

Leadership Sorghum Class I Meets in Kansas

Leadership Sorghum Class I met for its second session Nov. 27-29 in Kansas, the largest sorghum producing state in the U.S., focusing on domestic markets and public research for sorghum.

Fifteen sorghum producers from eight states make up the first class of Leadership Sorghum, a program sponsored by the Sorghum Checkoff. Participants will be immersed in many segments of the sorghum industry throughout the 16-month program, which seeks to develop the next generation of leaders for the sorghum industry.

While in Kansas, the class toured operations utilizing grain sorghum in the state, including Knight Feed Yard and Kansas Ethanol, both in Lyons, and Double D Hogs in Bushton. The class also toured the International Grains Program (IGP) Grain Science Complex flour mill and extrusion lab at Kansas State University and heard from food industry experts at the American Institute of Baking (AIB) in Manhattan, who are working to develop gluten-free food products made from sorghum flour. Team Marketing Alliance and Scoular Company discussed sorghum marketing strategies and profitability potential with the group, and the Kansas Secretary of Agriculture, Dale Rodman, addressed the group at IGP, touting the importance of sorghum's water savings and its opportunities in Kansas.

"This session was designed to expose the Leadership Sorghum class to a variety of established and emerging sorghum markets ranging from biofuels to livestock feed to gluten-free food products, while also highlighting the genetic research taking place at the public level," said Florentino Lopez, Sorghum Checkoff executive director.

Jordan Shearer, a sorghum producer from Slapout, Okla., said the Leadership Sorghum program has not only showed him different segments of the sorghum industry, but the leadership training and networking opportunities have also been beneficial.

"This leadership class is made up of growers from across the country, and it is really neat to learn about the different cropping systems that each of them has on their own farming operations," Shearer said. "I've been amazed in this session to see how integrated sorghum is in the Kansas economy. It is also good to see how producers' dollars are being invested and the level of synergy that exists in this industry."

The class also received media training during the Kansas session to prepare them to be advocates for sorghum and agriculture with local, regional and national media. The next session will be held in Washington, D.C., in February and will focus on the government's role in sorghum, checkoffs and interest organizations. For more information about the Leadership Sorghum program, visit SorghumCheckoff.com/leadership.