

Texas corn plant breeder feels the heat of water scarcity

Wenwei Xu helps farmers grow more with less

Wenwei Xu, researcher and professor of corn breeding and genetics for Texas A&M AgriLife Research and Extension, shares concerns of water availability many corn farmers face in Texas. One of the three wells used to irrigate his experimental hybrid plots at the Lubbock AgriLife Research and Extension Center is already obsolete.

“Here, water is the limiting factor,” Xu said. He explained decreasing the amount of water required for corn, while maintaining viable yields, is at the core of all corn breeding research his team conducts.

Xu said his goal is to ensure the sustainability and longevity of Texas families whose farm operations depend on a productive corn crop.

“Either the seed changes, or you don’t grow corn,” Xu said, “and the second is not an option for farmers.”

Like numerous corn farmers on the High Plains, Xu draws water from the Ogallala Aquifer. He said initially, he thought the aquifer was like a vast, underground lake.

“The reality is [the Ogallala Aquifer] has different water levels at different points,” Xu said. “The speed at which we pump out water of the aquifer is much faster than the recharge rate.”

Xu said his current research focuses on utilizing drought-resistant and heat-tolerant genes, combined with a short-season variety. This aims to minimize the amount of water needed to grow the hybrid corn specialized for the dry, hot climate of many Texas regions.

Short-season crops have recently gained attention because they mature faster, thus using less water. Xu said he expects them to gain popularity in the southern, dry regions.

“There are very few breeding programs in the southern states for this region,” Xu said. “We just grab corn from the Midwest, so [the hybrids] are not well-adapted.”

Xu’s team applies conventional breeding techniques, which combine two parent lines resulting in a hybrid plant containing the target traits from both parent plants.

Xu said engineering an ideal corn hybrid for farmers with a limited water supply includes the following traits:

- Heat tolerant
- Drought resistant
- Insect and disease resistant
- High yield
- Short-season variety

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From the Texas Corn Producers Board
and the Corn Producers Association of Texas
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the kernel



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CORNER Comments



David Gibson

**TCPB Executive Director
CPAT Exec. Vice President**

Farm bill discussions were the highlight of recess for Congressio-

nal members with large influence on agriculture this past August. We are fortunate to have Representative Mike Conaway from Texas' 11th Congressional District serving as the chairman of the House Agriculture Committee at this time.

The Corn Producers Association of Texas (CPAT) held regional meetings earlier this year to hear concerns of farmers across the state. Items that arose from those meetings include ARC/PLC payments rates and timing, importance of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and improvement of Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), along with maintaining a sound crop insurance program. CPAT is now using that information as discussion points for our membership as we advocate for policies to the House and Senate

Agriculture committees.

Other topics topping producers' concerns were health care, and what may be included in the tax reform bill. Representative Kevin Brady, with Texas' 8th Congressional District, is the chairman of the committee that will be writing the tax reform bill scheduled for discussion this fall.

A recently surfaced topic that is now at the forefront is the North American Free Trade Act (NAFTA) renegotiation. In our meetings with congressional members, CPAT staff and board members have raised concerns over the impact NAFTA has on corn and products made from corn that are shipped to Canada and Mexico. These are two key markets that impact the shipment of corn and corn products with heavy impact on market prices in Texas.

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At this writing, Hurricane Harvey is still dumping massive amounts of rain on East Texas and Louisiana. The devastation and destruction caused by this storm are incomprehensible. As Americans we are well prepared to deal with these kinds of natural disasters. Early warning systems prevented further loss of life, and rescue and shelter operations are enormous.

The downstate corn crop this year has been excellent for the most part. There have been some harvest delays due to excessive rain. Also, elevators have been scrambling to find room to store this year's crop.

This is the first year of an Experimental Use Permit granted by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to Texas Corn Producers Board (TCPB) for conducting whole field trials of the next

generation bio-control, FourSure[®], to displace Aflatoxin-producing fungi. Early results are showing good efficacy. There are still a lot of hurdles to clear before this product will be made available to Texas corn farmers. Having products of this type available for growers to manage Aflatoxin has increased food safety, reduced crop insurance indemnification, and made marketing more orderly.

Weather has caused considerable replant situations in the Panhandle this year. I have heard of a lot of corn planted late behind failed cotton. Hopefully this area will see a cooperative fall to let the crop mature before the first freeze.

TCPB's mission is to increase Texas corn grower profitability. Please make us aware of thoughts, comments or concerns. Stay safe. 🌽



**Scott Averhoff
TCPB Chairman**

Waxahachie, Texas

Texas farmers share insight on farm bill at listening session, summit

Corn Producers Association of Texas had the opportunity to attend the 2018 Farm Bill listening session, as well as the West Texas Legislative summit earlier this summer. Both were filled with devoted farmers, ranchers, and many different commodity groups that are all passionate about the agriculture industry.

On July 31, 2017, in San Angelo, Texas, these agriculturists came together to present to Chairman Mike Conaway of District 11 and the U.S. House Committee on Agriculture the issues they felt needed to be addressed in the next farm bill.

“All the farmers here have the same message, and that’s to make the Farm Bill better,” Jimmy Wedel, CPAT board member and Lubbock farmer, said.

Chairman Conaway and committee members traveled around the United States listening to farmers from all over the nation. From remarks made by Chairman Conaway before the listening session began, he wanted to know what needs to be changed in order to have a better farm bill, come September 2018. He sought to know what farmers face out in the fields and what can be done to better help them. Conaway expressed an understanding that agriculture plays a big role in the world, and an eagerness to make sure he is taking care of the people within it.

CPAT members and Texas farmers, including Lindsey Bowers of Inez, Heath Hill of Gruver, Joe Reed of Kress, and Jim Sugarek of Beeville had the opportunity to address some of the key issues they and others were facing. They voiced a need for more affordable crop insurance, because many years farmers spend more and

make less. Farmers also encouraged adjustments to the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) & Price Lose Coverage (PLC) reference prices to ensure farm stability in time of loss. Additionally, a need for conservation programs, trade regulation and risk management in times of drought were mentioned in the session.

Another topic of discussion was family farmland being economically feasible for next generations to return to the farm and keep family farming a tradition. Farmers’ income has decreased dramatically; before too long many will face the harsh reality of trying to make ends meet, while remaining in agriculture. If these issues are resolved, farmers will be able to continue to do what they do best, which is providing healthy and safe food.

At the legislative summit, attendees heard from a variety of panels and people from different industries. CPAT President Joe Reed had the opportunity to serve on the industry priorities panel.

“It’s not corn vs. cotton, it’s not corn vs. anyone, we have to be a united front in order to get this bill passed,” Reed said on the panel.

Reed expressed to corn farmers, other farmers, ranchers, and commodity groups the importance of coming together and supporting one another to get the new bill passed.



CPAT members and Texas corn farmers at farm bill listening session in San Angelo.

Pictured (l-r) Jimmy Wedel of Lubbock, Joe Reed of Kress, Dee Vaughan of Dumas, Heath Hill and his son Tripp of Gruver, Scott Averhoff of Waxahachie, and Lindsey Bowers of Inez.

The legislative summit discussed a variety of issues in depth and what needs to be done to have a better farm bill.

Chairman Conaway and his committee listened and heard each person talk about what they felt needed to be done to have a better farm bill. There were plenty of concerns that the congressman and his committee have to take into account.

“Conaway always seemed to be engaged, and when I made eye contact with him today I felt he actually cared,” Bowers said.

CPAT appreciates Chairman Conaway passion toward the agriculture industry, and the people within it. His effort to put agriculture’s best interests at heart when it comes to the new Farm Bill are welcomed by the industry. CPAT thanks him and his committee for hearing and caring about the needs and concerns of Texas farmers. 🌽

THE VOICE: Association News

A note from the President...

Education is the way to the future, and tomorrow's leaders are the youth of today. Corn Producers Association of Texas (CPAT) is launching a renewed effort to educate Texas youth on corn and agriculture in general. Too many young people want to know, but are looking to the wrong sources for answers. What may be worse is the ready availability of information not from agriculture itself, but from outside organizations with hidden agendas. We in agriculture must do better at sharing our story, and offering information to consumers about how their food is produced.

Several legislators who understand the efforts of farmers and ranchers, report time after time that when they go to work on ag policy, they must stop first to explain to fellow legislators basic aspects of the industry that produces the nation's food supply. As legislators and key decision makers grow farther removed from the farm, we must reach out to others to obtain sound farm policy that is passed

without objection. If we seek to have hope to pass a farm bill with one attempt (rather than the multiple of recent years), or work on any farm policy without strong opposition from groups with oftentimes hidden anti-agriculture agendas, we must start by engaging, educating and influencing those that don't live on the farm.

CPAT has a youth membership I encourage you to promote. At only \$20 per year, students get the opportunity to begin engaging with an advocacy voice for the industry. Additionally, CPAT offers two \$1,000 scholarships to youth members each year. Applications for these scholarships are being accepted through Nov. 30. Details can be found at www.TexasCorn.org or by calling the CPAT office at 806.763.CORN (2676).

CPAT directors are dedicated to advocating on behalf of the industry. These efforts reach from D.C. to Austin, but achieving our advocacy goals starts with a foundational agriculture understanding right



Joe Reed
CPAT President
Kress, Texas

here in your communities, your grocery store, and your nearby cities. I appreciate all current CPAT members, and encourage everyone to join. We need all your support in educating today's policy makers, as well as those in the future. 🌽

Corn Cob Classic: A hole-in-one

It was a year of record highs at the 6th Annual Corn Cob Classic. The golf tournament proved to be yet another successful event for the Corn Producers Association of Texas' (CPAT) Texas Corn Political Action Committee* (Texas Corn PAC).

A record 42 teams participated in the two-person scramble on Aug. 19 at the Twisted Elms Golf Club in Dalhart.

Though the \$10,000 hole-in-one award was not claimed this year, the lively group of farmers and

supporters of the industry enjoyed a fun-filled day of golf, fun, and fundraising.

It was also a record year in raising funds for the Texas Corn PAC through the event.

CPAT appreciates the many Dalhart-area and regional sponsors that supported the event.

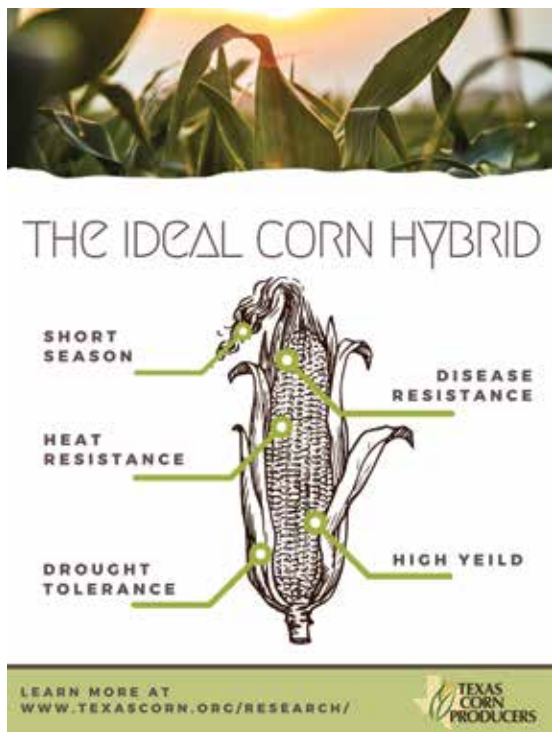
The Texas CornPAC supports legislators who help defend agriculture at both the state and national level. The Texas CornPAC enables CPAT to strengthen relationships with pol-

icy makers, ensure representatives know contributors are farmers, and influence policy to assure a future for Texas farmers. 🌽

**According to FEC rules, corporate account contributions cannot be accepted. Texas Corn PAC contributions must be paid for with a personal check. Voluntary contributions may be accepted from any U.S. citizen. However, so-licitation for contributions is limited to CPAT memberships.*

TCPB research spotlight: Growing more with less

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Aflatoxin is one of the diseases Xu has had to add to his checklist of genetic criteria. He said the fungus *aspergillus flavus* creates Aflatoxin, which is a dangerous compound for human and livestock consump-

tion.

Like other states, the Texas Federal Grain Inspection Service tests corn for Aflatoxin contamination since 96 percent of Texas corn is used to feed livestock.

“Aflatoxin is a chronic problem in southern Texas,” Xu said, “and it is more severe when the plant experiences high-temperature drought stress.”

Fortifying corn plants with drought tolerance and heat resistance, Xu noted, not only helps defend the plant from disease, but also makes farmers less susceptible to climate variability.

Xu said the result of climate change is a higher frequency of drought stress and extreme high temperatures, which are issues he and his team are already building resilience to in corn using native genes.

Some of Xu’s favorite aspects of

his job are engaging with farmers, fellow scientists, and students interested in plant breeding.

“If we just do lab work or our own research without connecting to [farmers], our work would go nowhere,” Xu said. “We are trying to find a solution, not just for science.”

Due to the nature of conventional genetic improvement, farmers might not have access to Xu’s current experimental hybrids until a few years down the road. However, issues like water scarcity and high temperatures are challenges that farmers will always need to combat.

“Working with the producers is extremely important and rewarding because I am able to see that we can make a difference,” Xu said. “It takes time, but we make a difference.”

Funding plant breeding research is one method TCP helps farmers produce more corn per acre, while also decreasing the resources required to grow it. Learn more about how TCP supports corn research by visiting www.TexasCorn.org/research.

A CORN BREEDER’S TIMELINE

4-5 years	Target two parent lines
3-5 years	Cross parent lines to begin creating experimental hybrids
2-3 years	Commercialization
Total: 9-13 years	

Outstanding corn county agent recognized

Texas Corn Producers Board (TCPB) awarded Michael Hiller, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension agent, with the Outstanding Corn County Agent of the year award at the Texas County Agricultural Agents Association annual meeting on July 17 in Odessa, Texas.

Hiller serves over Jackson County, located in the Coastal Prairies region of Texas. The Outstanding Corn County Agent award signifies a commitment to farmer engagement, agricultural education, and agricultural advocacy in their counties and surrounding counties.

“This award allows TCPB to express its gratitude for all of the critical work county extension agents, like Hiller, conduct in aiding corn farmers to maximize their profits on the farm, as well as advocating for corn farmers in their communities,” David Gibson, TCPB executive director, said.

“Hiller has provided many corn farmers in the Coastal Prairies region crop management tools,

farm business insight, and seed technology results,” he said.

Monty Dozier, Texas A&M AgriLife regional program leader, nominated Hiller for the award highlighting his service to farmers and community outreach in Jackson County and the Upper Gulf Coast.

In his nomination, Dozier said Hiller was able to reach out to nearly 200 farmers through workshops, demonstrations, and meetings alone in 2016. Dozier also noted Hiller’s bi-weekly radio program and quarterly agricultural newsletter.



Michael Hiller (left) of Jackson County was named Outstanding Corn County Agent by Texas Corn Producers Board Communications and Public Affairs Director Stephanie Pruitt (right).

To learn more about the award or TCPB visit the website at www.TexasCorn.org or email info@texascorn.org.

Going against the grain - to grow grain media tour

In 1920, one out of three Americans lived and worked on farms and ranches. Today, that’s about one out of 50. The change from a rural, agricultural nation to one that is mostly urban and industrialized has been constant over the past century.

The average American is now at least three generations removed from the farm, as young people left the farm for job opportunities in cities. But for every trend, there are exceptions.

In a recent media tour, viewers and listeners from across the nation had the opportunity to meet

four exceptional women: Ashley Pool of Bailey County, Texas, who grew up on the farm and decided to stay, and Deborah Clark of Clay County, Texas, Kyla Hamilton of Lubbock County, Texas, and Jaimie Saylor of Bailey County, Texas, who each grew up in cities, moved to farms, and now are actively engaged in growing our food. They are part of an organization known as CommonGround, a group of women farmers who have conversations about the food they grow and how they produce it.

In their journey from city to farm, they discovered that farming today

is based on advanced science and sophisticated technology that maximizes production while conserving resources and protecting the environment. They learned that families whose livelihoods depend upon the land and water are among the best stewards of those resources.

Learn more about the media tour and how farmers are sustainably producing for our food, feed, fuel and fiber needs with the technical assistance of USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service in Texas at WaterGrow.org or follow the Water Grow Initiative on social media!

ODDS *AND* ENDS



Texas farmers participate in 4th new leader program

Plainview, Texas, corn farmers Hagen and Beckah Hunt, and Tyler and Terra James joined corn farmers from 12 states at the National Corn Growers DuPont New Leaders program.

The 2017 class had its initial meeting in Johnston, Iowa, in June.

The program is implemented in three phases, with two plenary sessions: the first in Iowa and the sec-

ond in February 2018 at Commodity Classic in Anaheim, Calif. Between these sessions, participants take part in regularly scheduled policy and issue-specific webinars. They are also asked to take part in communications or other programs at the state and national level.

At the sessions, participants gain knowledge of communications and leadership skills and many of

the top issues confronting American corn growers. They also have the opportunity to see our farmer leaders in action during agriculture's premier trade show: Commodity Classic.

Texas Corn Producers is proud to again have two Texas couples participating in the program, and looks forward to seeing these individuals grow as leaders in the industry.

TCP welcomes new agriculture intern

In September, Paul Montgomery of Memphis, Texas, joined the Texas Corn Producers (TCP) team as an intern.

Montgomery is a senior at Texas Tech University, working toward a degree in agricultural communications. He has a passion for the industry in which he was raised.

"As the son of a fourth generation cotton farmer, agriculture has always been at the forefront of my life," Montgomery said. "When coming to Texas Tech, I knew that I wanted to use my skills to promote the industry, as well as help to in-

form and educate others of the importance of agriculture."

He joins TCP with a breadth of experience already under his belt. From his recent work as an intern and interim staff assistant in U.S. Congressman Mac Thornberry's office to leadership on the Texas Tech system's Student Loyalty Council, as well as his extensive FFA experience from high school.

Montgomery will be assisting TCP staff in a variety of ways, including communications, membership, education and administrative needs.



Gibson Comments, continued...

It is very important as these key pieces of legislation are written and voted on, and as NAFTA negotiations continue, that your member of congress hears from you to know

your concerns and how these items will affect your farm and family. We have direct links on our website to help you make contact or send emails to your members. We en-

courage you to do it and also let us know your concerns so we can carry your message as we work with Congress.

Stay connected with TCP on all your social media!



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Upcoming Events

Texas Corn Producers board meetings will be held
December 5-6 in Houston, Texas.

As farmers wrap up harvest statewide, there are a number of
end-of-season events across the state.

Visit www.TexasCorn.org for the most up-to-date list of events.

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