

Scientific Journal Cites Sorghum's Antioxidant Properties

LUBBOCK, Texas— Tannins, the substances that are most commonly found in red wine and tea, are also found in some types of grain sorghum. These tannins also contain compounds that are called “antioxidants.” Antioxidants are those compounds that protect against cell damage which are caused by molecules called oxygen-free radicals, which are a major cause of disease and aging. In fact, according to a recent publication in the Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry, some types of sorghum contain antioxidant levels equivalent to or in some cases even higher than blueberries, which are considered the gold standard for antioxidant levels.

“Ironically, we have tried for years to remove high tannin sorghum from US sorghum hybrids due to their negative effect on feed efficiency and weight gain in animals, and we have worked hard to isolate these sorghums from the mainstream of our grain industry,” says Dr. Jeff Dahlberg, NGSP research director.

But, in the last couple of years, research results on sorghum tannins have appeared in several important health and chemistry journals.

“As Americans become more concerned about their health and what they are eating, specialty sorghums that contain high levels of antioxidants could become important sources of ingredients for use in functional, healthy foods,” says Dahlberg. “We are also learning more about how regular, non-tannin sorghums may be healthier for you as well,” he adds, noting that sorghum starch may take longer to digest than other cereals, and this has positive implications for diabetics. “We are also a gluten-free cereal, and this makes sorghum a good choice for a wheat flour substitute in individuals unable to digest gluten—a condition known as celiac-sprue,” adds Dahlberg.

National Grain Sorghum Producers (NGSP) represents U.S. grain sorghum producers nationwide. Headquartered at Lubbock, Texas, in the heart of a U.S. grain sorghum belt that stretches from the Rockies to the Mississippi River and from South Texas to South Dakota, the organization works to increase the profitability of grain sorghum production through market development, research, education, and legislative representation.