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## **SORGHUM E-Notes**

April 30, 2009

NATIONAL SORGHUM PRODUCERS:

*the voice of the sorghum industry*

### **SURE Answers for Some, Still Awaiting Others**

The National Sorghum Producers has been actively working with the Farm Service Agency (FSA) over the past week to make sure that producers have clear information on their eligibility for Supplemental Revenue Assistance Payments (SURE), a new disaster program created in the 2008 farm bill.

In a technical corrections bill linked to the 2008 farm bill, NSP worked with Congressman Frank Lucas (R-OK) to make sure that grain sorghum planted behind failed wheat would be eligible for SURE. However, after questions about the application of that policy in Oklahoma last week, NSP sought further clarification of SURE eligibility from FSA. Unfortunately, the [clarification document](#) released today still leaves unanswered questions.

"In FSA-approved double crop counties, we still have concerns about how sorghum planted behind failed wheat is handled," said NSP CEO, Tim Lust. "Our concern centers around counties where wheat headed before it was declared 'failed'. We are working to get definite answers so that we can pass that information on to producers.

"What we do know is that if you are not in a county FSA-designated as a double crop county, regardless of the growth stage of your wheat, you can plant sorghum without affecting your SURE eligibility provided your wheat was insured or had NAP coverage."

NSP members will be notified of the most up-to-date information as soon as it is available.

### **ACRE Enrollment Open through August 14**

Producers can now elect and enroll in the Average Crop Revenue Election (ACRE) program, a new provision of the 2008 farm bill. Enrollment began April 27, 2009 and producers have until August 14, 2009 to elect to use ACRE. USDA will not accept any late-filed applications.

"The Average Crop Revenue Election program is an innovative alternative to the traditional farm safety net," Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack said. "This new option presents an opportunity for producers to review both programs and decide which one will work best for their operation."

Producers who elect the ACRE program for a farm agree to forgo counter-cyclical payments, accept a 20-percent reduction of the direct payments and accept a 30-percent reduction in loan rates for all commodities produced on the farm. For some producers, ACRE may be a viable option to current programs. However, each producer should carefully examine his or her own operation in order to make an informed decision.

Tools available to help you make informed choices include the [Texas A&M Ag and Food Policy Center ACRE Calculator](#) and a [recent article](#) from Sorghum Grower magazine.

### **California Approves Low Carbon Fuel Standard**

The California Air Resources Board (CARB) announced last week that they will implement a new low carbon fuel standard (LCFS) in an effort to transition California away from carbon intensive fuels that contribute to climate change. The decision, however, is a blow to the traditional ethanol industry because CARB used an unproven “indirect land use” factor to determine the carbon intensity values of ethanol, but did not use the same broad criteria to judge the use of oil. Therefore, some corn-based biofuels actually received a higher carbon intensity value than oil received.

“The California Air Resource Board’s decision Thursday was the absolute worst move at the worst possible time,” said American Farm Bureau President Bob Stallman. “By adopting a low-carbon fuel standard based on anecdotal science, the board unfairly punishes renewable, American-grown biofuels, and has created greater market demand for imported petroleum products.”

The LCFS will be phased in starting in 2011 but CARB has committed to ongoing research on the true level of indirect land use caused by ethanol and petroleum.

## **Why E15?**

Through record high fuel prices last summer, the food versus fuel furor and a tanked economy, the U.S. ethanol industry, though wounded, is recovering and continuing to fight for American energy independence. Currently, there is a 10 percent limit on the amount of ethanol that can be blended into U.S. gasoline. That blend limit is keeping the ethanol industry from expanding and creating greater markets for grain. The blend limit could also stymie the introduction of new technologies like sweet and high biomass forage sorghum biofuels into the ethanol industry.

In the interest of expanding the ethanol industry and markets for sorghum producers and consumers alike, Growth Energy, an ethanol advocacy group, has petitioned the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for an expansion of the blend limit to 15 percent.

EPA is calling for public comments on this request. The anti-ethanol lobby has flooded EPA’s comment site with reasons why *not* to expand the blend limit. We ask you to make sure EPA knows that ethanol is an important market not just for grain sorghum, but for allowing the expansion of sweet and high biomass forage sorghum technologies.

If ethanol markets are or could be important to your farm operation, please take a few minutes to let EPA know what you think. Click [here](#) to make your opinion known. The sooner you can comment the better, but comments are due by May 15, 2009. If you have questions, please contact [hannah@sorghumgrowers.com](mailto:hannah@sorghumgrowers.com) or call (800) 658-9808.

## **Commodity Roundtable Participants Discuss Tough Issues**

NSP staff attended annual commodity roundtable meetings in Washington, D.C. this week. The commodity roundtable is an opportunity for leadership from various commodity organizations to put their heads together and cooperate on the direction of the agriculture industry. This week’s meetings focused in large part on the impact of climate change legislation on agriculture. Definitive climate change legislation will be a contentious issue, no doubt involving all facets of agriculture, business and government. Climate change legislation is a tough issue for the entire agriculture industry because it could increase producers’ input costs. The question remains, what value would producers gain from climate change legislation? With that in mind, discussion centered around the importance of working together as an industry. Many commodity group leaders expect a climate change bill to pass sooner rather than later because climate change is a major priority of Congressional leadership and the Administration.

The commodity roundtable group also discussed new attacks from the [Humane Society of the United States](#) (HSUS). The group is specifically targeting animal agriculture in Ohio after running a successful campaign in California last year for the Prevention of Farm Cruelty Act. The Act, passed in November changes the way California production agriculture operates by implementing requirements that essentially end traditional meat production in the state. The HSUS, which has recently recruited high profile celebrity spokespeople, is not the same as your community animal shelter.

## **President Nominates Undersecretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs**

The Obama Administration announced this week that Edward M. Avalos, deputy director for marketing and development at the New Mexico Department of Agriculture, will be nominated as undersecretary for marketing and regulatory programs at USDA. The department he joins oversees checkoff programs, including the sorghum checkoff. Avalos was raised in southern New Mexico on a farm operation that included cotton, wheat and a variety of specialty crops. Avalos's career also includes a five-year tour with the Texas Department of Agriculture.

## **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).* If you have questions about the sorghum industry or the National Sorghum Producers, please do not hesitate to call NSP at (800) 658-9808.

## **SORGHUM Notes is sponsored by:**

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## **Quote of the Week:**

"Experience is that marvelous thing that enables you to recognize a mistake when you make it again."  
-- Franklin P. Jones

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