

# Nebraska Sorghum



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

[www.nebraskasorghum.org](http://www.nebraskasorghum.org)



## NGSB/NeSPA Events: Fall/Winter 2021

### NGSB Quarterly Meeting

- December 9 - Kearney

### NeSPA Quarterly Meeting

- November (TBD)

### 2022 Sorghum Symposium

- January 27 - Kearney

## Resources:

**The Sorghum Army  
Outpost**

[Click Here](#)

**Catalyst**

[Click Here](#)

**US Drought  
Monitor**

[Click Here](#)

**Grain Basis  
Maps**

[Click Here](#)

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# Nothing More Nebraskan: Nebraska Sorghum at the State Fair and Husker Harvest Days

2021 marked the return to normalcy in regard to the Nebraska State Fair and Husker Harvest Days. Though the fair did take place in 2020, it was an abbreviated affair due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Husker Harvest Days was cancelled altogether in the previous year.

Nebraska Sorghum served over 5,000 cookies at the events, in addition to serving popped sorghum and hosting six cooking demonstrations. We spoke with hundreds of producers and consumers, many of whom are only recently familiar with our crop. Many producers asked specific questions about how to include sorghum in their rotations. Consumers continue to be won over due to sorghum's special gluten-free, non-gmo, and sustainable attributes.

One special visitor, Ms. Chaeli (pictured) mentioned that she did not get to eat many of the fun fair foods due to her gluten intolerance. We invited her to join us for a cooking demonstration where we made gluten-free corn dogs. It really was a special moment.

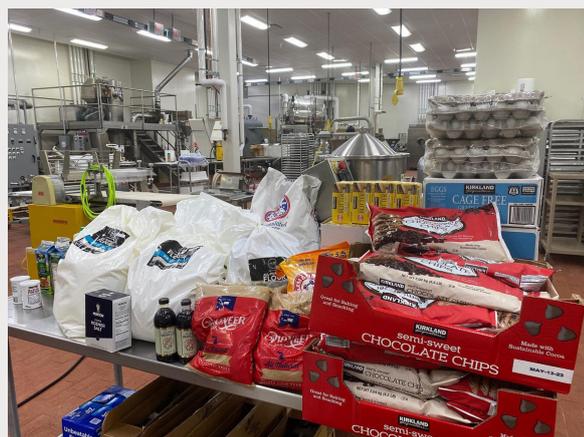
The state fair and Husker Harvest Days provide us with a special opportunity to visit with seasoned farmers and the general public alike. At Nebraska Sorghum, we are beyond glad to resume these events in full!



Ms. Chaeli helps Nebraska Sorghum E.D., Nate Blum with a cooking demonstration



FFA students visit the sorghum booth at Husker Harvest Days



Ingredients for 5,000 sorghum cookies

# Sorghum Varieties in the Spotlight: NeSPA's 2021 Hybrid Plot at Baker's Acres

Nebraska Grain Sorghum Board Chair hosted his annual sorghum variety field day on September 8th. The event featured thirty seven different varieties. Seed company representatives provided an overview of their entries in the hybrid plot. Those presentations were recorded and are available for viewing here:

Following the field presentations, the nearly seventy attendees travelled to Trenton for a meal provided by Frenchman Valley Cooperative. Ms. Norma Ritz-Johnson, Executive Director of the United Sorghum Checkoff Program (USCP), and Mr. Zach Simon, Regional Marketing Director of USCP, presented to the group. Special Guests from the US Global Leadership coalition, Ms. Alexandra Moyer and Mr. Luke Wenz also presented about the partnership between Nebraska Sorghum and their organization.

[Click Here](#)



The image shows a Facebook event page for the 2021 Hybrid Sorghum Field Day. At the top, there is a photo of a sorghum field with a woman in the foreground. Text on the page includes: "Special Guest: Sorghum Checkoff Norma Ritz-Johnson Executive Director", "2021 Hybrid Sorghum Field Day", "Wednesday, September 8th - 5pm to 8pm", "Trenton, NE. - Hosted by Mr. Mike Baker", and "North Of Trenton on Highway 25 - 2.5 miles, West on CR 717 - 2.5 miles". Below this is a grid of logos for sponsors: Sorghum Partners, Aurora Cooperative, Channel, BASF, Golden Acres Genetics, Hoegemeyer, Nutrien, Pioneer, DeKalb, Fontanelle Hybrids, ASGROW, Arrow Seed, Syngenta Global, Bayer, and Messenger. At the bottom, there is a thumbs up icon with the number 1 and a share icon with the number 1.

A huge Nebraska Sorghum "Thank you" to all of the sponsors, presenters and attendees that made the 2021 field day a success!

Special thanks to all of our sponsors for this year's hybrid field day!



Attendees at Mike Baker's Plot near Trenton

# International Trade and Global Leadership: How Nebraska Sorghum's Partnership with the US Global Leadership Coalition is Building Momentum for Sorghum



USGLC and NeSPA Representatives at Offutt AFB



USGLC and NeSPA visited with Congressman Fortenberry and staff while in Lincoln

**U.S. GLOBAL LEADERSHIP COALITION**

**Nebraska Sorghum Producers Association**

**THE NEBRASKA SORGHUM PRODUCERS ASSOCIATION IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE US GLOBAL LEADERSHIP COALITION PRESENT:**

**THE NEBRASKA EXPORTS AND GLOBAL LEADERSHIP SERIES**

**September 7: Lincoln Omaha**

**September 8: Kearney McCook**

**September 9: North Platte Valentine**

**September 10: Norfolk Columbus**

**Email: [sorghum.board@nebraska.gov](mailto:sorghum.board@nebraska.gov) for more information**

The Nebraska Exports and Global Leadership Series promotional flyer

In early September, Nebraska Sorghum hosted Ms. Alexandra Moyer and Mr. Luke Wenz, Regional Directors for the U.S. Global Leadership Coalition (USGLC). The series, titled "Nebraska Exports and Global Leadership" highlighted the impacts of international diplomatic efforts on opening and strengthening agricultural markets abroad. USGLC advocates for the 1% of the federal budget that goes toward diplomatic missions around the world.

While in Nebraska, USGLC and Nebraska Sorghum visited with community, business, defense, and media leaders in Omaha, Lincoln, Kearney, North Platte, Valentine, Norfolk, and Columbus. USGLC also presented to the field day attendees in Trenton.

As a result of our hospitality, NeSPA was invited to be a sponsor for the USGLC Heartland Summit held on September 28th. Partnerships like this one help us to reach new consumers both at home and overseas.

# Internships and Educational Opportunities in Sorghum

## *The Professional and Academic Leadership Experience at the Nebraska Grain Sorghum Board*



The Nebraska Grain Sorghum Board Internship is an experience like none-other. No prior experience with sorghum is necessary, we are looking for driven, out of the box thinkers, that want to make a difference.

### *What we do...*

- Network with people all over the world
- Help at fun events such as: Husker Harvest Days, State Fair & Sorghum Symposium
- Work to promote sorghum and agriculture

### *What we are...*

- Mentorship
- Individualized based on interests
- Flexible, fun & futuristic



### *Want to learn more?*

Call Nate Blum at 402-802-1850 or email [sorghum.board@nebraska.gov](mailto:sorghum.board@nebraska.gov)

\$500 scholarship per semester

Do you know a young person seeking an internship opportunity? Nebraska Sorghum has two available openings for either in-person or remote paid internships.

Internships at Nebraska Sorghum are project-based and tailored to the specific interests of the student. To learn more, contact the Nebraska Grain Sorghum Board at: [sorghum.board@nebraska.gov](mailto:sorghum.board@nebraska.gov)

Attention Educators! Nebraska Sorghum frequently visits with students at the secondary and post-secondary level. We regularly visit about sorghum, sorghum-based products, marketing, and general leadership skills.

If you are interested in scheduling a presentation, please send us an email!



# Promoting Nebraska at Home and Abroad

Markets development is our biggest priority at Nebraska Sorghum. While we always look to strengthen international trading partnerships for the export of grain, we also seek to foster valuable markets here at home. The domestic market holds many opportunities for products that are gluten-free, non-gmo, healthy, and sustainable. Research shows us that these markets are worth billions of dollars respectively. Incidentally, sorghum boasts all of these traits.

There are now over 130 pet food products using sorghum in the United States. Offerings of sorghum flour and other culinary goods utilizing sorghum are growing. As a result, Nebraska Sorghum regularly reaches out to existing domestic processors of sorghum. We work closely with the Nebraska Department of Economic Development (NDED) and the Secretary of State's office to tell the Nebraska Story. We believe that locating value-added processing in Nebraska for sorghum-based goods can increase on-farm revenues through direct contracting, create economic opportunities in communities across the state, and decrease supply line and logistics costs.

In August, Nebraska Sorghum hosted a virtual international processors call. Alongside Secretary of State Evnen, and Ms. Adrienne Caville with NDED, we spoke with over 200 registered individuals and companies from around the globe.

We've also partnered with Brand Ave., a media development company. That partnership has resulted in a short promotional video that has been targeted to investors and processors located on the East and West Coast. We hope that these efforts will continue to spark growth in multi-faceted markets for sorghum. Click the link below to check out the Brand Ave. video!

## OPEN FOR BUSINESS!



**"ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES FOR SORGHUM  
PROCESSING IN NEBRASKA"  
TUESDAY, 10 AUGUST  
0900 CENTRAL TIME**



**[HTTPS://US02WEB.ZOOM.US/J/84214804499?](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84214804499?pwd=CUXxQmFBBjNFBTJSREp5T2lKVlPSDz09)  
[PWD=CUXxQmFBBjNFBTJSREp5T2lKVlPSDz09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84214804499?pwd=CUXxQmFBBjNFBTJSREp5T2lKVlPSDz09)**

**[Click Here](#)**

# Standing Up for Agriculture: NeSPA Passes Important Resolutions



The Nebraska Delegation holds a press conference at Husker harvest Days



Policy challenges in agriculture are not new. Often, our industry faces well-intentioned but misguided attempts to regulate farm operations. As a result, it is important that we regularly advocate for producers with policy-makers and influencers at home and in Washington D.C.

Under the current administration and Congress, agriculture faces potentially devastating hurdles in the form of the ambiguous "30 X 30 Plan", revisions to the Waters of the US (WOTUS) by the EPA, and the potential elimination of stepped-up basis in the proposed spending bill. These policies would create unnecessary burdens on day-to-day operations on the farm and make it nearly impossible for family farms to be affordably passed on from one generation to the next.

In response, the NeSPA became the first and only state producer association to adopt resolutions against 30 X 30 and revisions to WOTUS. NeSPA also passed a resolution in support of the "Decade of Ag" movement at that time. The Decade of Ag is led by The US Farmers and Ranchers in Action, and is a producer-led policy initiative which seeks to inform conservation measures by including farmers and ranchers in the discussion. NeSPA joins over sixty business and industry leaders in support of this common-sense approach to conservation.

A copy of the resolutions can be viewed here:

[\*\*Click Here\*\*](#)

NeSPA was proud to stand with Governor Ricketts, Congressman Don Bacon, the Nebraska Corn Growers Association, Nebraska Cattlemen, Nebraska Farm Bureau Leadership, and others at Husker harvest Days to show Nebraska Agriculture's united commitment to fighting for our members.

# Milo Days: Sorghum Serves as the Cornerstone of Community Identity in Carleton



Milo Community Park  
in Carleton, Nebraska

Nebraska Sorghum wishes to thank Ms. Karla Lubben, and the community of Carleton, for extending a special invitation to participate in the 2021 "Milo Day" celebration. Carleton boasts being home to the first grain elevator to accept sorghum in the state of Nebraska. The community comes together each year to honor their proud heritage with various activities around town, a parade, and a "Milo Princess" competition. Nebraska Sorghum Executive Director, Nate Blum spoke with the Milo Princess contestants, judged a baking competition, and addressed the community at the new fire barn in the evening.

This was an amazing event. A classic small-town celebration. Nebraska Sorghum is looking forward to participating again in 2022!



A fun time at the Milo Day Parade



Blum with the Milo Princesses

# Message from the Director:



## Sorghum Aint No Joke

It is a privilege to have the opportunity to work for Nebraska's Sorghum Producers. Having grown up on a farm that raised milo, this career feels extra special to me. A way to continue on my family's agricultural legacy. Honestly, I sometimes wonder what I've done to be so lucky as to work with great folks promoting an industry (and a crop) that is so near and dear to my heart and history.

Many farms in Nebraska haven't grown milo in a generation or more. The reasons for this are myriad, but commonly are based around historically higher prices for corn and the advance of center-pivot irrigation in the 1990's. As a result, farms in Eastern Nebraska in particular often operate in a corn-soybean monoculture. Sorghum has become a part of the past.

But, that is changing. Nebraska's sorghum acres are up by 54% in 2021. This is a result of increased markets demand and better prices for the crop. In fact, I am frequently contacted by brokers and merchandizers looking to fill orders for huge quantities of sorghum. Unfortunately, we still don't have the production levels to meet those demands. We frequently are forced to send those orders to be filled in larger sorghum-producing states like Kansas and Texas.

That's bad news for Nebraska farmers. Sorghum prices in 2020 and 2021 were (and are) often above corn prices. Coupled with less expensive inputs at a time when costs are soaring, many farms would benefit from adding sorghum in their rotations. In fact, research from K-State shows us that corn or soybeans planted following sorghum will see an average of 8% increase in yield due to the positive effects of sorghum's larger root biomass on soil health.

So why don't we see even more sorghum production? Why is Nebraska fifth nationally in production total, when our neighbor to the north, South Dakota, is fourth?

One piece of the answer is simply a lack of awareness. Producers who haven't grown the crop for thirty years simply aren't familiar with sorghum any more. That producer education is a big part of my job as your Executive Director. We have several producer resources, and even an updated digital field guide on our website for this reason.

The bigger piece to this riddle is a cultural one. Sorghum is stigmatized by old tropes about itchiness, standability, and yield. Thirty years ago, these three issues were absolutely a limiting factor. However, with advances in breeding many of those concerns are a thing of the past. Granted, sorghum dust is still itchy. (So is soybean dust and corn dust, by the way.) Yet, I don't know of any producer still farming without a cab on their combine or cleaning out a grain bin in shorts and a t-shirt.

Those old stereotypes seem to live on mostly in dismissive jokes and comments that disparage the entire industry. I hear them every year at events like the state fair and Husker harvest Days. I even recently heard one made by a panel moderator in front of 350 conference attendees at a forum in Kansas City.

Not that I don't have a sense of humor. Sure, we can poke fun at things like this. But, doing so dismissively, and without even a second thought, creates an environment in which producers looking to diversify their operations and increase profits are dissuaded from doing so. A sort of agricultural peer-pressure, if you will.

As a result: NEBRASKA FARMERS ARE LEAVING MONEY ON THE TABLE BY NOT ACCESSING VALUE-ADDED MARKETS WORTH BILLIONS OF DOLLARS.

We have to change this mindset. Sorghum isn't a joke. It's a profitable crop. One that is growing in popularity amongst consumers at home and around the world at a staggering rate. As a sorghum grower, or even a supporter and member of the Sorghum Army, I need you to help advocate that our industry professionals move beyond the coffee shop snickers and start thinking about how sorghum can help improve their bottom line.

Including sorghum in rotations gains even more importance if we are paying attention to water, wildlife, and soil sustainability conversations. (And we ought to be!) This crop offers an opportunity to show agriculture's naysayers that we are actively taking charge to address their environmental concerns while also leveraging their pocket books for value-added agriculture.

Will you help to tell our story with your neighbors and friends? Next time someone asks you if that sorghum cookie will "itch on the way down", maybe ask them what their ROI and margins were last year on a farm that is more interested in telling jokes than making profit? This is real business. Producers in states around us are taking advantage of markets at the expense of Nebraska farms.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Sorghum" or a similar name, written in a cursive style.

# 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](http://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%<sup>1</sup> 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 methods<sup>2</sup>

A single cup of cooked whole grain sorghum packs 14.8 grams of protein<sup>3</sup>, 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

# The Nebraska Sorghum Producers Association Thanks our 2021 Sponsors!

The logo for Extreme Ag, Inc. features the words "EXTREME" and "AG, INC" in a stylized, blocky font. The letters are filled with a green and yellow pattern, giving it a textured, agricultural appearance.The logo for Midwest Messenger. It features the word "Midwest" in a small, italicized font above the word "MESSENGER" in large, bold, blue capital letters. Below the text is a green graphic of rolling hills, a yellow sun, a white windmill, and a white cow.The logo for Syngenta Global. It features the word "syngenta" in a blue, lowercase, sans-serif font with a green leaf icon above the 'y'. Below it, the word "Global" is written in a smaller, grey, sans-serif font.The logo for Arrow Seed, featuring the words "ARROW" and "SEED" in a blue, bold, sans-serif font, stacked vertically.The logo for Aurora Cooperative, featuring the words "AURORA" and "COOPERATIVE" in a bold, black, sans-serif font, stacked vertically.

To learn more about how YOUR company  
can become a 2021 Sorghum Supporter,  
call: 402-802-1850!

The logo for BASF, featuring a green square with a white square inside, followed by the word "BASF" in a bold, white, sans-serif font. Below it, the tagline "We create chemistry" is written in a smaller, white, sans-serif font.The logo for Alta seeds, featuring the word "Alta" in a green, cursive font and "seeds" in a yellow, sans-serif font, with a green leaf icon above the 's'.