



Kansas Grain Sorghum Commission
Legislative Report
February 9, 2016
Stephen Bigge, Stockton, KS serving as District IV Commissioner

Thank you for the opportunity to provide an annual report from the Kansas Grain Sorghum Commission (KGSC). My name is Stephen Bigge and I am the fourth district commissioner of the KGSC. My family farm is near Stockton, Kansas in Rooks County. Here with me today is the Kansas Grain (KGS) Director Pat Damman.

In addition to copies of my written testimony, we have presented you with our 2016 annual report and our annual financial audit completed by Varney & Associates of Manhattan, KS.

In 2007, due to an extreme shortage of money to fund sorghum research, the KGSC voted to support the formation of a national sorghum checkoff and to suspend the state checkoff in favor of a Sorghum Checkoff collection. This suspension occurred on July 1, 2008. The United Sorghum Checkoff Program was formed and is funded by a non-refundable assessment of 0.6 percent of the net market value of grain sorghum. The Sorghum Checkoff is required to hold a referendum. The first referendum was voted on in February 2011 and the second referendum was held in spring 2015. It passed with ninety-six and half percent votes in favor of the national checkoff.

Kansas is well represented in the United Sorghum Checkoff Program. As the top grain sorghum producing state, Kansas holds 5 out of 13 board seats. The Sorghum Checkoff has two regional field staff in Kansas that cover the state working with sorghum producers, researchers and stakeholders. Kansas producers, researchers and private industry are involved on Sorghum Checkoff committees. I am pleased to share that Kansas has 7 of the 15 participants in the first two Leadership Sorghum classes. Leadership Sorghum exposed farmers to the sorghum industry and future leadership opportunities. As a Class I graduate, I feel that Leadership Sorghum has equipped me with the skills to be a strong leader in the sorghum industry. Class III will begin this fall and we hope that Kansas will be well represented again.

The United Sorghum Checkoff program has benefited Kansas sorghum producers by facilitating a focused industry including: a unified voice in sorghum promotion and market development, elimination of duplicate state research and greater resources for higher investment research initiatives. The Sorghum Checkoff board can pass back a maximum of twenty-five percent of the funds received from a state, to that state's qualified organization. The Sorghum Checkoff board has elected annually to pass back the maximum, providing the Kansas Grain Sorghum Commission with a total of over 6 million dollars in the past seven years. The Sorghum Checkoff and Kansas Commission work closely together to strategically invest sorghum dollars. Separate from KGSC's investments, USCP has invested over 1.75 million dollars to research at Kansas State University.

Over the past seven years, the Kansas Commission has funded over 4 million dollars in research with Kansas State University and \$100,000 to Heartland Plant Innovations in Manhattan, KS. KSU is home to the Center for Sorghum Improvement. With adequate funding, they are positioned to be a key leader in sorghum research.



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The Commission has focused research efforts towards increasing yield, cold and drought tolerance, weed control and sorghum management.

The Commission is a member of the US Grains Council. US Grains Council provides foreign market promotion for grain sorghum. In January, I had the opportunity to travel to China and the Philippines on a grain export mission with the US Grains Council to learn and promote the sorghum markets. That amazing trip has given me a better understanding of the export market. Kansas sorghum is key to these countries. The commission also helps fund the International Grains Program at KSU that offers educational opportunities for many foreign grain purchasers.

Kansas remains the number one producer of grain sorghum in the United States growing forty to fifty percent of the United States annual production. According to the USDA in 2015, Kansas harvested 3.2 million acres which is a nineteen percent increase from last year and 282 million bushels, an increase of forty-one percent from the previous year. Sorghum is also standing out because of it's water utilization characteristics. Due to sorghums water use efficiency, it will play a role in maintaining and growing the Kansas agricultural economy as more progress is made in "conserving and extending" our water supplies. As mentioned in the water vision, we need additional research funds for sorghum to continue to conserve the water in Kansas.

The Kansas Grain Sorghum Commission plays a vital role in the future of grain sorghum production in Kansas by providing the sorghum producer with information and education. The commission also provides the seed and chemical industry with vital traits and technology that will be made available to the sorghum growers. Farmers need to be confident that the grain sorghum they plant will be both productive and profitable on their farms.

Thanks to the committee for your interest in sorghum. The Commission is proud to work on behalf of Kansas sorghum producers. At this time, I would be glad to address any questions that the committee may have.