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## **SORGHUM E-Notes**

October 31, 2008

**NATIONAL SORGHUM PRODUCERS:**  
*the voice of the sorghum industry*

### **USDA Makes Unprecedented Changes to Report, Raises Sorghum Estimates**

In an unprecedented move, the U.S. Department of Agriculture has revised its official October acreage and production estimates for six field crops and, as National Sorghum Producers had previously predicted, USDA again increased sorghum acreage estimates by 200,000 acres. USDA revised the numbers after discovering discrepancies in a Farm Service Agency (FSA) database of producer-reported crop acreage used by the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS). NASS published the changes this week in a corrected version of the Oct. 10 Crop Production. The World Agricultural Outlook Board also issued an abbreviated World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates (WASDE) report reflecting the acreage updates.

This morning's crop report includes changes to acreage and production estimates for corn, soybeans, sorghum, canola, sunflowers and dry edible beans. The revisions will have no impact on crop support payments to farmers.

Sorghum production is forecast at 472 million bushels, up 8 million from the Oct. 10 forecast. Feed and residual use was raised 10 million bushels with increased supplies. The projected season-average farm price is unchanged at \$3.70 to \$4.70 per bushel. The report also reflects a 2.5 percent increase in planted acres for sorghum.

### **How will a Freeze Affect your Bushel Weight?**

As freezing temperatures are approaching, KSU Agronomy examines sorghum yield loss at different stages of development. Sorghum grain weight is not reduced by temperatures of 32°F. However, as the air temperatures decrease below freezing, the amount of damage to a sorghum plant may increase and seed weight decrease, depending on the stage of grain development at time of the freeze. Maximum damage occurs when plants are exposed for 2 hours or more at a temperature of 28°F or lower at the soft dough stage or before. Damage will not be as severe if plants are exposed for less than 2 hours. Research indicates that grain sorghum exposed to air temperatures of 28°F or lower, is unable to continue filling grain from carbohydrates stored in the stem or remaining leaves. Estimated yield loss at various stages of sorghum grain development when freeze occurs is as follows: At the soft dough stage (sorghum is filled with a soft pasty substance) estimated yield loss is 38 to 52 percent. At the hard dough stage (kernel endoplasm has a chalky consistency) estimated yield loss is around 2 to 27 percent, and at physiological maturity, where the kernel weight is at a maximum, there is zero estimated yield loss.

<http://www.agronomy.k-state.edu/DesktopModules/ViewDocument.aspx?DocumentID=2355>

### **Grassley Questions Grocery Manufacturers**

Senator Chuck Grassley has written a letter to the Grocery Manufacturers' Association (GMA) requesting a change in grocery prices commensurate with recent drops in commodity prices. GMA launched an anti-ethanol campaign earlier this year stating that higher food prices could be blamed on ethanol production. Consequently, Grassley argued lower grain prices should translate to lower food prices, but that has yet to happen. Specifically, Grassley's letter attacks GMA lobbyist Scott Fabor because on Oct. 6<sup>th</sup> he said:

“The federal government’s food to fuel mandates are diverting one-fourth of America’s corn supply from kitchen tables to fuel tanks, and the result is corn selling for \$6 a bushel, an all time high. And the ripple effects are being felt throughout the economy. In tough times like these, when many families are struggling, Congress and the administration need to take a hard look at the unintended consequences of these food to fuel mandates that raise food prices without offering a significant environmental benefit.”

Grassley’s letter is available at <http://blog.foodpricetruth.org/wp-content/uploads/2008/10/grassley-letter-to-gma2.pdf>.

## Prussic Acid

With freezing temperatures this week in most of the United States, be aware of potential problems that may arise due to prussic acid. Prussic acid, also known as hydrocyanic (HCN), can be toxic when ingested by ruminants. When plant cells are damaged by wilting, frosting or stunting, Prussic acid is formed. Generally, prussic acid levels in sorghum are low enough that the forage is safe to graze; however, prussic acid buildup is very prevalent when there is plant regrowth after a freeze and can be dangerous at this time. The risk of prussic acid poisoning can be reduced by following these precautions:

- Avoid pasturing sorghums immediately following a frost or freeze that does not completely kill plants due to new shoot and regrowth development.
- Do not greenchop for two days following a killing freeze. Prussic acid levels rise in mature plants for two days following frost.
- Do not pasture after a killing frost for three to five days or until all growth has turned brown and no new growth occurs.

## Cornyn Commercial Showcases Sorghum Crop

Senator John Cornyn of Texas has recently been running a political advertisement with a background of a sorghum field in Nueces County. Although Senator Cornyn does not specifically mention sorghum in the advertisement, the commercial audience is sure to notice the nice field in the background. Senator Cornyn believes agriculture is vital to the Texas economy and that Congress must ensure that the United States continues to enjoy the safest and most abundant food supply in the world.

## Crop Report

This past week, 83 percent of the sorghum crop was mature, 14 points behind last year and seven points behind the five-year average. Major development occurred in New Mexico and Oklahoma, where 29 percent of the crop reached maturity during the week. Producers harvested 49 percent of the crop, 26 points behind last year and 16 points behind the five-year average. Harvest was at or behind the five-year average in all States, and was nearly a month behind in South Dakota, with major delays evident in many of the sorghum-producing States. Condition of the sorghum was rated 56 percent good to excellent, unchanged from the previous week’s rating.

## About Sorghum Notes

SORGHUM Notes is a publication of the National Sorghum Producers. NSP represents U.S. sorghum producers. The organization serves as the voice of the sorghum industry from coast to coast through education and legislative and regulatory representation. To learn more about NSP visit our website at [www.sorghumgrowers.com](http://www.sorghumgrowers.com). Write to us at National Sorghum Producers, 4201 N Interstate 27, Lubbock, TX 79403. *To unsubscribe to Sorghum Notes, please reply to [hannah@sorghumgrowers.com](mailto:hannah@sorghumgrowers.com).*

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**Quote of the Week:**

If your actions inspire others to dream more,  
learn more, do more and become more,  
you are a leader.

-John Quincy Adams

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