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International Grains Program

International Grains Program Provides Training to Enhance Kansas Corn Markets

IGP Short Course and Tours Showcase Feedgrains to Global Audience

For 30 years, people from all over the world have traveled to Manhattan, Kansas to train with and tour the International Grains Program (IGP). Since its beginning, IGP has continued to increase its capacity to educate and train international buyers of Kansas commodities.

The Kansas Corn Commission has a long-standing partnership with IGP and supports the program's mission of marketing and promoting export markets for corn and other feed grains. IGP and the K-State Department of Grain Science act as ambassadors for Kansas commodities and serve as a primary source of expertise when it comes to the use of Kansas feed ingredients.

Through its short courses and technical overseas assistance, IGP offers education on topics ranging from grain purchasing, transportation storage and handling to milling, marketing and processing. For example, next month IGP will offer an annual grain purchasing short course for international grain buyers from four countries. In addition, a short course on advanced risk management and merchandising will be held in May in conjunction with NCI of Fargo, ND.

"Foreign market development is an important part of the corn commission's program," according to Kansas Corn Commission Chairman Mike Brzon, Courtland. "IGP is considered to be a valuable resource to grain buyers throughout the world and we are lucky to have the program operating in our state. We've also had opportunities to host IGP classes on our Kansas farms, giving international buyers an understanding of the quality of grain we produce in the U.S."

Jay O'Neil, senior agricultural economist at IGP, said the first question many people have is about the purpose and mission of the program. Due to its location in Manhattan and affiliation with Kansas State University, IGP is often assumed as a program for undergraduate education. However, this is not the case. Though there is an interest in working with and teaching young people about the global grains industry, IGP's primary focus and efforts are centered on the promotion of Kansas commodities with foreign buyers.

"Our entire purpose and focus is to promote and educate foreign buyers on the use of Kansas and U.S. corn, wheat, soybeans and related products," O'Neil said. "We provide innovative and relevant technical programs to encourage market preference, consumption and utilization of corn for the benefit of Kansas corn producers."

Although IGP may not be a household name, the program enjoys global recognition among flour millers, feed manufacturers, grain buyers and governmental buying entities. This year IGP will conduct more than 25 short courses and customized training sessions to help familiarize international customers with U.S. corn and to promote its quality characteristics and best uses. O'Neil said IGP activities also include education on risk management and price control. In addition, IGP also works with trade teams and visitors and facilitates overseas technical assistance.

"Training is a part of the promotional element of marketing U.S. grains," he said. "A foreign buyer may not understand the U.S. grading and quality system or how best to utilize corn or feed ingredients. Having that familiarity and knowledge gives them power and motivation to buy our products to use in the best way. It's a classic case of the more you know the more you like it and we want to show how to use U.S. grains in the best way possible."