On the Road to a New Sweet Sorghum Industry

Sweet sorghum has been widely recognized as a promising sugar feedstock crop. Heckemeyer Mills has built and equipped the largest commercial-scale sweet sorghum processing plant in the USA, which is located in Sikeston, MO. Business aims include the production of food-grade syrup, as well as syrup for the manufacture of non-food grade products, biofuels, and biochemicals. All non-processed fiber is dedicated for large-scale cattle feed at the Heckemeyer farm. USDA scientists have helped the Mill overcome acute and chronic processing problems, including the removal of starch, and continue to be involved with the ongoing industrial evolution of the Mill. The Mill is now operational.

Mr. Matt Heckemeyer, a native of Sikeston, MO, is an ex Naval Aviator and business man, who has built a large-scale processing plant for sweet sorghum in Sikeston. Dr. Gillian Eggleston, a native of England, has a PhD in carbohydrate chemistry from Cranfield Institute of Technology, UK (1989). She is a National and International award winning USDA-ARS Lead Scientist on a large (seven scientists) Sugar and Biofuel/Bioproducts Processing project in New Orleans. A major goal of this project is to establish a large-scale sweet sorghum industry in the USA in the next 5 years. Current research interests include the improved industrial processing of sugarcane, sugar beet, and sweet sorghum, and manufacture of fuel ethanol and value-added chemicals from sweet sorghum and energy beets.