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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 6, 2008

National Sorghum Checkoff Approved by USDA

The U.S. Department of Agriculture today published a final order on the proposed National Sorghum Checkoff and will begin collecting assessments on July 1, 2008.

National Sorghum Producers (NSP) President Dale Murden is optimistic about the role a checkoff will play in the sorghum industry's future. "Now is the time to invest in sorghum," said Murden. "A National Sorghum Checkoff will leverage private industry investment while partnerships with public and private research and development operations will help bring technology to our fields."

Lloyd C. Day, administrator of USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) commented on the next steps in the process of implementing a national checkoff. "Now that a final order has been published, a certification process will begin for organizations to become eligible to put forward names for the National Sorghum Checkoff Board," said Day. "USDA will then start accepting board nominations from these organizations and the Secretary of Agriculture will appoint directors to serve on the National Sorghum Checkoff Board."

The many positive results of a national checkoff will be the fruit of a focused and consistent effort directed by strong leaders. "We ask that sorghum producers help us find qualified candidates for a national board and encourage those producers to serve our industry," said Murden.

The Sorghum Promotion, Research and Information order will collect 0.6 percent of net market value for grain sorghum. For sorghum forage such as hay and silage, the assessment will be .35 percent of market value and will only be collected from first handlers who purchase more than 5,000 tons per year.

NSP CEO Tim Lust said that NSP will work proactively with sorghum handlers and producers to provide an efficient transition to a national checkoff. "Our goal is to make this as smooth a process as possible. We invite people to call our office if they have any questions."

The NSP Board and sorghum producers nationwide have worked during the past two years to establish a National Sorghum Checkoff. Within three years, producers will have the opportunity to vote in a referendum. "NSP looks forward to working with the National Checkoff Board to help solve industry problems and increase sorghum profitability in producers' fields," says Murden.

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