not only can adding sorghum into that rotation help to break up the SCN cycle, research from our friends at Kansas State University also shows that planting corn or soybeans following sorghum in rotation results in an average increase in yields of 8% or more. This is because sorghum has a larger root biomass, leaving more organic materials in the soil. Incidentally, research is showing that that larger root biomass also has increased benefits for carbon sequestration over other crops.

Sorghum also provides perhaps the greatest impact on sustainability of daily operations of the family farm. Economic sustainability. As input costs continue to rise at a pace unsustainable to commodity prices, farmers must look to solutions for operational diversification and value-added specialty markets. Including sorghum in rotational plans can accomplish these goals as well. Lesser input costs for seed, fertilizer, and water than other crops...coupled with dryland yields nearing 200 bushels per acre and irrigated yields over 200 bushels per acre and at record prices for commodities and premium prices in specialty markets, producers can realize better overall margins than with a simple two-crop rotation.

Add in the fact that sorghum uniquely operates in the commodity markets as well as the specialty non-gmo, gluten-free, nutraceutical, and responsibly-sourced label markets (markets worth billions of dollars and growing domestically), the value of sorghum becomes even more apparent. In fact, Nebraska Sorghum has made it our mission to attract new and existing businesses to locate their domestic processing operations in our state. Doing so can increase opportunities for direct contracting between farmers and end-users for specialty sorghum, while also creating economic opportunities in rural communities. Given Nebraska's geographic centrality, road and rail infrastructure, and relative low cost of living and doing business, we believe that Nebraska can become the hub for value-added processing of consumer-ready sorghum-based products in the domestic market.

That's a big deal for our producers. Doing so will mitigate volatility in the markets caused by fickle international trade partners while also decreasing producer reliance on federal farm assistance programs and slow farm consolidation. The fact that there is a potential to further revitalize rural communities with new job and investment opportunities at a time where populations are shifting away from urban centers means this policy is a win for everyone.

From a federal policy standpoint, Nebraska Sorghum is working hard to tell our story to lawmakers in Washington. At a time when Administrative policies largely prioritize carbon sequestration, environmental sustainability, and child nutrition, we know that Sorghum offers strong solutions. Alongside the National Sorghum Producers, we are also monitoring recommendations from RMA to level the playing field for sorghum in the crop insurance equation.

Most recently, we are beginning work to include sorghum in the USAID Food Basket, which is currently devoid of any sorghum-based products. This represents not only a new market for Nebraska Sorghum, but also a nutritious alternative to displaced populations. Further, since sorghum is grown around the world, a product based in sorghum would be a familiar part of many indigenous people's diets already.

The simple reality is that when we work together as partners, in a spirit of good faith, with our urban cousins, rather than as adversaries, America wins. Those who would seek to segregate and isolate the American Farmer from their non-agricultural counterparts cannot maintain baseless arguments when truth is presented alongside trust and a spirit of partnership. But, that conversation also means that Ag must be willing to recognize, validate, and adjust to the regional and local environmental issues held dear by our detractors, just as those non-ag constituencies must be willing to recognize, validate, and adjust to contemporary ag practices. We all must be at the table.

I personally believe that sorghum is poised to help tell agriculture's sustainability story. Sorghum is also primed for substantial growth in the coming decades as demand for those specialty markets continue to grow. It is certainly an exciting time to work for you in this industry. Nebraska Sorghum will continue to tell our story, and that of all of ag, as we seek out new ways to add value to our producers.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Nebraska Sorghum", with a stylized, flowing script.

THE GRAIN THAT GIVES

As rich in nutrition as it is good for the Earth, sorghum sustains by offering big benefits for our health, water, wildlife and our world.



SORGHUM-SAVVY
Learn more when you visit
sorghumcheckoff.com

**SORGHUM
HELPS FIGHT
HUNGER**



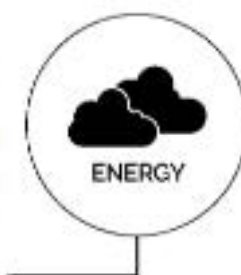
Sorghum benefits the globe from the ground up:

- Builds soil health by retaining more nutrients
- Sips and saves water up to 227%¹ better than comparable crops
- Reduces the need for pesticides and insecticides
- Protects against soil erosion from harsh winter winds
- Removes harmful carbon from the atmosphere by storing it underground



Sorghum is an ancient grain that provides today's nourishment:

- Cooked whole grain sorghum is an excellent source of protein and fiber
- More antioxidants than blueberries and pomegranates
- Naturally gluten free



Sorghum ensures the future of fuel:

- Clean-burning ethanol for better air quality
- Earth-friendly renewable resource from marginal land
- Boosts energy security by helping to import less petroleum
- Less expensive than other plant-based ethanol sources



Sorghum helps fauna flourish:

- Habitat protects and increases wild life populations
- Preferred food choices for deer, pheasants and quail



Sorghum makes financial sense for farmers:

- Improved yields of rotated crops
- Lower seed and other input costs
- Reduced economic risk
- 74% of sorghum acres are farmed with conservation methods²

A single cup of cooked whole grain sorghum packs 14.8 grams of protein³, plus it's a high energy grain and an excellent source of 12 vitamins and minerals. No wonder the United States relies on it for food assistance efforts around the world.

SORGHUM THE SMART CHOICE

¹cropwatch.unl.edu/crop-water-usa-comparison-rainfed-corn-sorghum-and-soybean-2009-2011 | ²<http://www.sorghumcheckoff.com/what-fuel-you>

³<https://fdc.nal.usda.gov/fdc-app.html#/food-details/16976/nutrients>

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