



**Comments from Stephen Bigge, Chairman, Kansas Grain Sorghum Commission
Annual Report to the Legislature
February 4, 2020**

My name is Stephen Bigge and I am Chairman of the Kansas Grain Sorghum Commission. I farm in Stockton and represent sorghum farmers in North Central Kansas in USDA's Crop Reporting District Number 4.

Here with me today is Jesse McCurry, our Executive Director, Adam York, our Director of Programs, and Reed Middleton, our Conservation and Sustainability Fellow and a sophomore at Kansas State University where she studies Agricultural Economics.

In 2019, our Kansas grain sorghum farmers produced 206 million bushels, down 11 percent from last year. Area for harvest, at 2.4 million acres, is down 9 percent from 2018. Yield is forecast at 86 bushels per acre, down 2 percent from last year. As these numbers represent, 2019 was a very difficult production year for growers across the state due to extreme weather and moisture conditions.

However, there were bright spots that should be reported. For example, the sugarcane aphid was a serious concern just a few years ago. This past year, however, in combination with proactive scouting practices by our farmers and new plant technologies available in the field, the sugarcane aphid posed little threat to sorghum production in Kansas. Weed control as well as export markets remain focus areas of our work.

Kansas remains the largest sorghum producing state in the nation. Our budget for FY20 is \$823,302. Kansas growers pay \$3.5 million dollars into the United Sorghum Checkoff Program - 64% of the national budget. There is no state checkoff for sorghum--it was voluntarily suspended to help create the United Sorghum Checkoff Program. This national checkoff is non-refundable. Our anticipated "passback" is \$851,106.33.



These Kansans serve on the Sorghum Checkoff board, appointed by U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue:

- Craig Poore, Chairman, Alton
- Boyd Funk, Treasurer, Garden City
- Kendall Hodgson, Little River
- Shayne Suppes, Scott City
- Jeff Zortman, Fowler

The Kansas Grain Sorghum Commission continues to have several primary investments in Kansas State University. K-State, home to the Center for Sorghum Improvement, leverages key investments in sorghum with our state and federal partners and builds on component strengths through public research and collaboration with key private industry stakeholders.

I also want to acknowledge your continued investment in sorghum research as it has bolstered projects in the state related to water and sorghum. Sorghum can be a tremendous resource in state water conservation and the State of Kansas has helped realize this through Water Technology Farms, crop research, and continued leadership on Ogallala issues.

Additionally, our market development program includes key resources in the U.S. Grains Council, an international cooperator to the United Sorghum Checkoff Program, as well as the International Grains Program at K-State. This past summer, for example, the Commission assisted the United Sorghum Checkoff Program in hosting numerous international trade delegations to Kansas elevators, ethanol plants, and food processors. Many of our Kansas farmers also stepped up to host these delegations to their farms and around their homes and families. These delegations included dozens of buyers from Mexico, Peru, Japan, Philippines, and China traveling across Kansas within a two-week timespan of each other.

The Commission also promotes ethanol, a clean-burning renewable fuel at the heart of many rural communities in Kansas. Sorghum as a feed grain can compete with corn and provide processors an interchangeable option to fuel vehicles and lower carbon emissions within our state and across our nation. Drivers can now use E15 in many markets, but there continues to be work before us in order to fully access the highly concentrated Kansas City, Kansas fuel market.

Included in our packet is an Annual Report document, a draft copy of our ongoing FY19 audit and other informational materials. It is our pleasure to provide this report and we look forward to your questions.