



NEWSLETTER

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USCP Staff Represents The U.S. Sorghum Industry During The U.S. Chile Agribusiness Trade Mission

In a significant milestone for the U.S. sorghum industry, the United Sorghum Checkoff Program's Director of Emerging Markets and Grower Leader Development Shelee Padgett and Director of Feed Ingredient Utilization Brent Crafton represented the industry at the 2023 USDA Agribusiness Trade Mission to Chile. This endeavor, led by Under Secretary for Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs Alexis Taylor, was held alongside the 200th anniversary of U.S.-Chile relations and marked the 20th anniversary of the U.S.-Chile Free Trade Agreement.

Chile is a major player in the production of animal protein, relying heavily on imported ingredients to maintain its position, and the significance of the industry lent itself to many opportunities for the U.S. delegation to explore market opportunities to cultivate new trade relationships.

Chile's food processing industry, which encompasses salmon, beef, dairy, pork and poultry production, has a strong export focus. These sectors heavily depend on imported feed products. In 2022, Chilean protein producers spent a staggering \$126 million on U.S. feed products, such as corn gluten meal and soybean flour and oil, for their production.

Yet, conversations with industry giants, including Agrosuper, Tremontes Lucchetti, ALPROSA and ALICORP, highlighted a growing interest in sorghum as an alternative feed ingredient due to its sustainability and value-added benefits for feed.

The Sorghum Checkoff remains committed to nurturing these newly established connections, offering technical nutrition insights specific to poultry, pork, salmon and trout production—and providing invaluable supply-chain support. Additionally, the team is exploring opportunities to introduce U.S. sorghum in Chilean and Peruvian pet foods and human food applications, offering a promising look into future opportunities for U.S. sorghum in Chile.



Brent Crafton (left) and Shelee Padgett

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Sorghum Sustains Docuseries: An Exploration into Sustainable Agriculture

The United Sorghum Checkoff Program, committed to advancing the sorghum sector with research, promotion and education, has sponsored the YouTube docuseries “Sorghum Sustains.” This series, consisting of four videos, explores sorghum’s contribution to sustainable farming:

Sorghum & Food: This video addresses the role of sustainable agriculture in meeting the growing global demand for protein. It examines the challenges posed by changing weather patterns to food production and highlights sorghum as a Resource-Conserving Ingredient™. The segment provides an overview of the journey food takes from the field to grocery stores.

Sorghum & Soil Health: This segment discusses the importance of soil health in agriculture. It presents the practices adopted by sorghum farmers to maintain soil health and the advantages of including sorghum in crop rotations. The video also touches upon the benefits of reduced-till practices and regenerative soil strategies.

Sorghum & Water Conservation: Focusing on water conservation, this episode discusses the challenges posed by declining water levels, specifically referencing the Ogallala Aquifer. It explores the impact of drought and changing weather patterns on this essential resource. The video features

interviews with experts and farmers, shedding light on the benefits of growing drought-tolerant crops like sorghum.

What is Sustainability?: This video aims to define sustainability within the context of food and agriculture systems. It looks at the challenges posed by changing weather patterns and the importance of developing sustainable agricultural practices.

Through the creation and promotion of projects like this, the Sorghum Checkoff seeks to boost the earnings of sorghum growers across the country. Beyond showcasing sorghum’s adaptability, the series offers valuable insights into sustainable farming for both producers, customers and consumers.

For those interested in learning about sorghum’s role in sustainable agriculture, the “Sorghum Sustains” series offers detailed insights. The series is available for viewing on [youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com).



**Scan the QR Code
to View the Series**

Mental Health Matters in Rural America

By Sorghum Checkoff Board Director, Macey Mueller

I am not one to wish away time, but this time of the year I just have to pray to “get through.” It is a taxing time for our family for many reasons compounded by the stress of early mornings shipping cattle, late nights in the field or the office, extreme weather conditions affecting production (cattle, crop and personal) and the sinking feeling that there is far more to get done than the hours in the day will allow.

The dog days of summer often leave me physically, mentally and emotionally drained, and I know I’m not alone. Seasonal and chronic stress and anxiety are all too common in an industry highly dependent on factors outside our control—volatile weather conditions, fluctuating commodity mar-

kets and increasing debt burdens all lead to financial instability and the added mental burden of carrying on a multi-generational family legacy. My husband and I are believers in the power of prayer and try hard to lay life’s burdens—especially those we can’t control—at the Lord’s feet, but there are times when those thoughts of worry and uncertainty linger and lead to deeper mental distress.

According to a five-year University of Illinois – Urbana study, nearly a quarter of the farm parents surveyed met the criteria for mild depression and moderate depression and 11.5 percent met the criteria for moderately severe depression. Furthermore, nearly a third of adult participants in the sample met the criteria for mild Generalized Anx-



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in Rural America

xiety Disorder (GAD), and 18.9% and 4.9% met the criteria for moderate and severe GAD, respectively.

Unfortunately, the mental health of U.S. farmers and ranchers has been overlooked and almost taboo for many years. As inherently proud and often private people, seeking help for mental health issues has been seen as a sign of weakness and has prevented many producers from reaching out for support. A recent poll by the American Farm Bureau Federation showed the stigma around seeking help or treatment for mental health has decreased but is still a factor in agriculture. While farmers and farm workers indicate an 11% decrease in the stigma attached to those who seek help for mental health, 63% say there is still at least some stigma around stress and mental health in the agriculture community.

In an effort to further reduce this stigma and address the growing rural mental health crisis, many agricultural organizations, universities and mental health advocacy groups have initiated programs to provide mental health education, crisis hotlines and support services specifically tailored to farmers. For resources compiled by the Kansas Farm Bureau to assist farmers and ranchers with depression, stress, addictions, and other mental/behavioral health concerns, visit www.kfb.org/Article/Mental-Health-Resources

Identifying Mental Health Distress

Oftentimes, signs of mental struggle are overlooked by family, friends and neighbors. According to NY FarmNet, the more signs of stress you or a farm family member is exhibiting, the greater the need for additional help and support. Many of

these are signs and symptoms of fatigue and stress, but when there are multiple signs, they should be taken seriously.

- Appearance: Sad face, slow movements, unkempt appearance, lack of facial expression
- Anxiety and/or depression
- Unhappy feelings
- Withdrawal or isolation
- Negative thoughts: "I'm a failure," or "I'm no good"
- Helpless and hopeless: Sense of complete powerlessness, sense that no one cares.
- Reduced activity: Absence of planning, increased sleeping, feeling that "doing anything is just too much"
- Substance abuse
- People problems: Lack of interest in being social ("I don't want anyone to see me.")
- Previous suicide attempts
- Physical problems: Sleeping problems, decreased appetite, various physical ailments from aches and pains to severe muscle tension or chronic pain
- Suicidal plan: Frequent or constant thoughts of a specific suicide plan
- Guilt and low self-esteem: "It's all my fault," or "I should be punished"
- Cries for help: Making a will, giving away possessions, making statements such as "I'm calling it quits" or "Maybe my family would be better off without me"

Coping with Stress

Recently, I have started to identify potentially

stressful times of the year and attempt to “head them off at the pass” with some strategic planning and built-in personal time to decompress. Being organized seems to alleviate some of my mental burden and helps me feel more in control of my wellbeing. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention also suggests these healthy ways to deal with stress:

- Take breaks from watching, reading or listening to news stories
- Take care of yourself and your body
- Make time to unwind
- Connect with your community – or faith-based organizations
- Avoid drugs and alcohol

Recognize when you need more help

George Washington once said “Agriculture is the most healthful, most useful and most noble employment of man,” and I think it’s safe to say he got two out of three right. Unfortunately, the stress that comes with the job many of us love can sometimes take its toll on our health and lead to mental and emotional distress, substance abuse, anxiety, depression and even suicide. Caring for our own health and wellness in this high-stress profession can be easy to overlook but is just as important as caring for our farm business.

September is National Suicide Prevention Month and a time to shine a light on mental health issues in our country. Specifically, September 17-23 is National Farm Safety and Health Week, which encompasses “brain health” and aims to promote overall wellness as a key to keeping producers safe on their operations, but we know this is an issue that deserves attention year-round.

If you would like to learn more about recognizing the signs and symptoms of stress and suicide, ways to effectively communicate with people under stress and how to reduce stigma related to mental health concerns, the Rural Resilience Open Online Course equips farmers, their families and the agricultural community with tools and resources to help in time of need.

Moreover, if you are a farmer in crisis, or know of someone in need of immediate assistance, contact a local treatment resource or call the National Suicide Prevention Line at 988.

SORGHUM INDUSTRY EVENTS

Nov 23-24 Thanksgiving Holiday
Office Closed

Dec 5-7 Leadership Sorghum Class VI Session 4
New Orleans, LA

Dec 13-14 USCP Annual Board Meeting
Lubbock, TX

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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