

Latin America Group Tours Two Kansas Farms

Kansas Grain Sorghum growers welcomed a nine-member team from Latin America last week to enhance interest in U.S. grains.

On Oct. 16, the U.S. Grains Council led a tour of two Kansas sorghum farm to educate the visitors on the use of grain as co-products for livestock, pork and poultry feeds. The program also emphasized how the Latin American companies can utilize corn, sorghum and dried distillers grains in livestock rations to maximize profitability. The group was mostly comprised of people working as feedgrains import buyers for companies throughout Latin America.

Latin America represents a strong export market for corn and grain sorghum, which are Kansas' leading feed grains. The Kansas Corn Commission and Kansas Grain Sorghum Commission worked with the U.S. Grains Council to host the group in Kansas. Both Kansas commissions continually fund the efforts of the USGC to build exports of feedgrains around the world.

Kansas Grain Sorghum Commissioner Jeff Casten, Quenemo, greeted the guests with information on his farming operation, shared how grain sorghum fits into his crop rotation and hosted lunch at his farm for the group. Casten says the buyers purchase from major grain companies on a huge basis with shipments of grain in 85 million bushels at a time.

"Grain sorghum is mainly used in feed for poultry and swine because of its high protein content and because it's slightly cheaper than corn, he said. "Grain sorghum has been used as a feed for livestock in western Kansas a lot. Kansas grows more grain sorghum than any state in the country, and has for a number of years."

Lawrence farmers Pat and Mary Ross, who grow corn and soybeans, were the next farm stop for the export team. Pat, who is a Kansas Corn Commissioner, and his wife, Mary, gave a history of their family farm and talked about their crop production and cattle feeding operation. The Ross family raises corn and soybeans and also feed cattle using corn and distillers grains in their rations. The group was also able to visit a field of corn being harvested by the Nunemaker-Ross Farm that afternoon.

"These export teams visit our U.S. farms to learn how we raise the corn they buy from us," Pat Ross said. "But we learn just as much from them."

The Kansas Corn Commission and Grain Sorghum Commission sponsored the tour as an opportunity for people who have a direct impact on the demand for specialty grains to see firsthand how crops are grown in Kansas.

"The group was especially impressed with how farming is a family business," Kurt Schultz, U.S. Grains Regional Director for Latin America, said. "And they witnessed the pride farmers have in their farm and their product."