



2009 Crop Year AGRONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS

National Sorghum Producers Yield Contest

Field Selection—Select highly productive fertile fields with good drainage. Plan on having at least two sites; one lower, bottom-type ground for the drier years and one more sloped location for the wetter areas. The minimum field size is five or more continuous acres.

Rotation—It is best if the crop being planted has not been planted on that field for at least one year.

pH—Ideal for sorghum is 6.5 – 7.5.

Fertility—Obviously, soil with high P and K levels can contribute to top yields. Watch fields for compaction, insects and poor seedbed. P levels of 30 PPM and K levels of 200 PPM or higher is recommended. If needed, applications of 50# P/A and 60# K/A for sorghum should be included in the fertility program. Starter for sorghum on lower fertility soils, extremely early planting or variable soils can help push for top-end yields. Micronutrients are generally not needed on most soil types. The exceptions would be Sulfur applied as a starter on extremely sandy, low organic matter soils, or where the soil tests low in Zinc (usually in high pH soils).

Nitrogen—Generally, sorghum yield goal X (in bushels/acre) times 1.2 less the residual N from soybeans, alfalfa or manure is adequate. If possible, split applications are helpful, especially in the wet years or wetter soils. If N is split applied, at least 30#/A should be readily available to the plant early in the growing season (either through starter or with the pivot where applicable). Split applications should be applied before the sorghum is one foot tall, if possible, to avoid root pruning.

Herbicides—Roundup® agricultural herbicides applied as a burndown in minimum tillage systems will aid in moisture conservation and emergence rates. Chloracetimides applied for pre-emergent weed control will reduce early season weed competition. Avoid pushing application window on any post-emerge herbicide, especially Marksman®, Clarity®, 2,4-D plus Ally® in sorghum. Watch carryover potential from higher rates of wheat herbicides ground going to sorghum.

Insects—Thorough scouting is the key for many things and this especially includes insects. If not using Poncho®, chinch bugs will be the main thing to watch for and be ready to treat.

Tillage—Limit field trips that cause compaction, typically, 80% of compaction occurs with the first tillage pass.

Planting Dates—Planting sorghum on the early side of your areas recommended date may increase your yield opportunity. For example, in northern Kansas, planting sorghum between May 15th and May 20th is the ideal window for the most opportunity.

Planting Guidelines—Even in dry years, there is little downside risk to pushing populations higher and the chance at a response is good in the better years. Plant sorghum at least 1 1/2 – 1 3/4" deep. Planting a potential contest area at 2–3 mph can improve plant spacing and consistency of depth dramatically.

Harvest—16% to 18% harvest moisture on sorghum can minimize field losses. Follow all rules for harvest as outlined by the NSP.