



## 2020 Annual Report



# Nebraska Sorghum

[www.nebraskasorghum.org](http://www.nebraskasorghum.org)



## INTRODUCTION

**Nebraska Sorghum continues to approach the challenges inherent in the sorghum industry with a spirit of innovation. Whether developing new marketing and communications strategies, to encouraging entrepreneurs, to providing virtual resources to new and returning producers in the era of Covid-19, our progress is meaningful and impactful in Nebraska.**



## At Nebraska Sorghum

***\*To view a digital version of this report, complete with videos and links to referenced sites, please visit:***

***<https://www.nebraskasorghum.org/annual-reports>***

# 2020 Education and Leadership Development Initiatives

**Education and leadership development are cornerstones of what we do at Nebraska Sorghum. This is true not only in regard to consumer and producer education, but also as good stewards and advocates for the future of all agriculture.**

- Internships
- FFA
- Secondary Education
- Nebraska Ag Youth Institute (NAYI)
- Revised Children's Activity Book
- 2020 Sorghum Symposium



*Remote Internships at Northeast Community College*

## Internships



**Ms. Demi Striglos, Former Communications Specialist Intern**

**Working with post-secondary student interns provides opportunities mutually-beneficial opportunities for mentorship and collaboration. We value our students, and benefit from their new and novel ideas.**

- NBSG continued the successful internship program begun in 2019

1) Ms. Demi Striglos completed the program in August upon graduation from the University of Nebraska

2) Ms. Kristine Dvoracek continues to provide excellent value to the organization as an Ag-Business Major

3) NGSB worked with 13 remote interns from Northeast Community College, who worked on business models and developed SWOT analyses for potential sorghum-based product production in 2019



**Ms. Kristine Dvoracek, Business Development Specialist Intern**

2020

# Education and Leadership Development Initiatives

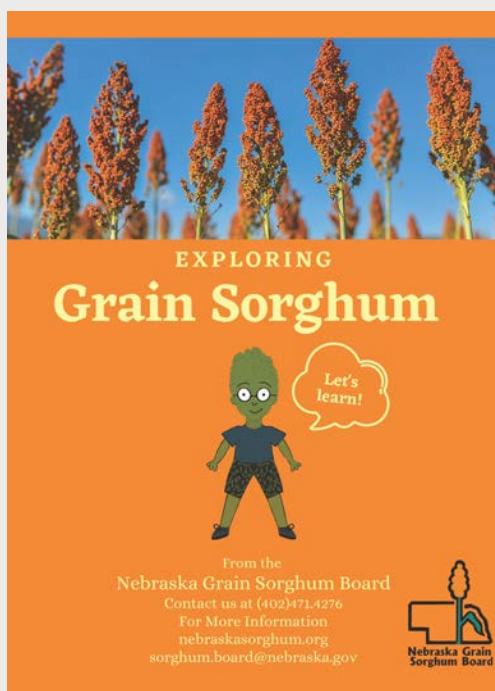
**Nebraska Sorghum supports the development of our young people through programs such as the FFA, NAYI, and in classroom interaction with secondary and post-secondary classrooms.**

- Nebraska FFA
  - Nebraska's State FFA Convention was held virtually in 2020.
  - NGSB served in judging roles for the Proficiency and Science Fair competitions.
- Secondary Education
  - Nebraska Sorghum in the Classroom 2020
- Nebraska Ag Youth Institute (NAYI)
  - NGSB introduced NAYI participants to sorghum via a virtual message in 2020.



*Nebraska FFA Alumni Club at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln*

## 2020 Children's Activity Book



**The previous version of the children's activity book was in sore need of modernization. The updated copy includes games and sorghum facts. It also serves to introduce young people to 'Milo'. Milo represents a juvenile sorghum plant, meant to compliment the more mature Sergeant Sorghum.**

- Developed for 3rd and 4th grade levels
- Activities and facts about sorghum, Nebraska, and the sorghum belt

*Front cover of the new children's activity book, featuring 'Milo'*

Meet Milo!



# 2020 Education and Leadership Development Initiatives

## 2020 Sorghum Symposium

**The Nebraska Sorghum Producers Association continued the tradition of the Sorghum Symposium in January 2020. This year's event took place at the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture in Curtis Nebraska.**

- Held at the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture: Curtis, NE
- Half dozen vendors
- Varied topics from Agronomy to marketing to traceability and social media management on the farm
- 50 in-person participants
- Live-stream with hundreds of views



*Participants at the 2020 Sorghum Symposium*

# Research Support

**Support for research is another fundamental cornerstone of the mission at Nebraska Sorghum. We are excited about the potential of CRISPR technology to expedite technological advances in sorghum.**



*Blum and Dr. Scott Sattler discuss his research at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Click the link below to see their conversation.*

•“Genetic Improvement of Sorghum for Bioenergy, Feed, and Food Uses”

– Dr’s Sattler and Funnell-Harris

•CRISPR technology

•Provided funding for research assistants



# Promotion and Markets Development

**The so-called "third leg of the stool" in Nebraska Sorghum's mission, promotion and markets development has been granted the highest priority by our board. Our outreach efforts touch existing and potential sorghum growers and industry partners. Importantly, we also focus intentionally on consumer-facing campaigns to raise awareness of, and create demand for, our products.**

- Catalyst: Focus on domestic markets development for consumer-ready products

- Nebraska State Fair

- Virtual Husker Harvest Days

- Secretary Perdue and Ambassador Doud

- Media Outreach

- Sorghum Army Outpost

- Pre-Plant 2021 Campaign

- “Nebraska Sorghum” Newsletter

- Virtual Field Days 2020

- Sorghum Cares: USSF



*A beautiful food-grade sorghum field near Battle Creek, NE*



*NGSB Chair, Mike Baker's hybrid sorghum plot near Trenton, NE*

# Promotion and Markets Development

## Catalyst: Focus on Domestic Markets Development for Consumer-Ready Products



Blum Discusses Catalyst. Click the links below to learn more.

**Catalyst is the present and future of grassroots encouragement entrepreneurial development for consumer-ready sorghum-based product production in Nebraska.**

**Catalyst Overview**

**Catalyst Announcement**



Catalyst teams at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and Concordia University in Seward

•Five Teams  
(University of Nebraska-Lincoln/Concordia University-Seward)

- Korean-themed snack foods
- Gluten-free snack foods
- Aquaculture feed
- Buffalo feeding
- Mushroom feedstock





# Promotion and Markets Development

## Nebraska State Fair and Husker Harvest Days

**The last weeks of August and the first weeks of September are always busy for Nebraska Sorghum due to the State Fair and Husker Harvest Days. Despite COVID-19, 2020 was no exception.**

- 1,000 Cookies
- 9 Gallons of sorghum-cookie dough ice cream
- 30 Pounds of popped sorghum
- 4 live cooking demonstrations
- Virtual “booth” at Husker Harvest Days



*Blum and Nebraska Extension Staff at Raising Nebraska*

## Ambassador Doud and Secretary Perdue

- Ambassador Doud spoke at the State Fair
  - Nebraska Sorghum spoke with Ambassador Doud regarding China and Kenya
- Secretary Perdue visited Lincoln
  - Nebraska Sorghum participated in an “Entrepreneurship in Agriculture Round Table” with the Secretary



*Blum and Zink with Ambassador Doud and Sec. Perdue*



# Promotion and Markets Development

## Media Outreach

**We value our relationships with local and state-wide media. This outreach is integral in telling the Nebraska Sorghum story to producers and consumers alike.**

- "Weekly Sorghum Update" on KRVN/KTIC
- Monthly segment on Pure Nebraska
- Radio with WJAG, WNAX, KICX
- Television with NTV, News Channel Nebraska
- Regular press release distribution across the state
- Daily and substantive social media messaging
  - Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, Soundcloud, Youtube



*Blum and Taryn Vanderford - Pure Nebraska*



*Nebraska Sorghum's annual advertisement in the FFA 'Blue and Gold' magazine*



*Blum at the KRVN Studio*

# Promotion and Markets Development

## The Sorghum Army Outpost

**New in 2020, the Sorghum Army Outpost allows consumers to purchase 'Sorghum Army' apparel. The Sorghum Army brand has been instrumental in generating consumer interest in sorghum since its inception in 2019.**



*Sergeant Sorghum*

- Consumer-facing marketing
- Targeted Facebook advertising to high-premium consumer markets
- Revenues benefit the Nebraska Sorghum Producers Association
- Tough, resilient, unique image



The Sorghum Army Outpost

## Pre-Plant 2021 Campaign

**Beginning in November, Nebraska Sorghum will undertake intentional outreach via mail to the largest ag producers in Nebraska. The campaign will capitalize on the market improvements for sorghum and the importance of farm diversification.**

- Proactive outreach
- 200 largest producers in Nebraska
- Focus on sorghum basis, cash prices, and diversification
- Monthly contact: November 2020 – March 2021



*Sorghum in the sun*



# Promotion and Markets Development

## 2020 Virtual Field Days

**Field Days in Nebraska went virtual in 2020 due to COVID-19. Two sites, one near Albion and the other near Trenton, featured over 40 varieties both in irrigated and dry-land trials.**

### NeSPA 2020 Field Days

- Over 40 varieties
- Advanta iGrowth spotlight
- Irrigated and dryland plots
- Trenton and Albion locations
- First "Food-Grade" only plot in Nebraska



*USCP Board Member and NGSB Board Vice Chair holds food-grade sorghum heads*



*Klint Stewart's food-grade field near Albion, NE*



# Promotion and Markets Development

## Sorghum Cares 2020: Honoring the U.S. Space Force and POW/MIA

**The Sorghum Cares Initiative is the Nebraska Sorghum Producers Association's annual effort to support our active duty and veteran citizen-soldiers. In 2019, the initiative recorded veterans stories for the Library of Congress. In 2020, we became the first organization in the country to publicly dedicate an official community installation recognizing the newly-formed USSF. A great honor for the community of Seward and for Nebraska's sorghum growers. The Sorghum Cares Initiative provides value to consumers by showing that we care about their communities.**



*Gov. Ricketts, Sen. Kolterman, Mayor Eickmeier, Lt. Col. Trusty, Staff representing Nebraska's Federal Delegation, family of the late Mr. Eldon Robinson and Nebraska Sorghum Executive Director Nate Blum dedicate the USSF and POW/MIA flags*

- First OFFICIAL public dedication of a U.S. Space Force Flag in the Nation (DOD/US STRATCOM/Nebraska Federal Delegation)
- Seward: National 4th of July City – Small Town USA (\* By Act of Congress, 1979), and home of Nebraska National Guard Museum
- POW/MIA flag rededicated to honor Mr. Grayson Robinson: Nebraska native and national POW/MIA Advocate

**The Sorghum Cares Initiative**



# Summary



**Like each of the sorghum-producing states, Nebraska faces challenges both common and unique. We believe that the best approach to winning producer-advocates is through showing value in growing sorghum to their bottom line. To achieve this, we are laying the groundwork for value-added processing, consumer-focused engagement, and grassroots empowerment of entrepreneurs.**

**In 2020, Nebraska Sorghum continued to lay the foundation for a rebranding of sorghum in our state. We've gone beyond engagement in the Ag community; Showing that we care about water, wildlife, and soil sustainability, healthy foods, economic sustainability, and community development in general. We believe that 2021 will bring even greater opportunities to build upon that foundation and actualize increased prosperity for sorghum growers.**

**As always, it remains my great pleasure and privilege to serve my fellow Nebraskans in this way.**

Nate Blum

A handwritten signature of Nate Blum in blue ink, written in a cursive style.

Executive Director  
Nebraska Grain Sorghum Board  
Nebraska Sorghum Producers Association