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NSP Cohosts International Conference on Sorghum for Biofuel

The International Conference on Sorghum for Biofuel kicked off today in Houston, Texas with an impressive slate of speakers. Today and over the next three days, the conference will highlight up-and-coming research on the use of sorghum for biofuel production and will identify and begin to address issues at play in bringing commercial scale biofuel production from all types of sorghum to the market.

"This conference is a major step for the sorghum industry," said Tim Lust, CEO of the National Sorghum Producers. "The world is taking notice of this crop in a big way and this conference is a meeting of the minds, so to speak, of some of the finest scientists and entrepreneurs in the world. We will all need to work together to solve the energy crisis and this meeting moves us in the right direction."

"Texas provides an ideal location for us to discuss how the agriculture and energy sectors are partnering to produce a new generation of renewable energy for Texas, the nation and the world," said Dr. Mark Hussey, Interim Vice Chancellor and Dean for Agriculture and Life Sciences at Texas A&M University and Director of Texas AgriLife Research in his opening comments. "Whether it's for grain, sugar or a high-tonnage source of lignocellulose, most of you in attendance at this conference are committed to making sorghum the preferred dedicated feedstock for production of ethanol."

Mr. David Fleischaker, Oklahoma Secretary of Energy was the day's keynote speaker. "The case for biofuels rests on the proposition," said Fleischaker, "that it can enhance national security and economic well being." Fleischaker reiterated that biofuels must be a part of the nation's energy plan.

Other speakers on Tuesday included Dr. John Ashworth of the National Renewable Energy Lab (NREL) in Golden, Colorado, Dr. Bill Rooney of Texas A&M University, Dr. Neal Gutterson of Mendel Biotechnology, Tim Lust, CEO of the National Sorghum Producers, Dr. Robert Meyer of ICM, Dr. Danielle Belmer of Oklahoma State University and other experts in the field of sorghum for biofuel production.

Wednesday will offer conference attendees the opportunity to focus on specific needs and challenges of the sorghum industry as it works toward further next generation biofuels production. Thursday, attendees will visit field plots at Texas A&M University in College Station, Texas to view sweet sorghum and cellulosic sorghum trials. Conference attendees will travel to Jennings, Louisiana on Friday to visit Verenium's biomass conversion ethanol plant.

The International Conference on Sorghum for Biofuels is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Texas A&M University, the National Sorghum Producers, Brazil's Empresa Brasileira de Pesquisa Agropecuaria, the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics, and Tsinghua University in the Peoples' Republic of China, and the National Science Foundation. Follow up-to-the-minute conference happenings by visiting www.sorghumgrowers.blogspot.com.

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