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## **National Sorghum Checkoff Begins Collections**

This morning, July 1, 2008, the Sorghum Promotion, Research and Information Order officially began collections for a program that will ultimately contribute to the improved development of the sorghum industry.

The National Sorghum Producers Board of Directors has been working toward the creation of a nation-wide sorghum checkoff program for over two years.

“The first checked-off load represents a milestone for the sorghum industry,” said NSP President Dale Murden of Monte Alto, Texas. “This step will lead to more research on sorghum, better markets for sorghum, and eventually more acres for this crop.”

The checkoff rate for grain sorghum is 0.6 percent of value and is collected at the first point of sale. The checkoff rate for forage sorghum is 0.35 percent of value. In many states, a previously-existing state checkoff was suspended upon commencement of national checkoff assessments.

“We have watched the decline of sorghum acres and the sorghum industry for the last 28 years,” said Gerald Simonsen, farmer from Ruskin, Nebraska. “To the producers for whom sorghum is an important part of their operation, the national sorghum checkoff is without any doubt the most positive move we have seen in those 28 years.”

Sorghum, deemed the “water-sipping crop,” is especially adaptable in semi-arid climates and uses one-third less water than some of its counterpart grains. It is used for animal feeding, for high-output ethanol production, as a gluten-free alternative food, and has many niche markets such as birdseed and wallboard. Much of the U.S. sorghum crop is also exported to Mexico and Europe for animal feeding and ethanol production.

“We have watched as public and private funding for the industry has been cut,” said Simonsen. “To me, it is inspiring that producers have taken it upon themselves to invest in their own industry.”

NSP represents U.S. sorghum producers. The organization works to ensure the profitability of sorghum production coast to coast through education and legislative and regulatory representation. To learn more about NSP, visit [www.sorghumgrowers.com](http://www.sorghumgrowers.com).