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NSP Evaluates Farm Bill Proposals

As the House and Senate Agriculture Committees write the next Farm Bill, the National Sorghum Producers (NSP) will continue to work with the Committees in support of the current sorghum farm programs. NSP will also work to ensure a strong renewable energy title that will make funds available for sorghum-to-ethanol research and development.

House Agriculture Committee Chairman Collin Peterson of Minnesota recently said that he intends to protect the safety net while adding new initiatives that will revitalize rural America and help our country achieve energy independence.

NSP President Dale Murden of Monte Alto, Texas said, "We stand in agreement with Chairman Peterson in support of a safety net and a strong renewable energy title that makes room for sorghum research and development. Sorghum growers can be assured the NSP will evaluate Farm Bill proposals to ensure a level playing field for profitability in the sorghum business."

Though sorghum growers are optimistic about high grain prices being fueled by ethanol demand, NSP supports keeping the safety net programs in place in case of market charges or weather-related disasters.

USDA recently proposed converting the current price-based counter-cyclical program to a revenue-based counter-cyclical program and eliminating the current 3-entity rule.

"The devil seems to be in the details in regard to how policies actually work out in the real world," said Murden. "For example, we've evaluated several revenue assurance proposals that are being circulated on the Hill, and they all seem to have different implications for producers. When it comes to payment limitations, NSP supports the provisions in the 2002 Farm Bill."

USDA also proposes to create a \$1.6 billion program to promote the production of cellulosic ethanol.

Grain sorghum yields the same amount of ethanol as corn, and other sorghums may also help the U.S. become more energy-independent. Sweet sorghums can be efficiently converted into ethanol and are used routinely in ethanol production around the globe. Biomass sorghum makes a good feedstock for cellulose ethanol.

NSP leadership and staff will continue monitoring Farm Bill developments in Washington, D.C.

NSP represents U.S. sorghum producers. Headquartered in Lubbock, Texas, in the heart of the U.S. Sorghum Belt that stretches from the Rockies to the Mississippi River and from South Texas to South Dakota, the organization works to ensure the profitability of sorghum production through market development, research, education and legislative representation. To learn more about NSP, visit www.sorghumgrowers.com.

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