

# Thought the battle to reregister atrazine was over? Think again.

While costs skyrocket, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is taking another swing at atrazine - disregarding sound science, transparency, and regulatory framework.

In 2020, EPA published its final atrazine registration review decision, setting the aquatic level of concern (CE-LOC) at 15 parts per billion (ppb). Extreme environmental groups retaliated with a lawsuit, opening the door for EPA to shift tactics and alter its 2020 published decision.

On June 30, EPA proposed an ultra-low CE-LOC of 3.4 ppb - dramatically limiting atrazine's use on corn and other crops. This proposed level is not supported by scientific research.

The proposed rule will impact more than 72 percent of U.S. corn acres, significantly reducing application rates and requiring additional conservation measures and reporting procedures.

If adopted, the proposal would place severe restrictions on most farmers who have safely used the popular herbicide for more than 60 years.

After examining the extensive documentation posted to the EPA proposed rule docket, the scenario has gone from bad to worse for growers

of corn, grain sorghum, sugar cane, fruits, vegetables, and other crops that rely on atrazine.

According to agency documents, 23 percent of acres would exceed the ultra-low 3.4 ppb aquatic CE-LOC, and an astounding 49 percent of corn acres would be over 9.8 ppb. Areas predicted to exceed the limit would then be required to implement and document one or more mitigation practices from a "pick list" and use a lower rate of atrazine.

Even in flat areas with little or no runoff, EPA's radical prediction model would require growers to use mitigation practices like adding buffer strips and terraces. Meanwhile, with no input from USDA, other viable options like split applications were not included on the proposed pick list.

Additionally, EPA is proposing label changes that reduce atrazine application rates by 20 percent, ban application within 48 hours of a predicted rain event that could produce runoff, and also aerial applications.

EPA estimates the cost to replace atrazine is \$42 per acre based on alternative herbicide expenses and reduced yields from poor pest control. If adopted, there will be significant implications for no-till and conservation

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From Texas Corn Producers Board  
and Texas Corn Producers Association

Summer 2022

# the kernel



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# CORner Comments



**David Gibson**  
**TCPB Executive Director**  
**TCPA Exec. Vice President**

As we are wrapping up one of the toughest years I have seen for corn production across Texas during my 20 years with Texas Corn Producers, I know the true spirit of agriculture will shine as we prepare for next year. Due to high input prices, volatile market prices, and the EXTREME DROUGHT conditions that have plagued the whole state, no producer in the state has escaped one or all these factors.

The market for December corn alone has seen a market swing of over \$2.50 per bushel. Many of you, like me, can remember when \$2.50 per bushel was by itself the center point for the whole year. On top of the futures price swing, we have seen very strong basis for those that still had corn from last year to sell into the market and we are even seeing some stronger than normal basis bids

for delivery of this year's crop early next year. Hopefully the stronger basis will remain as growers begin to price the crop for 2023.

As I am writing this, the CBOT is trading December 22 corn at \$6.28 and December 23 at near \$6.00 per bushel – with strong basis bids this should give them a chance to remain economically sound if mother nature will cooperate and a normal crop can be produced. In that regard, currently the entire state is below normal for the year on rainfall and the soil moisture maps show most of the state has very dry soils. Moisture in abundant amounts will be needed to get a crop going in 2023 in every portion of Texas.

We are hearing there will be some increases in seed cost, fertilizer cost is projected to stay fairly high, but hopefully energy cost will continue

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**Robert Gordon**  
**TCPB Chairman**  
**Dalhart, Texas**

Early September reports show a mere 17 percent of corn in the state is in excellent or good condition. Meanwhile 52 percent of this year's crop is classified as either poor or very poor. These aren't the statistics - or the reality - any farmer is excited about.

I recently saw from John Nielsen-Gammon, state climatologist with Texas A&M, that a La Niña weather pattern is expected to hold through fall and winter, which means below average precipitation and above-average temperatures for Texas historically. He also noted the above-normal expectations for hurricanes and tropical storms could deliver moisture, but those storms typically bring destruction as well.

Texas weather, its challenges and its unpredictability aren't anything new for our state's farmers. It's something we can do our best planning for, and ultimately just pray for the best for the 2023 crop.

The checkoff continues to fund programs and efforts to keep corn production viable for farmers in our state in ways we actually can make a difference.

Recently, Texas Corn Producers Board worked with fellow corn orga-

nizations to fund a study diving into why we've seen nitrogen fertilizer costs skyrocket.

One of the largest manufacturers for urea ammonium nitrate solutions (UAN) - arguably the most commonly used method to apply fertilizer - filed a petition last year for tariffs on the product. Fortunately, the information our checkoff, and the advocacy efforts of corn associations worked to ensure regulators were appropriately informed... with the tariffs ultimately being denied. The study our state corn organizations saw the need for played a pivotal role in this outcome.

As you can read in this edition of the newsletter, just the threat of these fertilizer tariffs had a grave impact to our bottom line as farmers. I'm proud of our checkoff board for doing its part in ensuring information was available to be used against this threat.

I can confidently say the small \$.01 per bushel we each pay to the checkoff more than paid for itself solely in this one effort that prevented tariffs from having at least a 5-year impact on our fertilizer costs.

I encourage you to reach out if there's anything we could be doing as a checkoff for your farm. 🌽

Rain makes corn... and we haven't had much of the former this year.

Despite an August that brought even above-average rainfall for the month, most of Texas remains drought-stricken and below the average rainfall for the year. As farmers, we also well know it's too little too late to be an asset to this year's crop.



# Wrapping up one tumultuous crop year.... and heading into the next one

Mark Welch, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Economist—Grain Marketing

Any crop year begins with a certain amount of uncertainty around the factors of supply and demand that shape the price of grain—acres, yield, domestic use, exports, etc. We began 2022 with additional factors that magnified those issues and added volatility to the grain market (Figure 1):

- Russia's invasion of Ukraine threatened grain supplies from a key participant in the world export market for corn and wheat.
- Record high input costs, and questions of availability of resources at any price, for fertilizer, fuel, and key herbicides.
- High prices for crops like cotton and soybeans intensified the competition for acres in the U.S. and globally.
- Drought continued its grip on much of the western U.S., including the western Corn Belt.

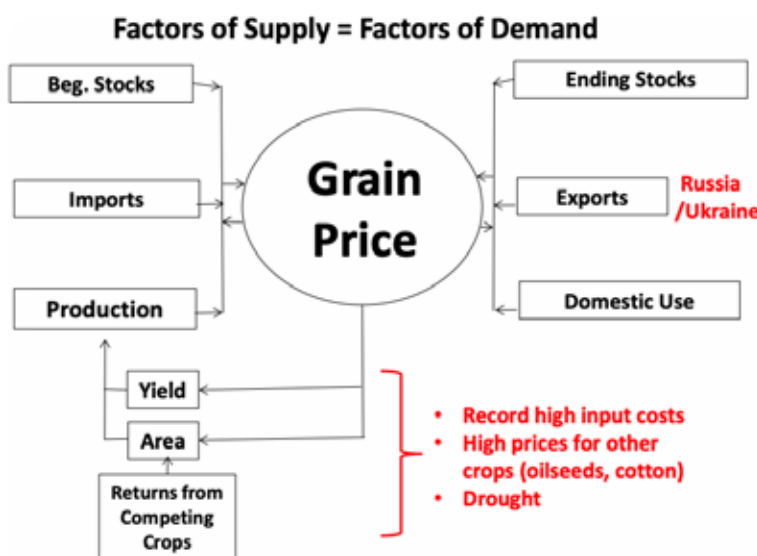


Figure 1. Schematic Representation of the U.S. Grain Market

With tight supplies of corn, domestically and worldwide, John Zanker, a commodity risk management specialist from Indiana provided the mantra for the 2022 crop year: “We can’t lose acres and we can’t lose yield”. Turns out, we lost both. Corn planted acres in 2022 were down 3.6 million com-

pared to 2021. The U.S. average corn yield in the August Crop Report from USDA was 175.4 bushels per acre, down from 177.0 bushels last year. Corn stocks relative to use (days on hand at the end of the marketing year) in the U.S. is now estimated at a 34.9-day supply, down from a 37.6-day supply of corn at the end of the 2021/2022 marketing year.

As we wrap up 2022, plans and preparations for 2023 will soon be under way. Producers must still struggle with the challenges of high input costs, volatile commodity markets, weather extremes and global geopolitical instability.

As input costs are locked in, an important question is where do output prices go from here? A key tenet of economic theory provides insight into that question. In 1890, Lord Alfred Marshall told us where prices are going in the long run: prices will go to the cost of production. In a free mar-

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## Farmers win with ITC ruling against tariffs

This summer, the U.S. International Trade Commission (ITC) issued its ruling against imposing tariffs on nitrogen fertilizers imported from Russia and Trinidad and Tobago.

CF Industries requested the tariffs on imported nitrogen fertilizer, claiming losses. Meanwhile, farmers across the country experienced skyrocketing prices for the product.

How much of an impact was this for Texas farmers? The Ag and Food Policy Center at Texas A&M University recently completed a study identifying the urea ammonium nitrate solutions (UAN) price impact of the just the threat of these tariffs had on corn farmers.

The study - which was funded by Texas Corn Producers, other state

corn organizations and the National Corn Growers Association (NCGA) - determined an additional \$13.89 to \$27.79 per acre were spent by corn farmers until the ITC ruling eliminated impending tariffs.

On Texas’ 2.3 million corn acres this year alone, that equates to \$31.95 million to \$63.92 million from farmers’ bottom lines.

TCP worked judiciously with fellow state corn organizations and NCGA to advocate against these tariffs, pooling resources, funding studies and actively ensuring the farmer’s perspective was heard on this important matter.

TCP recognized the need to advocate for its farmers as fertilizer costs that account for approximately 36% of

a farms’ operating expenses climbed. TCP Issues Committee Chair Dee Vaughan, who farms in the Texas Panhandle, said the TCP board saw this as an issue statewide.

“Texas farmers are among the first in the nation to prepare their fields to plant due to climate,” Vaughan said. “We saw an astonishing 264% increase in the cost of nitrogen fertilizer alone from South Texas up to the Panhandle in just over 2-years. Our board knew action must be taken to call attention to an issue that posed harm to the viability of family farm businesses.”

Find out more about how TCP continues to advocate on this issue and more at [TexasCorn.org](https://TexasCorn.org).

# THE VOICE: Association News

## A note from the President...



**Charles Ring**  
**TCPA President**  
**Sinton, Texas**

As harvest wraps up in some parts of the state and begins in others, a tough crop year is coming to an end. While factors like the weather are always out of control, it is nice to be able to make a difference where we can.

I hope you have a chance to read the article about the fertilizer tariffs

in this issue of The Kernel. The partnership between the association and the checkoff proved pivotal in saving farmers as much as \$27.79 per acre. In a year with inflation, lingering supply chain issues, high fuel costs, total crop failures and more – tackling the fertilizer issue was vital in keeping our farms afloat.

While we are proud of the victory we can claim on this piece of the fertilizer saga, we still have work to do.

Chemicals that we rely on – like atrazine – are once again under attack. We are fortunate to work with the Triazine Network, coalition of agricultural organizations and their growers concerned with regulatory actions relating to triazine herbicides, helping with research and messaging to explain the safety and necessity of these chemicals. I hope you will get involved with helping your members of Congress and leadership at the Environmental Protection Agency understand the importance of this issue by the October deadline.

Both truck and rail freight costs are causing high basis levels. The railroad companies are showing a

strong preference for higher income producing cargo over agricultural commodities. Trucker shortages that began during the pandemic are still being felt today as they also take cargo from companies able to pay more.

International trade continues to make waves in the grain market. As Ukrainian grain shipments appear to be back online for the first time in months, the uncertainty over long-term safety of these ports keeps volatility in the market. China's claim to Taiwan and U.S. policy on Taiwan's independence draws questions of China fulfilling its commitment to purchasing U.S. commodities. Last, but certainly not least to us in South Texas: Mexico's push to ban GMO-corn and glyphosate continues to be a concern, but currently their imports of U.S. corn remain strong.

As we come into the mid-term elections and another farm bill in Congress, it is important for us to show up at the ballot box and continue to support our ag organizations to protect our farms. 🌽

## Gibson comments, continued from p. 2

a decline as we have seen the past few weeks. Lots of factors both here at home and around the world could play heavily into the projected input prices for next year.

Moving forward to 2023, it appears that having a good marketing plan may be more important than ever. Including fuel cost, diesel, gasoline, and natural gas, should be factors outside the price of grain to help determine cost of production. Interest rates are on the way up and managing them

will be another factor as the crop year advances.

The state's corn checkoff and association are busy working on ways to help control some of these cost by helping provide information that will prevent tariffs on imported fertilizer. Results of studies we have funded have been used to help prevent tariffs, and we are working to provide needed information to repeal some that are in place, as well as stop new tariffs.

Collectively, we will be actively engaged as 2023 Farm Bill talks get underway. We are just wrapping up our farm bill survey in the state and those results will be used as we develop policies to be prioritized on behalf of Texas Corn Producers.

As stated in this newsletter, atrazine is under attack again! Please read the information and take action to preserve one of our most used crop protection chemicals. 🌽

**TELL EPA**  
**WE NEED ATRAZINE**



**ACT NOW AT**

**FIGHTEPA.COM**

## Fight back on atrazine by Oct. 7, continued from p. 1

tillage - negatively impacting efforts to reduce carbon emissions. Allowing environmental activists to win here – when atrazine has more than 7,000 science-based studies over 60 years proving its safety sets a dangerous precedent for regulating atrazine and all other crop inputs.

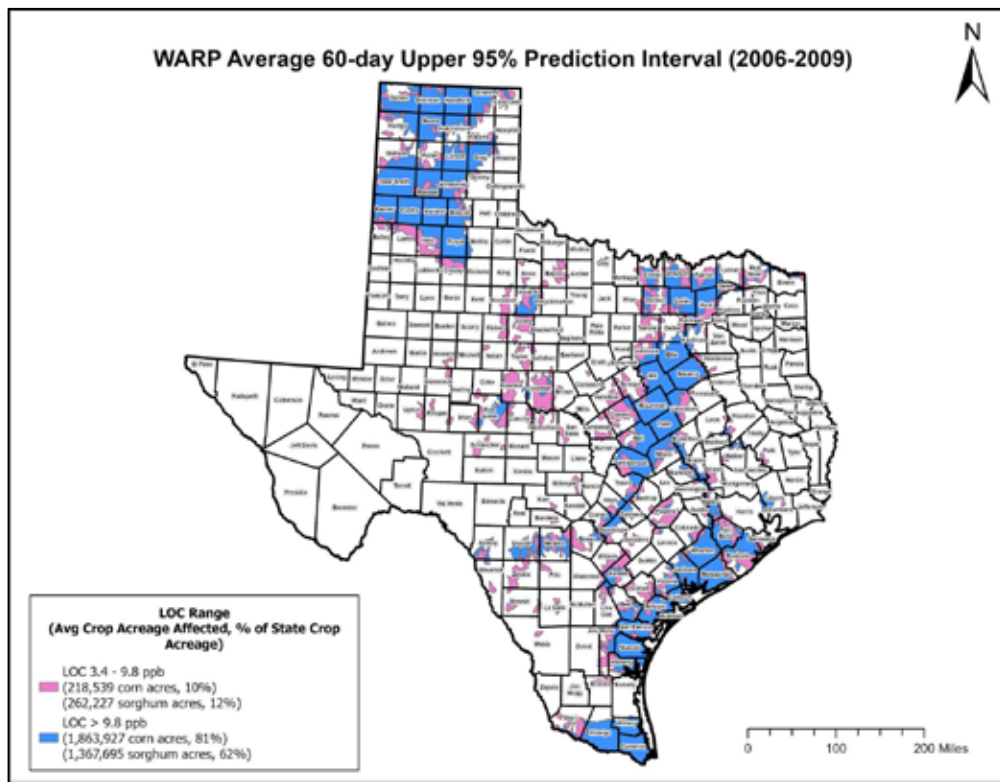
Join us in the fight. Add your name to the long list of growers battling to stop EPA's latest overreach. Tell EPA to stick to sound science and the 2020 finalized atrazine registration review. Anything less is unacceptable.

### Next Steps

1. Join the petition with fellow farmers at [FightEPA.com](https://FightEPA.com)
2. Submit comments directly to the EPA at [bit.ly/TXAtrazineComment](https://bit.ly/TXAtrazineComment)

It's imperative to take action NOW before the comment deadline of Friday, October 7, 2022.

Visit [AgSense.com](https://AgSense.com) for additional information and resources on this important issue.



Potential impact in Texas of EPA's flawed proposal on atrazine

## An insider look: Field to Fork

Less than two percent of the U.S. population is directly involved in the growth of our food, which can make connecting with a farmer challenging.

Field to Fork gave food influencers and elected officials an inside look into how our food is grown and how farmers conserve our natural resources.

In June, attendees got to see where their food's journey begins – in the field. They explored corn, rice, cotton and fish farms, as well as a grain elevator and cotton gin – many experiencing these places for the first time. At each stop, they connected with farmers and agricultural industry leaders to learn more and ask questions, as well as sample a variety of progressive hors d'oeuvres.

Field to Fork is made possible through Water Grows, an initiative by the Texas Corn Producers and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), as well as the generous support of volunteers from CommonGround, NRCS field staff, and

Texas Department of Agriculture's Go Texan program.

Bridging the concept of how food gets from field to fork, the event concluded with a three-course meal made with Texas-grown ingredients prepared by renowned Chef Brandon Silva.

Daniel Berglund, Texas farmer from Wharton, Texas, opened his farm and home to host this year's event. He said events like this for people who, perhaps, did not grow up on a farm or around the agricultural industry are crucial to help provide a direct connection to farmers.

"It's very important to communicate with those who aren't on the farm about the importance of the job that we do, and the care and love that we put into what we do," Berglund said.

Attendees walked away from the event with a greater understanding of the role of agriculture in their daily lives. Take a glimpse at a few attendees' takes on the event after a front-row seat to a unique agricultural experience.

### ECONOMIC IMPACT

Chris Barbee, mayor of El Campo, Texas, said agriculture is intertwined in our very existence and we cannot live without it. In fact, agriculture plays a large role in the economic vitality of communities across Texas.

"El Campo is an agriculture community, as is much of rural Texas. Farmers and ranchers are so important to our community and our county – not just the farmers themselves but the side industries that come with it," Barbee said.

The money farmers spend on seed, fertilizer, irrigation, labor, transportation and much more, ultimately flow through their local economies.

### FAMILY FARMS

With a big interest in local businesses and food, Jazzmine Woodard of Dash of Jazz said she enjoyed seeing the family nature of these farms and agriculture-related businesses first-hand.

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# Corn market insight, continued from p. 3

ket economy, a price above the cost of production will provide incentives for an increase in supply or entice other entrants into the market. Prices below the cost of production will cause supply to decrease or participants to exit the marketplace.

Successful and sustainable financial performance in an economy where prices move to the cost of production implies two key components of management strategy that revolve around production and price:

1. Be the low cost/high quality producer. Input use efficiency is critical to achieve the lowest possible breakeven cost. Tools to achieve this goal include the use of crop rotations, hybrid and variety selection, conservation tillage, soil and plant testing, and precision application of inputs.
2. Lock in profitable prices. Tools of financial management include budgets and breakeven analyses, cash flow projections, crop insurance, marketing plans, and price safety net provisions.

Does this management approach work? Evidence of the impact of these management strategies can be found by looking at the financial performance of the top 20 percent of corn producers over the last several years. This information can be found in the FINBIN database from the University of Minnesota. This database summarizes actual farm data from thousands of agricultural producers.

Sorting key production and price characteristics by financial performance shows that, compared to the overall average, the top 20 percent

|  | Low 20%  | All Farms average | High 20% | Difference High to avg |
|--|----------|-------------------|----------|------------------------|
| Yield (bu)                                       | 142/ac   | 195/ac            | 213/ac   | +9%                    |
| Price (incl. hedging, crop ins., gov't payments) | 5.44/bu  | 5.39/bu           | 5.82/bu  | +8%                    |
| Cost (incl. mgmt. and labor)                     | \$797/ac | \$800/ac          | \$762/ac | -5%                    |
| Break even                                       | 5.62/bu  | 4.10/bu           | 3.57/bu  | -0.53/bu               |
| Net return                                       | -\$26/ac | +\$225/ac         | \$480/ac | +\$255/ac              |

Table 1 2021 Corn on Cash Rent Summary Report

|  | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 |
|--|------|------|------|------|
| Yield (bu)                                       | +8%  | +9%  | +8%  | +9%  |
| Price (incl. hedging, crop ins., gov't payments) | -1%  | +3%  | +6%  | +8%  |
| Cost (incl. mgmt. and labor)                     | -15% | -9%  | -10% | -5%  |

Table 2 Corn on Cash Rent Summary Report Comparisons, High 20% to Overall Average, 2018-2021

of corn growers in 2021 had higher yields, received higher prices, and had lower costs (Table 1). Looking back over the last several years, this group, the top 20 percent, outperformed the average every year in every category with one lone exception. In 2018, the average of all corn producers received a one percent higher price (Table 2).

As a farm management philosophy, consider the adoption of what Danny Klinefelter, retired professor in the Department of Agricultural Economics at Texas A&M University and

founder of The Executive Program for Agricultural Producers (TEPAP), calls the '5% rule'. In the upcoming crop year, where can I lower my costs by five percent? How can I increase my yields by five percent? How can I increase my average price received by five percent? Making relatively small changes in critically important areas over time can have a dramatic impact on financial performance. Sound management principles for tumultuous times—and all the rest, too. 🍌

# Field to Fork, continued from p. 5

"Hearing about people's passion behind what they do and how much respect they have for the soil and the land, I think is something that I would want to share," Woodard said.

She said the work farmers and ranchers do is linked to the way we live our lives every day. Woodard also added it was interesting to learn that conservation efforts exist in agriculture.

## CONSERVATION FORWARD

Alessandra Madrid of Babes XO said she loved learning how important water conservation is to farmers.

"Not only is it an expensive resource when you have to water so many crops, but also knowing that they are taking care of the environment because the environment is what they live off of – that's something I guess

I never really thought about before," Madrid said.

By hosting influencers, the event had an impact far beyond those directly in attendance - influencers sharing their experience had a potential reach of 8.1 million. Learn more about Field to Fork and other Water Grows efforts at WaterGrows.org. 🍌

# ODDS *and* ENDS



## High costs of growing corn – Podcast Feature

A recent Ruled by Reason podcast from the American Antitrust Institute (AAI) dives into an issue that's no secret to farmers: soaring fertilizer prices strangling margins for family farms.

AAI President Diana Moss hosts the episode entitled The High Costs of Growing Corn: How Growers are Squeezed by High Input Prices That Are Set by the Fertilizer Oligopoly. In it, she visits with Texas Corn Producers Issues Committee Chair Dee Vaughan, a farmer in Moore County, and Joe Outlaw, Ph.D., the co-director of the Agriculture and Food Policy Center at Texas A&M University (AFPC).

The episode notes that farmers pay higher and higher prices to pow-

erful oligopolies for inputs that are necessary to grow their crops. However, farmers then sell into markets where commodity prices are also often controlled by only a few firms and are subject to significant commodity price fluctuations, asserts AAI in the episode summary.

This edition of Ruled by Reason dives into how farmers are paying high prices for nitrogen fertilizer. It highlights an AFPC study recently commissioned by the corn checkoff in Texas and other state corn organizations across the nation, of which Outlaw was a principal researcher.

It also notes other studies, including one done by AAI, that indicate the likelihood that fertilizer producers are more likely to coordinate with

each other, rather than compete. To hear more on how anticompetitive fertilizer prices hurt corn growers and consumers, as well as imperil the stability and integrity of a vital agricultural supply chain listen to the podcast at <https://bit.ly/RuledByReasonFertilizerOligopoly>. The podcast discussion touches on issues relating to the importance of fertilizer for growing corn for its many uses, how corn and fertilizer prices are related, the power of the fertilizer oligopoly, and how international trade issues exacerbate the situation, according to AAI's episode summary. This episode of Ruled by Reason can be streamed from your favorite podcast platform.

## Auckerman recognized as outstanding agent

Texas Corn Producers Board (TCPB) recently recognized Rick Auckerman, the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension agent in Deaf Smith county, as its 2022 Outstanding Agent Award.

AgriLife agents have consistently built bridges between Texas Corn Producers (TCP) and farmers and ranchers. Their role of being a resource, host, informant and responder for the agriculture community is often understated, but never underappreciated.

Auckerman was recognized at the Texas County Agriculture Agent Association (TCAAA) annual awards luncheon in South Padre, Texas, in late July.

He works closely with agents across the region to coordinate the checkoff-funded moth trapping project. This project gives farmers real-time information on pests in the region, helping them determine if economic thresholds have been met and if spraying should begin.

Auckerman also works with agri-

culturists in his county, providing valuable educational opportunities, demonstrations, and research projects. His effectiveness to provide timely and accurate information has developed his skills and credibility as an agricultural leader.

TCP is thankful for the efforts put forth by all extension agents to help keep our industry connected. The organization is especially grateful for Auckerman's efforts and service to the region's agricultural industry.

## Checkoff seeks research proposals for coming year

Texas Corn Producers Board recently released its research Request for Proposals.

Each year, the checkoff solicits proposals for it to consider funding to better corn production in the state.

The board determined the following four primary priority areas for 2023:

- Biological Controls:
- Corn Breeding:
- Irrigation:

- Production and Management
- Policy

Proposals are due to the board by Friday, October 28, 2022. The checkoff's research committee will review proposals this fall and make its funding recommendations to the board at its January meeting.

The board also funds aflatoxin research; however, the research proposals and reviews are done through

the Aflatoxin Mitigation Center of Excellence (AMCOE). The AMCOE steering committee which operates through the National Corn Growers Association manages these requests.

Complete details and specifications about all requests for proposals are available on the checkoff website at [TexasCorn.org](https://TexasCorn.org).

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