



NEWSLETTER

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Sorghum Checkoff Strengthens Marketing Efforts with Team Approach and New Staff Addition

The United Sorghum Checkoff Program recently announced a strategic reorganization of its marketing team. Under the new structure, the Sorghum Checkoff will focus on developing and advancing sorghum as the resource-conserving ingredient and efforts to reveal the potential and versatility of sorghum through increased shared value.

The new marketing team includes longtime Sorghum Checkoff team members who now hold expanded roles from their previous regional marketing positions:

- Shelee Padgett, Director of Emerging Markets & Grower Leader Development
- Brent Crafton, Director of Feed Ingredient Utilization
- Zach Simon, Director of Ingredient Utilization and Pet Food

Padgett is focused on facilitating international marketing efforts, emerging markets and regional relations as well as the Leadership Sorghum program, which offers various sorghum education programs to young and emerging leaders in the sorghum industry. Crafton is responsible for research and program development in aquaculture, livestock and

poultry nutrition programs. Simon is focused on sorghum's role in the pet food industry, renewable fuels and supply chain infrastructure.

"This team approach to developing valuable markets for sorghum will help showcase and advance sorghum's versatility across the entire landscape of the diverse end uses for our crop," Sorghum Checkoff Executive Director Norma Ritz Johnson said. "We are thrilled Padgett, Crafton and Simon—all seasoned members of Team Sorghum—were able to step into these new roles."

Lanier Dabruzzi, MS, RD, LD, is the most recent addition to the restructured marketing team. She joins the Sorghum Checkoff as the Director of Food Innovations and Institutional Markets and will be responsible for increasing the use of sorghum in the U.S. food supply as an ingredient and stand-alone product. She will also provide marketing and education and identify critical issues and opportunities relating to value-added sorghum marketing opportunities in the food industry.

"Dabruzzi came to us highly recommended for her history

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of connecting with consumers and the food industry by highlighting the nutritional benefits of the products she has represented," Ritz Johnson said.

"The experience and deep industry insights she has, coupled with her culinary nutrition skills, are the perfect fit as we begin this new chapter. I have never been more excited about our industry's future."

Before joining the Sorghum Checkoff, Dabruzzi served as the Assistant Director of Food and Nutrition Outreach for The Dairy Alliance. In that role, she used her in-depth knowledge of food, communications and marketing to grow sales through food and nutrition trends, nutrition expertise, menu and product ideation, including working in partnership with MilkPEP on programs and campaigns with the National Football League (NFL) and United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee (USOC).

"I have tremendous respect for our nation's farmers and the safe, nutritious food they produce for us each day," Dabruzzi said. "Sorghum has enormous growth potential in the consumer food industry, and I could not be more excited to lead that effort."



Lanier Dabruzzi RD, LD, MS

Dabruzzi is a member of the Food and Culinary Professionals Dietetic Practice Group with the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics and the Georgia Academy of Nutrition & Dietetics.

Dabruzzi received her Bachelor of Science from the University of Southern California in Health Promotion and Disease Prevention and her Master of Science from the University of Tennessee in Nutrition Science. Dabruzzi has worked with the dairy, beef and almond industries for more than 10 years.

The team approach to the Sorghum Checkoff's market development efforts was implemented preceding the Dec. 8 retirement of Market Development Director Doug Bice, who devoted eight years to the Sorghum Checkoff and sorghum industry.

"I would like to thank Doug Bice for his role in bringing added value and demand for U.S. sorghum farmers," Sorghum Checkoff CEO Tim Lust said. "Bice has been a tremendous advocate and innovator to our organization and our industry."

A Farmer's Thoughts on Sustainable Agriculture

By Farmer Ted Bannister, Hays Kansas

The terms "conservation agriculture," "sustainable agriculture," and "regenerative agriculture" are frequently used somewhat synonymously in farm circles in terms of what farmers and society hope to achieve - to diminish, stop or reverse resource depletion. Depletion is something that I think about all the time - it may be my greatest concern as a farmer. The depletion I'm talking about is comprehensive—depletion of technology efficacy, soil nutrients, water, our rural population, any of which may reach tipping

points that could end farming as I know it.

I recently attended the Sustainable Agriculture Summit, which was hosted by ag producer groups and food associations. This conference promotes itself as a leading voice in this space, so it was interesting to see the composition of speakers and attendees. Producers definitely composed less than half of the attendees and were predominantly representing animal agriculture. The greater share of attendees were nonprofits, producer group staff, government

staff, press and private company sustainable officers. I have to say, the interest and motivation on this side of agriculture and food are intense. However, my reading was that when this non-producer segment discusses "sustainability", they mean climate and when they discuss "climate", they mean carbon. That's okay with me at some level; farmers are root to seed deep in carbon. We are already in the carbon business. After all, an acre of grain sorghum produces at least 756 pounds of carbon.

As producers, I'm sure you

are aware of “carbon markets” with their carbon credit buyers. Did you know there are at least 100 carbon markets with 60 different measurements and pricing mechanisms? This overabundance of choices is off-putting to many farmers who are left making somewhat ambiguous choices that could translate into thousands of dollars staked on our choices.

These carbon markets are demand-driven by corporations that are facing increasing pressure to be good corporate citizens and show some effort at carbon reduction. Limited by their own flexibility to reduce carbon, they seek offsets through those that can sequester carbon—namely, farmers. Over 900 U.S. companies include a statement about climate/carbon in their corporate bylaws or public press. At least 50 have net zero pledges. With this kind of momentum, it will be odd for a company NOT to have a stake soon. This “greening” is not entirely altruistic or all consumer driven, but investor driven. Endowments, foundations and pension funds want corporate statements on carbon from the companies they own. There are mutual

funds, ETFs and Index Funds exclusively for carbon/climate investment. Another example, an alliance called FAIRR (Fair Animal Investment Risk and Return) claims to have \$45 billion of managed money pledged toward reducing the environmental impact of animal agriculture.

The Federal (and some state and local) government is similarly seeking climate action - they just don’t know what action. The government looks at agriculture and sees it as a place to move the needle most while requiring the fewest actors. The primary agricultural levers look to be carbon sequestration and reduced methane from animal feeding. Carbon sequestration is sought through farming practices consistent with the pillars of regenerative agriculture. Keep the soil covered, minimize soil disturbance, maximize crop diversity, maintain a living root and integrate livestock. The reduction of methane produced by livestock feeding is targeted at ruminant enteric fermentation. This is accomplished by feed additives of fats or oils, chemicals, or natural additives. The dairy industry, being more concentrated and with great consumer exposure

because of branding, is already deep into testing methane reducing feed systems.

The problems for policy-makers are large—not just achieving scientific bang-for-the-buck but also achieving buy-in from farmers. Two glaring issues are 1) incentives - do you pay only for farm practices or for measured soil carbon or emission results? And 2) the early adoption “penalty”—for those farmers that are years into regenerative practices by their own compulsion—do they not get compensated? Both of these issues could make or break the success of any climate-related programs.

So how do I feel about this wave of carbon incentives and heavy emphasis on better living through soil health? As a farmer, I am truly concerned about resource depletion and I think that regenerative agriculture principles offer an answer. If the marketplace of society, in a passionate bidding of carbon sequestration, is there to pay my tuition in adopting regenerative practices that addresses my resource depletion fears, then I better enroll. And yes, I definitely think there is tuition to pay.



Sorghum Checkoff Swears in New Board Members, Elects Charles Ray Huddleston as New Chairman

During the United Sorghum Checkoff Program annual December board of directors meeting, officers were elected and four directors were sworn in to complete their appointment to the board by U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary, Tom Vilsack. Charles Ray Huddleston of Celina, Texas, takes the helm as the newly elected Chairman.

"We are extremely excited to have this group of newly appointed board members join Team Sorghum," Sorghum Checkoff CEO Tim Lust said. "Their hard work and leadership will be great assets to not only the board but also to the future of the sorghum. The newly elected Sorghum Checkoff executive committee and newly appointed board directors include:

- Charles Ray Huddleston, Chairman, Celina, TX
- Adam Schindler, Vice Chairman, Reliance, SD (re-appointed

At-Large seat)

- Jeffry Zortman, Treasurer, Fowler, KS
- Kendall Hodgson, Secretary, Little River, KS
- Macey Mueller, Kansas Member, Halstead, KS (appointed to Kansas seat)
- Kim Baldwin, Kansas Member, McPherson, KS (appointed to Kansas seat)
- Kevin Pshigoda, Texas Member, Perryton, TX (appointed to Texas seat)

"With increased sorghum acres in 2021, improving yields, new markets, and new herbicide tolerant technology, this is an exciting time for U.S. sorghum, both internationally and domestically. I am grateful for the support of my fellow board members and I am honored to continue the great work of our checkoff," newly elected Chairman Charles Ray Huddleston said. "The board is composed of experienced, well-respected

leaders who provide valuable and strategic guidance. I look forward to continuing the board's success and I am excited about sorghum's future."

Tim Lust, Sorghum Checkoff CEO, expressed his gratitude for the steadfast hard work and commitment of retiring directors who have been on the board since 2018.

"The efforts of our retiring directors do not go unnoticed," Lust said. "We appreciate everything Craig, Boyd and Jim have done for the Sorghum Checkoff and are thankful to continue to have them as strong allies for the sorghum industry."

All four appointees will serve three-year terms starting December 2021 and ending December 2024. More information on how to become a Sorghum Checkoff board member is available at SorghumCheckoff.com.

SORGHUM INDUSTRY EVENTS

Jan 25-27 International Production & Processing Expo
Atlanta, Georgia

Mar 10-12 Commodity Classic
New Orleans, LA

Mar 11-13 Pheasant Fest
Omaha, NE

For more events, visit sorghumcheckoff.com/calendar

USCP MISSION

The Sorghum Checkoff commits to reveal the potential and versatility of sorghum through increased shared value.



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