

Farming carbon

Is agriculture the new frontier on combating climate change? It depends on who you ask. For several years, plant-based renewable fuels have been the most discussed contribution of agriculture toward lowering the amount of carbon emitted into the atmosphere. Now, the conversations have changed to how agriculture can help take carbon out of the air and transition it into the soil.

Carbon Sequestration

For decades, atmospheric carbon being stored in the soil has been researched and talked about in various circles of the industry, but has finally made national headlines as it is considered in Washington, D.C. As major corporations in various industries look to offset their carbon footprint, farmers and foresters are being looked to as the frontline of the carbon frontier.

Katie Lewis, Ph.D., an associate professor of soil fertility and chemistry with Texas A&M AgriLife Research and Texas Tech University, recently joined a panel on “Carbon Farming in Texas” hosted by extension agents in South Texas. She explained the differences between

carbon sources and carbon sinks, emphasizing why the soil is a complicated storage system.

The soil stores carbon through photosynthesis but loses carbon through respiration and decomposition in equal amounts.

Lewis explained that it is possible for the soil to become a carbon sink, but management practices and environmental conditions must allow organic matter to grow to increase organic carbon.

Why Should I Care?

Since the dawn of the industrial revolution, the world has been mass emitters of carbon dioxide. As carbon dioxide was released into the air, it shifted the balance from carbon stored in the earth and plant life to being stored in the atmosphere. This meant that additions were made to the crucial gases that warm the Earth: increasing the amount of heat trapped.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, carbon dioxide made up 80% of the United States’ greenhouse gas emissions in 2019. While agriculture can be a part of the solution to take carbon and put it

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From Texas Corn Producers Board
and Texas Corn Producers Association
Spring 2021

the kernel



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CORNER Comments



David Gibson
TCPB Executive Director
TCPA Exec. Vice President

This year, as most years in Texas, is presenting many problems for our corn growers from the Rio Grande Valley all the way to the top of the Texas Panhandle as far as weather concerns – and that is what makes the decision on volume of the crop for this year to market.

As I visited with growers from across the state, growing conditions are very mixed. In the Valley, water issues with decreased river flow and dry weather is potentially limiting the crop. As we go up the coast, excessive moisture may be more of a problem. Parts of Central and Northeast Texas are also very wet, limiting timely application of fertilizer and fungicides. The Panhandle has been critically dry, but some timely moisture is falling as planting is wrapping up.

In areas prone to aflatoxin pres-

sure, I encourage growers to use one of the available atoxigenic products, Prevail® or Afla-Guard®, to control the levels that may occur this fall. The wet and cool weather may set us up for some severe stress on the corn when temperatures rise and soil moisture declines. If we see high temperatures and moisture stress late in this crop, we could see more aflatoxin pressure due to the plants being so lush at this point and they may not be able to handle the stress later in the growing season.

So far, 2021 has offered us some good marketing opportunities with corn futures trading in a range above \$5.00 per bushel, depending on marketing months. Many growers I have talked to have marketed some part of their projected production and are wondering how much more they could safely market ahead of harvest.



Robert Gordon
TCPB Chairman
Dalhart, Texas

Few things in this world may be certain, except death & taxes... These two certainties can go hand in hand when it comes to managing a farm business.

News headlines are abuzz with potential tax changes for Americans next year. There are legislative tax proposals circulating that could have an impact on businesses throughout the country.

It's important for farmers to have an understanding of what these changes

may be and to be in touch with their accountant or whomever handles filing the farm's taxes. There may be necessary alterations in your farm business structure to ensure your farm business and personal finances are best cared for as any potential changes are made at the federal level.

While clarification continues to unfold, the National Corn Growers Association, which is funded by state check-offs and associations such as Texas Corn Producers, held a webinar aimed to offer some light on this subject. Agricultural economic experts at KCoe Isom hosted the informational webinar for corn farmers entitled Tax Reform Watch 2021: News and Perspective on Tax Planning and Priorities. The webinar address questions farmers may have regarding legislative tax proposals and potential impacts on businesses. If you were unable to participate in this event live, it is now available on the Texas Corn Producers Website at TexasCorn.org. I encourage farmers in our state to do their homework on this matter and stay abreast of the latest movement, as there may be need to quickly work to ensure your business affairs are in order before the end of the calendar year.

Having farm business affairs in order is key to being prepared for the impact of any federal tax changes, and also important when the farm business faces an unexpected death or an intentional succession. This intersection death and taxes can be something many of us would prefer not to think about, but having a plan in place can ease the burden families navigating keeping the farm running while handling the passing of a loved one. Having a succession plan in place and affairs in order can make a world of difference in a smooth transition for the family farm – while also minimizing financial setbacks.

TCP recently hosted a series of Successful Succession workshops diving into what to be prepared for in estate and succession planning. Further details are available in this edition of The Kernel, as well as on our website at TexasCorn.org.

As farmers, we're adept at being reactive to situations outside of our control: from volatile markets to curveballs from Mother Nature. While this adaptability serves us well in the day to day, having a plan for the certainties: death and taxes, can alleviate burdens on finances and our families down the road.

Lone Star legislative session in review

Like everything else in the past year, the Texas Legislature's session that ended on Memorial Day was not normal. Lawmakers conducted their business behind plastic partitions and masks, while Capitol visitors waited in line to be tested for coronavirus. The new rules and health precautions did not deter the Legislature from passing a number of bills related to agriculture.

The primary agriculture bill of the session was the "Sunset" bill for the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA). Nearly all state agencies must undergo a thorough legislative review every 12 years called the sunset process and the Legislature must approve the continued operation and functions of the agencies. In the process this year, legislators extended TDA's existence for 12 years and added a new function to the agency – creation of a farmer mental health and suicide prevention program – and ordered an additional 2-year review of the operation of the GO TEXAN Program, which promotes Texas agricultural products. (S.B. 703 by Sen. Buckingham of Lakeway)

Recognizing that young Texans need a better understanding and appreciation of where their food comes from, legislators passed a bill requiring the Texas Education Agency to develop an agriculture education program for elementary schools with input from TDA and non-profit organizations with expertise in agricultural education. (S.B. 801 by Sen. Kolkhorst of Brenham)

To increase protection of agricultural operations in the state, a new law creates criminal penalties for anyone who damages, vandalizes, or steals any property on or from a farm, ranch or any animal or crop facility. The new criminal law is an effort to address past problems with prosecuting trespassing charges on farms, ranches and livestock facilities. (H.B. 1480 by Rep. Cyrier of Lockhart)

A new program will be established for an early plant pest detection and surveillance system through cooperative agreements between TDA and universities in the state. It will provide a full range of activities, including field inspection for early detection

before the invasive organism becomes established or becomes too large to eradicate or control. (H.B.2089 by Rep. Burrows of Lubbock and Sen. Perry of Lubbock)

The Legislature approved a bill to enable the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board (TSSWCB) to draw down more federal funding and other sources of conservation funding by creating the "On-The-Ground Conservation Program" – Essentially, a broader authority to connect outside conservation resources with Texas landowners, including additional funding for cost-sharing on conservation projects. (S.B. 1118 by Sen. Johnson of Dallas)

Another bill related to the TSSWCB will protect the privacy of individuals participating in TSSWCB invasive species eradication programs by making identifying information confidential and exempt from disclosure under state public information law. (S.B.634 by Sen. Kolkhorst of Brenham)

The expansion and affordability of broadband internet service in rural

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Field notes: Texas corn crop progress

It's a mixed bag for corn in Texas this year – with weather playing an integral factor. Get a glimpse at Texas Corn Producers board members' perspectives of the crop's progress and outlook in their respective regions as we enter June.

Region 1: Panhandle

Wesley Spurlock, Sherman, Co.

Spurlock reports Region One's planting is 95% complete in the region. He notes the region has had a smooth run so far and most of the corn is up and growing. Spurlock has an optimistic outlook for the year with the crop having a good start. He said farmers in the area are hopeful for a sizeable yield, with harvest in late September to early October.

Region 2: South Plains

Max Swinburn, Castro Co.

Delayed wheat harvest in this region has naturally pushed planting of many summer crops, including corn. Swinburn comments that corn

growth is faring well in the areas where wheat has been harvested, and corn was able to be planted prior to recent spring storms. One hardship the region's farmers have faced is a hard drought, but Swinburn said the recent rainfall has perked up everyone's spirits. Swinburn expects the area's 2021 corn crop to fare well and anticipates to harvest early-planted corn silage at the beginning of September and dent corn later that month.

Region 3: North Texas

Chad Wetzel, Grayson Co.

Corn in the northern part of Region Three is close to pollination and tasseling thanks to early planting. Wetzel states the excessive rainfall over the last 60 days has been hard on their crops and may cause stunted or late growth in this year's crop. He believes the North Texas corn crop outlook is highly variable based on plant date and soil drainage. Wetzel says those who planted early can ex-

pect a decent crop, while those who planted later may struggle due to less soil drainage issues.

Region 3: Central Texas

Aaron Martinka, Milam Co.

Martinka reports that Central Texas corn is at pollination in some places and others may have already progressed to the brown silk and blister phase. He says that some areas are doing well with the wet conditions and have withstood the weather, while other areas may have experienced too much rain and could be lacking nitrogen. Martinka believes they were in a good spot when the rainfall started and has not had many problems with it, but wishes some areas would dry up so farmers could put down more nitrogen and start disease prevention practices. While farmers in the region have had their troubles, Martinka speculates the area's crop, as a whole, is faring well compared

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THE VOICE: Association News

A note from the President...



Charles Ring
TCPA President
Sinton, Texas

Relationship building. It's at the heart of Texas Corn Producers Association's (TCPA) work.

Nurturing and building global markets for corn and corn products are an essential part of demand development for corn farmers. TCPA, as well as the state's corn checkoff, supports international business relations as part of the U.S. Grains Council (USGC).

Grasping the complexity of building relationships with other countries is a key part of USGC's efforts. Serving as a delegate to USGC for the state's

corn farmers, I've seen firsthand the difference in understanding the customer needs of Asia partners compared to Central and South American countries. USGC and affiliate members have experienced some "big wins" over the years: seeing Colombia recognize the value in U.S. corn, China's large purchases over the past year and more. Yet, there has been a fair share of difficulty, including most recently Mexico's announced plan to ban GMO corn consumption by 2024.

Navigating these complex issues are something USGC skillfully does on a daily basis. The council regularly takes its action teams on trips to bridge the gap between U.S. farmers with current and potential buyers of the country's corn products. Additionally, USGC hosts these country's representatives in the U.S. so they too can see the work and care given to producing a quality corn crop.

These regular operations, like most all aspects of our lives the past year, were disrupted. Naturally, being unable to visit in-person with one another made it difficult to build relationships and gain trust. Yet, USGC really aimed to do its part this past year despite this challenge. The council hosted virtual opportunities for international partners to continue to engage with U.S. corn and grain producers – in effort to continue building

relationships even virtually. These efforts spanned from virtual tours to conversations internally about understanding how to share U.S. farms' sustainability story.

As parts of life start to return to a semblance of what they were before March 2020, this summer USGC will have its first in-person meeting in over a year. I look forward to seeing the council's efforts soar as it builds on what's been accomplished despite facing challenging odds this past year.

Supporting long-term efforts such as that of USGC, is just one way TCPA aims to advocate for the Texas corn farmer. This summer, the association looks forward to the opportunity to continue advocating to policy makers in D.C. – even if that must be done virtually for now. TCPA is planning visits with the Texas delegation on the Hill in June. Additionally, I plan to represent the association at a roundtable with Congressman Kevin Brady (R-8) in June to discuss issues pertinent to Texas farmers and rural Texas.

Building relationships both globally and with our neighbors in Texas is essential for the future of agriculture. These advocacy efforts are what builds markets and ensures we as farmers have the means to continue the work we love: farming. 🌽

Texas legislature overview, continued from p. 4

and other underserved areas was a top priority of the legislative session after pandemic restrictions made high-speed connectivity essential for schools, telemedicine and many businesses. The major broadband bill passed during the session creates a State Broadband Development Office within the comptroller's office to map underserved areas of the state, use state and federal funding to award grants, low-interest loans, and other financial incentives to expand access and develop a state broadband plan that establishes long-term goals for greater affordability and use of broadband service. (H.B. 5 by Rep. Ashby of Lufkin)

Three additional bills were passed to

expand the availability of broadband service, including: using \$75 million in federal funds to replace utility poles to accommodate broadband lines; giving broadband providers access to electric cooperative poles; allowing electric utilities to partner with internet service providers to lease fiber capacity to provide middle mile broadband service; and allowing broadband providers to use state highway rights-of-way.

Among the bills that failed to pass was a bill with several provisions related to groundwater conservation districts. The House and the Senate could not reach agreement on the awarding of attorney fees and court costs in lawsuits involving ground-

water districts. The bill also would have required groundwater districts to create a process for petitioning for changes to a district's rules and a process to notify landowners of well permit applications if the well spacing distances from the new well would extend onto their property. (S.B. 152 by Sen. Perry of Lubbock)

A bill making numerous changes to the state's hemp cultivation laws also failed when the two houses could not reach agreement in the final days of the session. (H.B. 3948 by Rep. King of Uvalde)

A special session is expected to be called, as the Legislature must still determine congressional districts. 🌽

Farming carbon

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back in the soil, there are other areas in which agriculture can decrease other heat trapping gases.

Nitrous oxide (NO₂) traps nearly 300 times more heat than carbon dioxide. Soil management practices such as fertilizer application, field burning, manure management and more accounts for about 75% of the total nitrous oxide emissions in the U.S.

Show Me the Money

Since agriculture continues to make significant progress in sustainable and environmentally-safe practices, other industries are looking to farmers to help offset the impact its companies have on the environment. Whether it is travel, transportation of goods, use of non-renewable energy resources, or many other factors, few companies can transform atmospheric carbon into something else. Which brings us to the establishment of carbon markets.

Carbon markets essentially pay farmers for carbon taken out of the environment and stored in the soil. As farmers increase their land's carbon amounts by the acre/tons, industries will pay farmers for the "credit" of the carbon sequestered into the ground so the company can show an effort to offset its carbon emissions.

Joe Outlaw, Ph. D., co-director of the Agriculture and Food Policy Center with Texas A&M University, pointed out during the South Texas extension program that companies facilitating carbon banks are estimating participating farmers could make between \$5-\$20 per acre, depending on the amount of carbon their soil can absorb. For many farmers, this means little to no management style changes can reap a reward. However, this is not the case for every farmer.

Different soil types and environments heavily dictate how and how much carbon can be stored into the soil. In Figure 1, the Chicago Climate Exchange (CCX), which is the experimental voluntary market that trades greenhouse gas emission offsets, identifies its estimated carbon capture potential across the country.

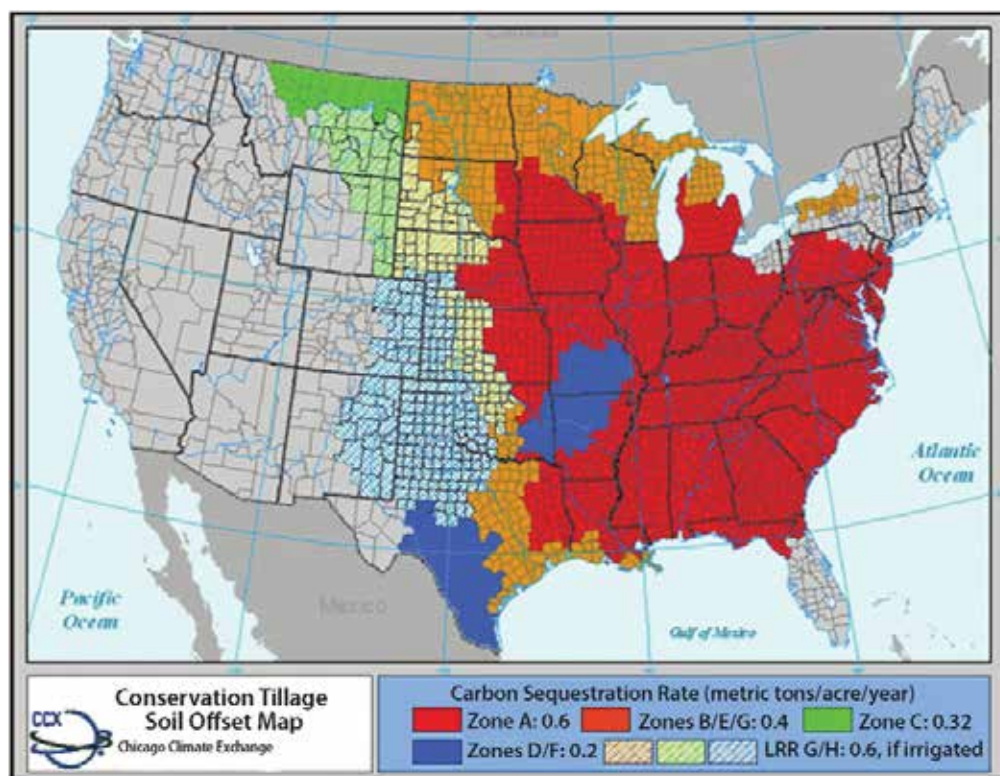


Figure 1: Carbon capture potential identified by CCX

Lewis mentioned the four soil health principals needed to increase organic carbon in the soil: maximize continuous living roots, soil cover and biodiversity, while minimizing soil disturbance (tillage). Many farmers in the Plains have adopted minimal or no-till management practices, but rarely have the water needed to establish cover crops.

Both Lewis and Outlaw mentioned the sentiments of many in the agricultural community expressing a need to ensure early adopters of these practices are not punished by additionality.

Steps Forward

In April, Senator Mike Braun (R-IN) introduced the Growing Climate Solutions Act in the United States Senate with help from Senate Agriculture Committee Chairwoman Debbie Stabenow. This act aims to make the USDA become the official certifying agency for greenhouse gas markets, like the USDA Organic program. To date, the act passed out of committee in the Senate with bipar-

tisan support and is expected to have a companion bill introduced in the United States House of Representatives in the future.

Texas Corn Producers (TCP) encourages all farmers who engage with companies facilitating a carbon bank to proceed with caution. Doing homework on what a company expects from farmers and what a farmer can expect from the company will be crucial in ensuring these carbon markets are a hassle-free, profitable opportunity for farmers.

As the industry continues to navigate this quickly emerging market, it's important to approach climate smart efforts with thought and care for the details. TCP will continue to share details about opportunities for farmers to continue and broaden their role as a part of the solution to climate concerns facing the globe. Stay up-to-date on these efforts at TexasCorn.org or through TCP's social channels. 🌽

Successful succession: Preparing for your farm business transition

Part one

Who's going to fill your shoes? Putting pen to paper for a farm business succession plan can alleviate worries for individuals currently running the business and lessen the burden on those faced with handling business matters following the loss of a loved one.

Knowing the first steps to take in making a succession plan can be daunting, if not overwhelming - especially for those of us that are not armed with a legal degree.

This spring, Texas Corn Producers traveled across the state hosting a series of Successful Succession workshops for Texas farmers. In these workshops, Tiffany Dowell Lashmet, an agricultural law specialist with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, guided Texas farmers in knowing where to start and gathering the information they need before they even step foot in a lawyer's office to draft a will. In just a few steps, farmers can feel prepared in developing a succession plan that leaves a clear path of direction for the future of the legacy they've built over decades. How can farm families get started?

The Flight Plan

The first step for anyone planning for succession, is to ensure pertinent documents and information is

gathered. Lashmet dubs this the "flight plan."

A considerable amount of thought should be given to ensure all pertinent information is included in this. The plan should pull together some information you'd naturally expect such as estate planning documents, investment account information, life and health insurance policies, deeds, titles, registrations, and burial plot location and instructions.

As a farm business, there are specific items that are also wise to include in the plan such as crop insurance policies, FSA contracts, and a list of estimated fair market value of land, livestock and other assets.

Then there are some of the easily looked over items to include: email and computer passwords, contact information for key business associates, and credit card and debt information and payment schedules.

TCP has developed a resource guide that includes a more thorough list of what should be included in a flight plan and worksheet to complete to ensure all information is thought through and available. Visit TexasCorn.org to access this guide.

Communicate & Strategize

With a flight plan gathered, the next step in planning for succession

is having open conversation with all stakeholders. It's important to have an understanding of every stakeholder's interest, values and willingness to participate in the ongoing business operation.

From there, these stakeholders need to identify their goals. What do you want to do with the farm - keep it in the family, sell it, keep the land farming? What are the goals for long-term care to provide for the needs of the "retiring" generation? What are tax implications to consider? Is there an equitable/equal issue with the next generation?

These questions need to be grappled with and carefully thought through. This may need happen through several conversations rather than just one sitting. However, having a solid understanding of the family's goals is essential to the next step: designing a business succession.

The next edition of The Kernel will offer insight into the next steps for a successful success. However, in the meantime, the resource guide and other resources are rolling out online at TexasCorn.org.

The program is a collaboration of TCP and AgriLife Extension made possible in part by a grant from the Southern Extension Risk Management Education Center. 🌽

Field notes, continued from p. 3

to what farmers are facing in other parts of the state.

Region 4: Coastal Bend

Daniel Berglund, Wharton Co.

Region Four has faced a few hardships with this year's crop, rainfall being the root of most issues. Most farmers' corn in the region is currently underwater and experiencing water stress and excess moisture. Berglund believes that corn planted earlier in the season is doing better, but the younger corn is maturing too early and is less likely to survive the weather. De-nitration and less oxygen

reaching the roots is another problem he is worried about for the region. Earlier in the season, some farmers in the Coastal Bend dealt with disease issues. Berglund has a positive outlook for this year's crop thanks to the current commodity market. He hopes to have an above average yield with the earlier planted corn.

Region 5: South Texas

Colin Chopelas, Nueces Co.

Chopelas says most corn in the region is nearly to dent or will be in the next week - if it does not drown beforehand. He said some farmers in

the area are worried about premature death due to the excessive rainfall. Chopelas plans to harvest in July, and anticipates a sporadic yield that's likely around 80-90 bushels per acre. Due to the extremities of the weather from a harsh drought to excessive rain, producers have faced a variety of challenges. He reports that planted corn acreage in the region was smaller than normal, with a shift toward milo this year. Chopelas expects yields to hover on either side of average, but could wind up on the low side if the rainfall does not slow down in the region. 🌽

ODDS *and* ENDS



High Plains moth trapping

For the past 10 years, real-time information has been provided to Texas farmers about moth activity in counties across the Texas High Plains. Continuing this effort is something Texas Corn Producers Board (TCPB) is excited to again bring farmers in 2021.

This checkoff-funded project gives farmers firsthand information on pests within certain counties. These counts can help farmers determine when an economic threshold has been met giving farmers an optimal time to spray pesticides.

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension agents in Dallam, Deaf Smith, Gray and Hartley counties partner with

farmers to collect moth count data on four different pests present in corn fields during the growing season: Southwestern corn borer, fall armyworm, Western bean cutworm, and corn earworm. This provides information to farmers on moths that are active during the corn growing season. Although there are general trends in moth activity, there are yearly variations when moth activity happens during the season.

Providing information to farmers about moth activity during the upcoming growing season will allow farmers to know the extent of the threat these pests pose to their crops. This research offers valuable

insight for Texas farmers, making the decision-making process easier down the road when spraying crops is necessary.

Traps were setup the last week in May and will be counted by county extension agents until the end of August. TCPB will post the weekly trapping information on its website at TexasCorn.org. Additionally, farmers may follow @TexasCorn on Twitter for the weekly updates. Be on the lookout for the first week's data at the end of the month!

Find out more about this and other research efforts funded by TCPB at TexasCorn.org.

New interns join Texas Corn Producers

This spring, Texas Corn Producers (TCP) welcomed two new interns. Geneva Lord is the organization's new communications intern and Sophia McMurray is its administrative intern.

Geneva Lord says she is delighted to join TCP to assist with its communications efforts. Lord grew up in May, Texas, just north of Brownwood on a ranch, and graduated from May High School in 2020. She is currently a sophomore at Texas Tech University pursuing a bachelor's degree in agricultural communications.

Lord was actively involved in 4-H and FFA where she served in numerous councils at the local and county levels. She is passionately involved in the livestock industry, which has allowed her to show a few different species and serve as the 2019 Brown County Youth Fair Queen. Lord accredits her career aspirations to these organizations.

Although Lord's plans are not yet set in stone, she hopes to be an asset to the agricultural industry and says she is looking forward to learning more about the crop industry and hopes to implement the skills she learns during her time at TCP to positively impact the agricultural

industry.

Sophia McMurray is assisting TCP in the office with administrative and membership tasks. She is a student at Texas Tech University pursuing a degree in agricultural communications with a minor in political science.

McMurray was raised in the small town of La Vernia, Texas, which is southeast of San Antonio. The youngest of five, she credits her oldest sister for inspiring her passion for agriculture. Her sister's involvement in agriculture led McMurray to be pushed by her high school agriculture teacher to sign up for her first agriculture class in high school – a decision she doesn't regret.

Throughout high school, she was heavily involved in FFA along with Business Professionals of America, National Honor Society, and high school and travel softball.

McMurray recently joined President's Select. She has aspirations of attending law school after completing her bachelors' degree and she believes that gaining experience with TCP is an impactful first step in her future endeavors.



Geneva Lord (top) and Sophia McMurray (bottom) join as interns

Directors

Daniel Berglund, Wharton Co.

Colin Chopelas, Nueces Co.

Dustin Dickerson, Hidalgo Co.

Robert Gordon, Hartley Co.

Braden Gruhlkey, Randall Co.

Kyla Hamilton, Lubbock Co.

Mark Howard, Hartley Co.

Hagen Hunt, Hale Co.

Todd Kimbrell, Hill Co.

Aaron Martinka, Milam Co.

Larry Mason, Dallam Co.

Joe Reed, Swisher Co.

Charles Ring, San Patricio Co.

Austin Sage, Hartley Co.

Wesley Spurlock, Sherman Co.

Jim Sugarek, Bee Co.

Max Swinburn, Castro Co.

Bart Thoreson, Sherman Co.

Dee Vaughan, Moore Co.

Bruce Wetzel, Grayson Co.

Chad Wetzel, Grayson Co.

Russell Williams, Hartley Co.

Steve Yoder, Dallam Co.

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Upcoming Events

Visit www.TexasCorn.org for the most up-to-date list of industry meetings and other upcoming events.

July 14 | National Corn Growers Assoc. Corn Congress | New Orleans, La.
July 28-30 | U.S. Grains Council Delegates Meeting | Des Moines, Iowa
Aug. 24-26 | Texas Corn Producers (TCP) Board Meetings | Lubbock, Texas

Support our Corporate Members



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www.TexasCorn.org