



WHAT'S INSIDE

1

New Sorghum Assurances Protocol Strengthens Global Market Opportunities

2

USDA Appoints Five to Sorghum Checkoff Board

3

Leadership Sorghum Class VIII Selected

4

Sorghum Checkoff Executive Director Announces Retirement



SORGHUM
CHECKOFF

New Sorghum Assurances Protocol Strengthens Global Market Opportunities

Every bushel of sorghum tells a story.

It begins with producers who carefully manage their land, conserve natural resources and grow one of the world's most sustainable crops. Increasingly, global customers want documentation that U.S. sorghum meets the environmental standards and verifies those practices were employed.

To help meet that demand, the United Sorghum Checkoff Program and the U.S. Grains & BioProducts Council developed the Sorghum Assurances Protocol, a voluntary, industry-led framework that documents how U.S. sorghum is produced. The recent issuance of the first Sustainable Sorghum Exports records of sustainability marks an important milestone, moving the program from development into real-world commercial use.

The protocol doesn't change how producers farm. Instead, it documents the strong legal, regulatory and production systems already in place across the United States. It provides international buyers with verified information on production prac-

tices and the land on which U.S. sorghum is grown, giving them greater confidence when sourcing U.S. sorghum.

Around the world, food, feed and renewable fuel companies continue to increase regenerative reporting requirements. Many customers now seek documentation that demonstrates responsible sourcing as part of their purchasing decisions. The Sorghum Assurances Protocol helps the U.S. sorghum industry meet those expectations while reinforcing the value of American-grown sorghum in competitive global markets.

The protocol evaluates 13 impact categories, including water stewardship, soil conservation, biodiversity, greenhouse gas management, labor practices and supply chain governance. Rather than creating new regulations, it compiles existing federal and state laws, industry standards and best management practices into a single, internationally recognized framework that buyers can trust.

Through the Sustainable Sorghum Exports (SSE) platform, international buyers can also receive shipment-specific

documentation that links their sorghum purchases to records of sustainably produced U.S. sorghum verified under the Sorghum Assurances Protocol. This creates a transparent chain of documentation while simplifying the process for companies participating in global supply chains.

For producers, the value extends well beyond paperwork.

The protocol helps strengthen customer confidence, protect existing export relationships and create opportunities in emerging markets where documentation continues to grow in importance. As more countries and multinational companies adopt responsible sourcing policies, having an industrywide assurance system positions U.S. sorghum to compete for new business without placing additional reporting burdens on growers.

Sorghum already stands apart for its drought tolerance, efficient water use and ability to thrive under challenging growing conditions. The Sorghum Assurances Protocol gives the industry another tool to communicate those strengths with credible, verified documentation that today's customers increasingly expect.

As global demand evolves, the Sorghum Assurances Protocol helps ensure U.S. sorghum remains recognized not only for its quality and versatility, but also for the transparency and trust that support long-term market growth for America's sorghum producers.

To learn more about the Sorghum Assurances Protocol and how it strengthens buyer confidence in U.S. sorghum, watch the overview video and visit SustainableSorghumExports.org.

What Producers Should Know

- Voluntary: The protocol does not require changes to current farming practices.
- Market-driven: It helps satisfy regenerative and sourcing requirements from global buyers.
- Grower-focused: Stronger buyer confidence supports long-term demand for U.S. sorghum.



Scan to learn more.

USDA Appoints Five to Sorghum Checkoff Board

The U.S. Department of Agriculture recently appointed five sorghum producers to the United Sorghum Checkoff Program Board of Directors, filling seats representing Kansas and Texas, as well as at-large positions. Four members will serve three-year terms through December 2028, while one member will complete a one-year term through December 2026.

The newly appointed board members are:

- Patrick J. Curl, Wellington, Kansas
- Scott Anthony Irlbeck, Lubbock, Texas
- Jeremiah Nicholson, Dodge City, Kansas
- Amy Jo Peterson, Johnson, Kansas
- Lindy McMillen, Dighton, Kansas

The 13-member Sorghum Checkoff Board is

composed of producers representing the nation's largest sorghum-producing states, along with at-large representatives from across the country. Board members oversee producer-funded investments in research, promotion and education that strengthen the competitiveness of U.S. sorghum and create opportunities for growers.

The board provides strategic direction for checkoff programs that support crop improvement, market development, consumer and industry education, international trade, and new market opportunities. Directors serve as representatives of sorghum producers, helping guide investments that deliver value across the sorghum value chain.

The Sorghum Checkoff Board operates under the oversight of USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service. More information about the board and its programs is available at the Sorghum Checkoff website and the USDA Agricultural Marketing

Service. To learn about how to become a director on our board visit sorghumcheckoff.com/about-us/board-of-directors/.



Patrick Curl,
Wellington, KS



Scott Irlbeck,
Lubbock, TX



Jeremiah Nicholson,
Dodge City, KS



Amy Peterson,
Johnson, KS



Lindy McMillen,
Dighton, KS

Leadership Sorghum Class VIII Selected

The United Sorghum Checkoff Program has selected 15 participants for Leadership Sorghum Class VIII, a premier leadership development program designed to cultivate the next generation of leaders in the sorghum industry.

"As agriculture continues to evolve, developing informed and forward-thinking leaders is essential to the long-term success of the sorghum industry," said Kim Baldwin, USCP chair. "Leadership Sorghum gives participants a broader view of the industry and equips them with the knowledge, relationships and experiences needed to help advance sorghum's future as they grow into leaders at every level."

Leadership Sorghum Class VIII members:

- Brock Billings, Braymer, Missouri
- Todd Borland, Levelland, Texas
- Ana Copeland, Raymondville, Texas
- Morgan Crabtree, Dalhart, Texas
- Chris Jewett, Amarillo, Texas
- Raphael Jolliffe, Seibert, Colorado
- Colin Kirchhoff, Prairie View, Kansas
- Matthew McMillen, Dighton, Kansas
- Mark Nall, Lubbock, Texas
- Cole Novak, Canyon, Texas
- Job Rendel, Miami, Oklahoma
- Tobin Randolph, Perryton, Texas
- Lisa Schemm, Sharon Springs, Kansas
- Michael Taylor, Weatherby, Missouri
- Creason Young, Riviera, Texas

"Each class of Leadership Sorghum represents the future voice of our industry," said Shelee Padgett, USCP director of emerging markets and grower leader development. "These producers and industry professionals bring valuable perspectives from across the sorghum-growing region, and this program helps them build the skills and connections needed to strengthen both their

"Each class of Leadership Sorghum represents the future voice of our industry."

operations and the broader industry."

During the 14-month program, participants will take part in educational seminars, industry tours and professional development opportunities. Through hands-on learning and direct engagement with leaders across the value chain, class members gain a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities shaping the sorghum industry today.

Class VIII begins in September during the Global Sorghum Conference in Lubbock, Texas, where participants will connect with producers, researchers and industry leaders from around the world.

To learn more about Leadership Sorghum, visit LeadSorghum.com.

Sorghum Checkoff Executive Director Announces Retirement

United Sorghum Checkoff Program Executive Director Norma Ritz Johnson will retire at the end of 2026, concluding a career marked by service to agriculture, organizational leadership and community engagement.

Johnson became the Sorghum Checkoff's third executive director in January 2021. She previously served as executive vice president of the Lubbock Chamber of Commerce and as communications director for National Sorghum Producers.

During her tenure, Johnson helped expand market opportunities for U.S. sorghum, strengthen domestic and international partnerships, increase consumer awareness and advance research investments across food, feed and agricultural innovation.

"Serving sorghum farmers in this role has been one of the greatest privileges of my career," Johnson said. "I am proud of what we've accomplished together and grateful for the producers, board members, staff and industry partners who have made this work so rewarding."

Johnson will continue leading the national organization through the end of the year and will help ensure a smooth leadership transition.

The Sorghum Checkoff has begun its search for an experienced professional to serve as its next executive director. Based in Lubbock,

Texas, the executive director manages day-to-day operations, leads staff and works with the CEO and Board of Directors to guide investments in research, market development, innovation and producer engagement while maintaining compliance with USDA Agricultural Marketing Service requirements.

Applicants should hold a bachelor's degree and have at least five years of business experience or training.

Submit a cover letter and resume to edcandidate@sorghumgrowers.com by Aug. 18, 2026. See the full job posting at sorghumcheckoff.com/news/position-announcement/.



Sorghum Industry Events

September 14-18 Global Sorghum Conference
Lubbock, TX

October 13 Sunbelt Ag Expo
Moultrie, GA

October 15-17 Export Exchange
Seattle, WA

For more events, visit sorghumcheckoff.com/news-and-events/



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USCP Mission

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



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