United Sorghum Checkoff Program
Strategic Plan
February 2009

Vision: Sorghum producers profit from a progressive, competitive and adaptive industry.

Mission: USCP commits to efficiently investing checkoff dollars to increase producer profitability and enhance the sorghum industry.

Purpose: We exist to do as a group what we cannot do individually: to provide research, market development and communications.

Core Values:

- We will listen to sorghum growers.
- We value transparency and honor our commitment to make information available to all sorghum growers.
- We believe that return on investment must be our first consideration for investing sorghum checkoff dollars.
- We believe in the ability of our industry to succeed through the investment in all segments of research, market development and communication.
- We value the communication and education of the sorghum producers and industry in regard to research and market development projects.
- We believe that all information, positive and negative, must be gathered and understood to generate the future we want for the sorghum industry.
- We value our relationships with partner organizations and industry. We understand and recognize the differences between our contractual relationships and our relationships as organizations. We are committed to the letter and spirit of the Act and Order.
- We value an interactive network within USCP to trigger action from one committee to another based on the needs of that committee.

Key:

Goals will be listed one per page (or if multiple pages, the goal will be repeated at the top) in a ***bold, italic*** font. Underneath the goals will be listed objectives (●), then strategies (○), and finally tactics (■).

Increase yields overall by 5% per year through 2015

- Increase yield annually through producer education with existing knowledge by 2011
    - Develop and distribute regional producer agronomic handbooks to educate farmers on best management practices
        - Work with regional extension personnel on development of the handbook
        - Distribute at producer meetings and direct mail
    - Develop and deploy producer educational programs to educate farmers on best management practices
        - Work with regional extension personnel and crop consultants to develop educational program
        - Hold producer meetings and field days
        - Partner with private and public stakeholders when possible to meet the goal
        - Partner with NSP and Information Committee of USCP to expand awareness of this resource

- Increase yield annually by the application of new traits that protect yield potential – defensive traits
    - Have new weed and grass control on 50% of the sorghum acres by 2015
        - Help develop new technology by partnering with private and public stakeholders
        - Help deploy new technology by implementing an educational program that informs producers of new weed control, herbicides and herbicide technologies including resistance management issues
    - Have economically important disease and pest resistance traits on 25% of regional sorghum acres by 2015
        - Identify and target technologies and/or practices that solve specific insect and disease problems
        - Once identified, develop and deploy educational programs so producers will implement new technologies and/or practices

- Increase yield annually by new research and other agronomic factors
    - Identify and target research projects to enhance whole plant cold tolerance
        - Work with private stakeholders to incorporate cold tolerance into hybrids
    - Identify and target research on water management and water use efficiency
        - Educate producers on the importance of irrigation timing and the economics of sorghum irrigation versus other crops
        - Relate growth stages of sorghum to water use by hybrids

Increase yields overall by 5% per year through 2015 (continued)

- Identify and target research on efficient fertilization to maximize yields
  - Educate producers on the importance of nitrogen application timing and crop rotation
  - Educate producers on the benefits of starter fertilizer
  - Educating producers on importance of soil testing

- Continue to increase yields annually with genetic improvement
  - Identify and target genomic/germplasm projects to increase yield
    - Develop new genetic germplasm for enhanced yield in bioenergy, foods, health, and feed
    - Enhance the use of exotic sorghum germplasm through new technologies to efficiently utilize photoperiod-sensitive germplasm
    - Expand genomic tools to exploit the sorghum sequence
    - Expand heterotic pools within sorghum to increase yield potential
    - Identify and target research that increases nitrogen use efficiency
  - Identify and target research on traits that protect yield potential – defensive traits
    - Identify and target research on drought and heat tolerance
    - Identify and target research on plant health and standability
    - Work with seed industry and producers to develop technologies or practices to minimize the impact of ergot in sorghum

- Increase yield annually by reinforcement and verification of existing knowledge
  - Update and deploy educational tools as knowledge base expands
    - Hold producer meetings in specific areas where breakthroughs with research or agronomic practices will have the most impact on yield

Increase demand by 7% per year through 2015

- Increase inclusion rate of grain sorghum in the ethanol industry by 50% by 2011 (35 m bu)
    - Develop tools to educate plants on the return on investment (ROI) of using sorghum
        - Develop software tools to quickly compare ROI of using sorghum to other feedstocks
    - Educate plant leadership on value of sorghum as a feedstock
        - Hold meetings with plant leadership that utilizes software tools and existing research on sorghum as a feedstock

- Position grain sorghum as a successful feedstock for advanced biofuels by 2011 (50 m bu)
    - Complete a comprehensive greenhouse gas (GHG) lifecycle analysis for grain sorghum
        - Compile existing information on grain sorghum GHG lifecycle analysis
        - Conduct research to supplement existing information
        - Aggregate existing and new data into a comprehensive analysis
    - Develop strategy to position grain sorghum as the preferred advanced biofuels feedstock
        - Develop and deploy educational material resulting from the research progress of multiple sources on the benefits of grain sorghum as an advanced biofuels feedstock
        - Work with ethanol industry associations to educate processors on the benefits of grain sorghum as an advanced biofuels feedstock by placing articles in ethanol industry publications and web sites

- Target international market development in markets with the greatest opportunities for a 7% annual increase by 2015 (28 m bu)
    - Coordinate efforts with the sorghum sector of the U.S. Grains Council
        - Encourage USGC to hire a sorghum-specific trade servicing contractor
        - Evaluate transportation and logistics through analysis and intelligence gathering
        - Meet with end users to identify market constraints
        - Evaluate and commercialize new use and niche market opportunities for sorghum
        - Secure new customers that meet the above criteria

Increase demand by 7% per year through 2015 (continued)

- Expand domestic markets and new uses by 7% annually by 2015
    - Identify all historical, current and potential new end users of sorghum
        - Hire a trade servicing contractor
        - Identify specific niche market opportunities
    - Evaluate transportation and logistics through analysis and intelligence gathering
        - Conduct focus groups with key industry stakeholders
    - Identify, characterize and enhance grain and forage quality traits for all uses
        - Enhance starch conversion for identification of "processor preferred" sorghum
        - Research nutraceutical and health applications of sorghum for human and animal consumption

Deliver 1 billion gallons of non-grain biofuels from sorghum by 2015

- Define and determine non-grain sorghum life cycle analysis as it relates to GHG and advanced biofuels by 2010
    - Determine the differences between non-grain and grain sorghum GHG lifecycle analysis
        - Compile existing information on grain sorghum GHG lifecycle analysis
        - Compile existing information on non-grain sorghum GHG lifecycle analysis
    - Complete a comprehensive GHG lifecycle analysis for non-grain sorghum
        - Conduct research to supplement existing on non-grain sorghum GHG lifecycle information
        - Aggregate existing and new data into a comprehensive analysis

- Research production techniques that capitalize on specific traits of non-grain sorghum that will provide increased ROI for industry stakeholders
    - Research biomass conversion techniques
        - Evaluate existing techniques for converting non-grain sorghum biomass
        - Refine and/or develop new techniques for biomass conversion
    - Research sugar conversion in sweet sorghum
        - Evaluate existing techniques for sugar conversion in sweet sorghum
        - Refine and/or develop new techniques for sugar conversion in sweet sorghum
    - Research the transportation, harvesting, and storage of non-grain sorghum
        - Evaluate existing transportation, harvesting and storage equipment and strategies including logistics analysis
        - Refine and/or develop new equipment and strategies for non-grain sorghum transportation, harvesting, and storage

- Provide information and education on agronomic, technical and financial aspects of non-grain sorghum biofuels production to producers and plant developers
    - Educate producers on the specifics of non-grain sorghum production as a biofuels feedstock
        - Develop non-grain sorghum specific best management practices
        - Deploy best management practices through printed materials and producer meetings
    - Educate plant developers on the value of non-grain sorghum as a biofuels feedstock
        - Develop educational materials about the benefits of non-grain sorghum as a biofuels feedstock from research results from multiple sources
        - Conduct meetings with plant developers and entrepreneurs

Increase knowledge among producers and first purchasers about the checkoff. Increase knowledge 20% annually through 2015 among producers about the factors that could increase profitability. Increase knowledge 20% annually through 2015 among end users.

- Create 100% sorghum producer awareness of the sorghum checkoff by 2010
    - Increase knowledge of the checkoff by the flow of information through media, producer meetings, farm and ranch shows, printed material, and web site
        - USCP communications department coordinates a unified message working with outside contractors
        - Ensure proper credit is given to USCP to help establish identity
    - Provide information to first purchasers
        - Educate first purchasers through on-site visits

- Increase knowledge of the sorghum checkoff program by 10% annually
    - Increase knowledge of the checkoff by the flow of information through media, producer meetings, farm and ranch shows, printed material, and web site
        - Continue a coordinated, unified message that promotes brand identity

- Provide marketing, economic, and agronomic information to sorghum producers that increases knowledge, awareness, and application by 20% annually as measured by surveys
    - Provide agronomic information through educational events, publications, media, crop consultants and websites
        - Work with contractors on a unified message that delivers agronomic information to producers
    - Research factors that influence the competitiveness of grain sorghum with other crops
        - Evaluate crop insurance yields and pricing and provide data to industry stakeholders
        - Evaluate proposed WTO impacts on sorghum and provide data to industry stakeholders
    - Research factors that influence the competitiveness of non-grain sorghums with other crops
        - Evaluate the comparative advantage of non-grain sorghums

Increase knowledge among producers and first purchasers about the checkoff. Increase knowledge 20% annually through 2015 among producers about the factors that could increase profitability. Increase knowledge 20% annually through 2015 among end users (continued).

- Provide educational and marketing information to end users that increases knowledge, awareness, and positive buying impact by 20% annually as measured by surveys
    - Provide information to end users
        - Work with outside contractors to develop and distribute end user information

Establish partnership with allied organizations to leverage checkoff dollars

- Develop a system where, within 3 years, a minimum of 30% of funded research projects will involve a public/private partnership
    - Utilize a RFP process that gives priority to projects that leverage funding and or other resources
        - Establish a web-based, consistent, searchable and accountable database for the RFP process
    - Within 1 year establish several short-term projects
        - Identify existing opportunity areas for collaboration
    - Within 1 year establish 1 to 2 long-term research projects
        - Identify priority areas for collaboration
    - Work with the industry to quickly establish an IP policy that allows USCP to partner with industry in order to get technology to the market
        - Work with industry stakeholders to examine current IP policies
        - Work with legal counsel to develop a comprehensive IP policy