

TCP funds study, leads advocacy as fertilizer prices soar

Price hikes for family farmers spurred a study on nitrogen fertilizer costs and the impact on farms released at the beginning of the year. The analysis, completed by the Ag and Food Policy Center at Texas A&M University (AFPC), eyes several concerning factors that appear to drive fertilizer prices.

“As part of this study, we conducted a historical analysis going back to 1980 and found that fertilizer costs tend to go up when corn revenues increase,” Joe Outlaw, Ph.D., the AFPC co-director, says. “Notably, these prices tend to go up exponentially even after accounting for natural gas prices and higher demand.”

Texas Corn Producers (TCP) Issues Committee Chairman Dee Vaughan, a farmer in Moore County, says his farm has felt the impact of climbing prices that account for approximately 36% of a farms’ operating cost.

“In just over 2-years, I’ve seen an astonishing 264% increase in the cost of nitrogen fertilizer alone,” Vaughan says. “My farm’s overall fertilizer cost has increased 241%.”

Farms are experiencing this price hit regardless of location. Jim Sugarek who farms near Bee County also saw a 264% increase in fertilizer costs on his family farm.

“As I prepared to put seed in the ground in recent weeks, I couldn’t wait to see if these price hikes would

settle to something close to a normal year – much less risk them surging even more,” Sugarek says.

In the study’s historical analysis of the nitrogen fertilizer industry, four manufacturers, including CF Industries, Nutrien, Koch and Yara-USA, account for approximately 75% of the total domestic nitrogen fertilizer production.

Inflation and supply chain issues experienced nationwide have been cited by the industry as key factors to the impact on farmers’ fertilizer prices. However, the study shows there are some trends to be considered to the contrary.

Namely, the industry indicates natural gas accounts for 70-90% of variable production costs for nitrogen fertilizer. The study finds that the increase in one type of nitrogen fertilizer, anhydrous ammonia, the value of natural gas accounts for only 15%, or \$102 per ton, of recent price increases.

“The study shows that once the value of natural gas has been subtracted from nitrogen, the residual tends to closely track the price of corn,” Outlaw notes.

While this correlation could nod to increased demand for nitrogen products as corn prices rise, it could also be “due to the exercise of market power by nitrogen product manufacturers,” the study asserts.

“Our findings raise serious questions and clearly help explain the frus-

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From Texas Corn Producers Board
and Texas Corn Producers Association
2022 First Quarter

the kernel



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CORner Comments



David Gibson
TCPB Executive Director
TCPA Exec. Vice President

Farmers: Be Ready to Take Action on Atrazine Issues

Corn farmers should be ready to submit comments in favor of atrazine later this spring when the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) plans to announce a revision to its 2020 registration decision on atrazine. EPA had set a reasonable “level of concern” for atrazine but then took advantage of an environmentalist lawsuit to reconsider its own decision.

In September 2020, EPA issued its Interim Registration Review Decision, and confirmed its decision to use the 15 parts per billion (ppb) aquatic level of concern (CELOC) for atrazine. This was a better outcome than a 2016 EPA proposal that would have banned atrazine in much of the corn belt.

Fast forward to August 2021, when in response to a court case filed by

environmental groups against EPA’s registration review decision, EPA told the court it planned to reconsider the 15 ppb level of concern for atrazine. This unprecedented move reopened the decision adopted by EPA almost a year earlier.

On March 14, 2022, EPA filed a report with the court saying it would complete its proposed revisions by April 30. After EPA publishes the proposed revisions, there will be a 60-day public comment period, expected likely in the May-June timeframe. This will be during a hectic time for farmers, but we will be counting on you to respond to calls to action to demand EPA base its decision on credible science, and again let them know the benefits of atrazine to your sustainable farming practices.

Texas Corn Producers is working with National Corn Growers

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Robert Gordon
TCPB Chairman
Dalhart, Texas

This annual meeting brings together leaders from checkoffs and associations across the country, and across multiple commodities: corn, grain sorghum, soybeans and wheat. The event brought a crowd of more than 7,800, including farmers and agricultural professionals.

At this year’s Classic, Texas Corn Producers (TCP) had the opportunity to advocate for the state’s farmers on a number of fronts. We met with industry professionals, including seed and chemical companies, to share the concerns and issues on the minds of farmers in our state. Topics included everything from input prices, impacts of world conflicts on the industry and agriculture, and of course the dry weather most Texas farmers are experiencing so far this year.

Additionally, both the Texas corn checkoff and association had representation at the National Corn Growers Association meetings and events. Engagement at these events allows us to visit with farmers in other regions about the issues they’re facing, and find our common ground on efforts and needs to better represent our state’s corn farmers as a whole.

Additionally, this is a crucial opportunity to share our state’s unique perspective on a national stage: impacting the priorities of national efforts to educate and advocate on behalf of corn farmers.

Of note, TCP joined fellow state corn organizations investing in aflatoxin mitigation research to hear from funded researchers about their studies and findings. This meeting allows researchers to better collaborate and understand other scientific efforts aimed to alleviate aflatoxin impacts on farms. The Texas corn checkoff works with other state corn organizations to pool funds to make a bigger impact on aflatoxin research efforts.

Classic is a busy week of many meetings and programs every year, but ultimately an impactful event that enables fellow farm leaders to gain insight and perspective from one another to better serve the farmers we represent back home.

If there are issues impacting your farm that the state’s corn checkoff can assist with, I urge you to reach out to a checkoff board member in your region or contact the office directly. 🌽

I recently returned from the 2022 Commodity Classic (Classic), which was back in person this year in New Orleans, Louisiana. I can’t tell you how nice it was to finally see faces of fellow farmer leaders from across the nation – and not through the monitor screen!

Checkoff board election results announced

Four incumbents return, one new director

In the fifteenth statewide election since the Texas Corn Producers Board became a statewide entity in 1990, five board members were elected or re-elected in the organization's biennial elections held this fall.

In Voting Region Two, **Braden Gruhlkey of Randall County** and **Hagen Hunt of Hale County** were re-elected. **Kyla Hamilton of Lubbock County** will join the board this year to represent this region that covers the Southern and High Plains. **Bruce Wetzel of Grayson County** was re-elected to serve in Voting Region Three, which encompasses North and Central Texas. **Ben Gwynn of Nueces County** will continue to serve in Voting Region Five – covering the South Texas region.

The Texas Department of Agriculture

ratified the results of the elections on Thursday, December 16.

The five board members were sworn in on January 8, 2022, during TCPB's next board meeting by Patrick Dudley, Texas Department of Agriculture. Each person elected will serve a 6-year term, or until the year 2028.

The Texas Corn Producers Board is a statewide board dedicated to furthering research, education, promotion and marketing opportunities for the Texas corn industry. A voluntary checkoff program provides our organization with the funds required to enhance and grow the Texas corn industry.

The state is divided into five separate "voting regions" to ensure TCPB board seats best reflect corn produc-

tion across the state, so corn farmers' interests are adequately represented. There are 15 board seats on TCPB; the voting regions are designed for each seat to represent 1/15th of the total corn production in Texas, as reported by the Texas Crop Reporting Service. A complete list of board members is available on the back cover of this publication or online at [TexasCorn.org](https://www.texascorn.org).

News releases and legal notices on the elections were sent to major newspapers in the regions where elections were held. The voting period was from Oct. 25 – Nov. 15, 2021.

The next election will be in two years for five seats serving 6-year terms to begin in 2024. 🌽

Texas farmers share perspectives, gain insight through NCGA action teams

In January, association members serving on the National Corn Growers Association (NCGA) action teams met up with other team members to discuss pertinent issues, concerns and more for the upcoming year.

Each action team's efforts focused on select topics vital to the corn industry and its future, directing the funds and efforts of the national organization's initiatives.

Corn Political Action Committee (Corn PAC)

The first items of business for the Corn PAC this year were to elect new officers and discuss the Corn PAC auction. Robert Gordon, a board member for Texas Corn Producers (TCP) from Dalhart, is a part of the national action team and was elected as its secretary.

Gordon said he expects the Corn PAC to continue its political contributions for candidates running for federal public office that have shown support of corn producers and policies across the nation.

The Corn PAC also continued to work on its annual Commodity Clas-

sic auction fundraiser to raise money for the PAC's future actions and political contributions.

Market Development Action Team (MDAT)

Kyla Hamilton, a Texas member of MDAT from Shallowater, had her first meeting with the team and was excited to discuss the new marketing opportunities and industrial uses of corn.

"There are very exciting new marketing opportunities. I cannot wait to learn them and integrate them into the corn market," Hamilton said. "We have potential contracts with Lululemon on integrating corn into the elasticity of the product and a new market for corn in everyday skincare and lotion products."

Risk Management & Transportation Action Team (RMTAT)

Aaron Martinka, a Texas member of RMTAT from Buckholts, said most of his team's conversations were directed at implementation on disaster programs and a producer survey on risk management that will both play roles in planning the next farm bill.

He said the team expects the risk management survey that's been distributed to a broad sampling of corn farmers across the nation to have many benefits when it comes to working with legislators and policy staff on the next farm bill.

"It will help guide and direct grower leaders to formulate a farm bill that encompasses most of the needs," Martinka said, "A lot of the farm bills we have now are a result of previous surveys and grower panels. It helps to figure the wants and needs of the growers and how they differ in different regions."

Stewardship Action Team (SAT)

The SAT covered all topics related to environmental health. These topics ranged from the conservation and environmental benefits of crop production to soil health economics. Russell Williams, a Texas member of the team from Dalhart, said the decisions made were geared toward pushing the corn industry to more sustainable practices.

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THE VOICE: Association News

A note from the President...



Charles Ring
TCPA President
Sinton, Texas

As we enter into the 2022 growing season, there are a number of issues on the radar of the state's corn association. As a focus on climate-smart agriculture grows across the countryside, I don't know a farmer who hasn't been asked to look into a carbon contract.

At the recent Texas Ag Forum held in Lubbock, carbon markets and car-

bon contracts were specifically highlighted. It was very interesting to hear the perspectives surrounding carbon - from economics to agronomics to legal considerations.

As farmers look at these market opportunities, I encourage you to mindfully research the opportunities for carbon sequestration on your farm. Every growing season we must make considerations for the best crops, varieties, applications and management on our individual fields - and carbon opportunities on these fields are equally unique. Researchers have found the potential for additional carbon sequestration is limited based on a number of factors, including soil type, crop, climate and more. This is something the corn checkoff board is investing research funds to help provide more data for farmers across the state to be able to make an informed decision.

It was also interesting hearing a lawyer's perspective of considerations when signing a carbon contract. There are many factors we need to be mindful of as farmers. I encourage you to review the resources Tiffany Dowell Lashmet, an agricultural law specialist with Texas A&M AgriLife

Extension, has available on her blog the Texas Ag Law Blog.

Be mindful of how early you commit to a market contract. Time will tell how the carbon markets play out. As farmers, it's vital that we weigh the long-term profitability of changing practices against the monetary incentive these carbon contracts offer.

The association is carefully watching for policies that can impact farmers and the agricultural industry as carbon markets continue to evolve. In particular, Texas Corn Producers Association is actively advocating for farmers who already implemented many conservation practices that are now being considered climate-smart agriculture to not be penalized for adopting these practices on an earlier timeline. We feel all farmers should be equally recognized and incentivized for their efforts to conserve resources and positively impact the environment.

Farmers are the original conservationists - we can be a piece of the solution toward conserving our resources for future generations to come. As always, please reach out if there is anything you feel the association should address.

Association annual meeting, elections

Texas Corn Producers Association (TCPA) held its annual membership meeting on Friday, January 7 in Lubbock, Texas. The hybrid in-person and virtual meeting coincided with the board of directors' meeting.

Congressman Jodey Arrington opened the meeting, offering his perspective on the federal policy landscape and its impact on Texas agriculture. Arrington remarked on the needs for agriculture and rural Texans, and the work to be done in Congress to protect the nation's food security — particularly through the farm bill.

TCPA President Charles Ring also gave an overview of recent association advocacy efforts and activities.

At the meeting, TPCA held elections for board seats with expiring terms, in-

cluding seats in Regions 1, 4 and 5, and two At-Large board seats.

Membership voted to re-elect the following board members:

- **Dee Vaughan**, Moore Co. Region 1
- **Daniel Berglund**, Wharton Co. Region 4
- **Colin Chopelas**, Nueces Co. Region 5
- **Joe Reed**, Swisher Co. At-Large
- **Wesley Spurlock**, Sherman Co. At-Large

Additionally, TPCA members re-slated officers for the year. These officers



will serve a second 1-year term:

- **President**
Charles Ring
San Patricio County
- **Vice President**
Jim Sugarek
Bee County
- **Secretary/Treasurer**
Hagen Hunt
Hale County.

Input expense advocacy, continued from p. 1

tration with this situation farmers are feeling nationwide,” Outlaw says.

The study was commissioned by state corn checkoffs and associations in Texas, Missouri, Colorado, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee and Wisconsin.

TCP worked with the National Corn Growers Association (NCGA) and state affiliates to share the results of this study with policy makers and media. In this effort, a press conference was held that featured Outlaw laying out the study’s findings alongside Vaughan and other corn farmer leaders across the country sharing firsthand experiences of the impacts of soaring prices on the American farmer.

The issue has continued to come to light for the public in weeks since the study’s release, as consumers see grocery prices rise and start asking questions. Vaughan visited with Fox News Live to help viewers under-

stand rising food prices are not benefiting America’s farmers. He outlined how a mere \$.14 of every dollar spent on food goes back to the farm. Emphasizing that skyrocketing input costs - particularly with fertilizer - are chiseling away at farmers’ ability to keep family farms thriving and in business — putting the nation’s food security at stake.

The ongoing conflict in eastern Europe has since further amplified this issue in the agricultural industry.

Further, looming tariffs would add insult to injury. The AFPC study states, “Any import tax on nitrogen fertilizers would raise prices for both domestically produced and imported fertilizer by the full amount of the tax rate multiplied by the pre-tax price.”

“Fertilizers play an integral role in a crop’s health and success,” Vaughan concludes. “The steep price hikes hitting farm country is alarming for corn farmers who count on nitrogen and other fertilizers for their plants to thrive. The breadth of how far-reaching this is impacting farmers is telling that something needs

to be done to keep America’s farmers from bearing the burden of an industry pushing the limit of how thin they can cut a farms’ margins.”

Texas Corn Producers Association is actively advocating for policy action on this matter. In a recent letter to the Texas delegation in Washington, TCPA President Charles Ring and TCPA Executive Vice President David Gibson stated:

“Of immediate concern, is ensuring no further tariffs are granted for the fertilizer industry. The AFPC study demonstrates these tariff costs are directly passed down to American farmers.”

The letter underscored the urgency of considering what can be done at the federal level, stating:

“Ever-climbing prices in the fertilizer sector with this steep of market concentration cannot be sustainable for our family farms in the long term.”

TCP continues to work with fellow agricultural organizations on this issue. Stay up-to-date on latest developments on TCP social channels or at TexasCorn.org.

Action teams, continued from p. 3

“We are committed to further participation in Field-to-Market, which is good for the sustainability of corn,” Williams said. “It is looking at the entire life cycle to analyze the things that have been done to see how practices are contributing to the continuation of sustainability.”

Member & Consumer Engagement Action Team (MCEAT)

Bryce White, the producer relations director for TCP, met with the rest of the MCEAT to discuss the launch of the 2022 Corn Reputation media buy in Washington. The team also provided insight on the Farm Family Behavioral Health and Diversity and Inclusivity programs. Additionally, volunteers for various committees were chosen.

“Among the many exciting updates we received at our January meeting, two programs in particular have made major strides. CommonGround, a con-

sumer advocacy program, rebranded under the guidance of a national task force,” White said. “Also, the Corn Reputation campaign has launched in the nation’s capital and is already getting engagement from decision makers in DC. Both programs are moving in the right direction to have positive impacts for corn growers.”

Other Teams

Three more action teams met in conjunction with these meetings, the Sustainable Ag Research Action Team (SARAT), the Ethanol Action Team (ETHAT) and the Production Technology Access Action Team (PTAAT).

ETHAT covered topics that related to all things ethanol such as public policy, partnerships, research and more.

PTAAT discussed a variety of topics related to the Endangered Species Act, pending tariffs on fer-

fertilizers, and programs that support pollinators’ health and habitat.

SARAT discussed new research areas and finding ways to support research-based communities. Decisions were made over what areas of research are important to focus on, which led to discussion about the priority areas for the research title of the farm bill.

NCGA relies on these teams of farmer leaders to continue pushing forward the organization’s goals and to represent the corn segment of the agricultural industry. TCP is proud to have Texas members serving on these action teams and helping lead NCGA. Texas members on these teams provide the unique perspective of southern agriculture, while working to support the corn industry across the nation. Find out more about NCGA action teams and efforts online at NCGA.com.

National Corn Yield Contest results announced

The 2021 National Corn Growers Association's (NCGA) National Corn Yield Contest (NCYC) boasted a high yield of 602.1694 bushels per acre by

David Hula of Charles City, Virginia. In Texas, Andy Cover of Dalhart, Texas brought in the most bushels per acre, yielding 338.2694 on his no-

till irrigated corn crop.

Congratulations to the Texas farmers, including those with crop in New Mexico and Oklahoma:

Rank	Entrant Name	City	Hybrid Brand	Number	Yield
Conventional Non-Irrigated					
1	Justin N. Hansen	Lorena	Dyna-Gro	D58SS65*	237.9638
2	Keith Kresta	Wharton	Pioneer	P1847VYHR*	236.0780
3	Aaron N Martinka	Buckholts	DEKALB	DKC67-94	210.7477
No-Till Non-Irrigated					
*	Justin N Hansen	Lorena	Dyna-Gro	D57VC51	233.2581
Strip, Min, Mulch, Ridge-Till Non-Irrigated					
1	Brian Fink	Cost	Pioneer	P1847VYHR*	197.4779
*	Brian Fink	Cost	Pioneer	P1622VYHR*	178.1959
1 (NM)	Jared Gordon	Dalhart	Pioneer	P1108Q™	276.7248
No-Till Irrigated					
1	Andy Cover	Dalhart	Pioneer	P1108Q™	338.2694
2	Jarret Weinheimer	Groom	Pioneer	P1366AML™	284.5089
Strip, Min, Mulch, Ridge-Till Irrigated					
1	Todd Reinart	Amarillo	Pioneer	P1828AM™	318.5766
2	Chandler Preston	Dumas	Pioneer	P1572AM™	317.0115
3	Brett Britten	Groom	Pioneer	P1828Q™	287.8742
2* (OK)	Austin Sage	Texline	Pioneer	P1366AML™	313.1147
Conventional Irrigated					
1	Tommy & Valerie Cartrite	Sunray	Pioneer	P2042AML™	331.9006
2	Tommy & Valerie Cartrite	Sunray	Pioneer	P1828AM™	326.1073
1 (OK)	Austin Sage	Texline	Pioneer	P1108Q™	311.5208

Gibson comments, continued from p. 2

Association (NCGA) and the Triazine Network, a coalition of ag groups seeking science-based outcomes in the regulation of the triazine herbicides including atrazine. The Network continues to be in communication on this issue with both EPA and Syngenta, the primary registrant of atrazine. For over 60 years, atrazine has provided low-cost, long-acting weed control for farmers. We can't afford to lose it –

and possibly other key crop protection tools that would follow.

But wait, there's more! Atrazine Endangered Species Act Review: EPA also came up with damaging and questionable evaluations of atrazine and glyphosate as those herbicides entered the Endangered Species Act review. The ESA Review is guided by EPA's Biological Evaluation, which was published in November 2021. This misguided evaluation

claimed that atrazine adversely impacted nearly every endangered species habitat including some species that are extinct. Glyphosate didn't fare any better in its biological evaluation. We will be involved with the ESA review to insist credible science is used for decisions for both of these important herbicides. 🍌

ODDS *and* ENDS



TCPA awards student, AFNR educator scholarships

Texas Corn Producers Association (TCPA) is proud to offer scholarship opportunities for higher education. This year, TCPA awarded a total of eight scholarships for student members.

Four student members won \$1,000 scholarships to further their education at a Texas college or university. Two scholarships were awarded in both the high school and college categories. This year's winners are:

High School

- **Zachary Gray**, Harlingen
- **Annie Fallon**, Sherman

College

- **Caden Carver**, Abernathy
Texas A&M University
- **Breely Huguley**, Olton
Texas Tech University

"We were so encouraged by the ambitions of the students who applied this year," TCPA Education Director Hannah Turner said. "The future of our industry is in wonderful hands."

TCPA also awarded a total of four scholarships to student members earning their degrees in agriculture, food and natural resources (AFNR) education. These individuals are given \$500 scholarships to use during their student teaching term.

Participating universities this year were Texas A&M University and Tarleton State University. Scholarship winners are:

- **Emily Gwinn**, Texas A&M
Teaching at Marion H.S.
- **Erica Pavliska**, Texas A&M
Teaching at Caldwell H.S.

- **Kinsey Lane**, Tarleton
Teaching at Grandview H.S.
- **Jenna Lawhorn**, Tarleton
Teaching at Alvin H.S.

The winners of the AFNR scholarship will also incorporate teaching a corn-focused lesson to students during their student teaching assignment.

"Ag science teachers are in a unique position to pour into students at a crucial stage in their life," Turner said. "Through this scholarship, we get to support them as they support students who are future industry and community leaders."

Congratulations to this year's winners. Details about future scholarship opportunities will be available online at TexasCorn.org.

Texas farmers enjoy evening out, networking at Turnrow Tonight

Texas Corn Producers (TCP) gathered farmers for a night of dinner, dancing and conversation. TCP held two successful Turnrow Tonight events: the first in Gruene in November, and the second in Lubbock in January.

The events fostered conversations amongst the farmers and agricultural professionals in attendance over a variety of topics from the 2021 harvest to the upcoming growing season to the work of TCP and more.

Bryce White, TCP's producer relations director, said the goal of Turnrow Tonight was to provide a night for farmers to relax and engage in conversations with others.

"Turnrow Tonight was a way for farmers to take the night off with neighbors and friends, while also providing an opportunity to learn about TCP efforts and how it benefits them," White said. "We value hosting events that provide the best networking opportunities for everyone, while

still being able to enjoy the night."

Board members and those actively involved in the association encouraged discussion about the efforts of TCP over the past year and future plans to continue checkoff and association advocacy efforts.

Look for similar events in your region in 2022. Details about these opportunities will be available in our print newsletter and online at TexasCorn.org.

New administrative intern joins TCP

This spring, TCP welcomed Macey Gerhart as an administrative intern. Gerhart grew up in Winters, Texas, on a small farm and ranch. She graduated from Winters High School and then attended Texas Tech University where she received a bachelor's degree in animal science in Dec. 2021.

As an undergraduate, Gerhart was involved in various activities such as Ambassadors for Agriculture, the second cohort of the Davis College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources (CASNR) MILE program,

and participated in the CASNR Government Internship Program.

Currently, Gerhart is pursuing a Master of Business Administration from the Jerry S. Rawls College of Business at Texas Tech.

Gerhart hopes after completing her master's she will continue to work in the agricultural industry, and more specifically in commodities.

As the Administrative Intern, Gerhart will take on the role of assisting with membership, assessments, research and more.



Macey Gerhart of Winters joins TCP team as an intern

Directors

Daniel Berglund, Wharton Co.

Colin Chopelas, Nueces Co.

Robert Gordon, Hartley Co.

Braden Gruhlkey, Randall Co.

Ben Gwynn, Nueces 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.

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.

March 28-30 | Texas Corn Producers (TCP) Board Meetings | McAllen

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Learn how you can become a corporate member at www.TexasCorn.org