About 30 years ago, myself, Dr. Morris Bitzer from the University of Kentucky, and a handful of Kentucky’s dedicated corn farmers met at a field day in Princeton to organize what eventually became the Kentucky Corn Growers’ Association. We were interested in pooling our efforts to address the farm financial crisis of the early 80s, market our crop, and find a way to fund needed research, such as weed control and no-till corn production. But back then, we had to take up a collection to buy a pot of coffee.

Once the corn promotion assessment was passed in 1990, we were able to direct vital checkoff dollars to many research, market and promotion projects. One of the most successful projects was KyCorn’s investment in the Commonwealth Agri-Energy ethanol plant. In fact, ethanol is a success story for our farmers nationwide due to the vision and collaboration of our Corn Growers’ associations and their members. I also take a lot of pride in our support of the U.S. Grains Council and seeing greater demand for our corn around the world.

While we continue to work to strengthen markets, invest in beneficial research, and promote our crop, our primary focus the past few years has shifted to our farmers. The amount of checkoff dollars directed to producer education has increased dramatically with our investment in the Kentucky Agricultural Leadership Program, the CORE Farmer Program, and other production-centered seminars. We believe developing the grain farmers and agricultural leaders of tomorrow will benefit the industry in more ways than we can imagine, and I’m looking forward to seeing what these new leaders will accomplish.

I made the difficult decision to step down from the Kentucky Corn Promotion Council this past January. In the earlier years, I served as the president of the Kentucky Corn Growers Association, and served on the National Corn Development Foundation and several committees over my tenure. I have dedicated a lot of time to our industry over the years, but I never felt like it was a waste. I was always able to take home and share new information that improved the way we did business.

I am thankful to leave on a good note. This past year, we produced the largest corn crop in Kentucky’s history. The previous year brought us one of the worst since 1930. I can definitely relate to the Forrest Gump-esque quote: “Farming is like a box of chocolates. You never know what you’re gonna get.”

With weather and market volatility, it is the time for all of us to come together for the success of our industry. So my final plea as an original member of the Kentucky Corn Growers Association is to ask ALL corn farmers to join our organization today. We need to rally the troops to sustain our industry for the next 30 years and beyond.

Jim Barton
KyCorn Promotion Council Chairman
1998-2013

Kenneth Hayden and Jim Barton, Jr., two of KyCorn’s founding members, were honored at the Kentucky Commodity Conference in January for 30 plus years of service. They are now members of the Kentucky Corn Growers Hall of Fame.
TIME TO ROLL UP OUR SLEEVES

I could not have had a better first month of being president of the Kentucky Corn Growers Association. The farm bill was finally passed, and we were able to submit more than 3000 letters to the EPA regarding a change to the Renewable Fuels Standard. It makes me delighted that our members and partners have the passion to mobilize in such an effective manner. Only time will tell if our efforts were fruitful. The new rules from the EPA are anticipated this summer.

Unfortunately, corn prices bring me some concern. Based on what I’ve read from several agricultural economists, we are lingering close to breakeven. I’m thinking it may be time to roll up our sleeves and look for additional market opportunities.

Livestock continue to utilize about 70 million bushels of corn within the commonwealth, making it our primary market. We are interested in finding ways to grow the opportunities for Kentucky livestock producers to increase the amount of corn needed for feed.

The bourbon industry is also growing. We see the possibilities of promoting the benefits of using local corn and investing in infrastructure to improve access to Kentucky-produced grain.

Our ethanol plant continues to utilize 12 million bushels of local corn per year, and success of the industry plays a vital role in corn demand. We want to ensure this market continues to be strong and are excited in anticipation of more Kentucky fuel retailers providing ethanol fuel blends. There are now more than 50 retailers selling E85.

Corn for food processing may also provide room for growth. We have several mills in the state using local corn for baking and snack foods, and we may need to look at additional opportunities for specialty corn crops. A group of corn buyers from Mexico visited Kentucky last summer to see how our crops may fit their needs, and feedback was promising.

Exports may provide the biggest opportunity for development. Once local demand is met, surplus needs to move out of the state for southeastern and overseas markets. Location on major waterways and transportation infrastructure provides our growers increased access to these markets. We have been working to protect and improve waterway infrastructure and will continue to do so. Supporting the efforts of the US Grains Council, the organization that promotes corn and distiller’s grains exports, continues to be a vital investment.

These are just a few of the areas we are working to provide more opportunity for our corn farmers’ profitability. For more information on all of our market development, research, promotion and education programs, please visit our website at www.kycorn.org.

LEGISLATIVE AND REGULATORY PRIORITIES

Farm Bill - KyCorn visited with legislators and worked closely with National Corn Growers Association lobbying staff to encourage stronger crop insurance programs and a market-oriented farm safety net. We are pleased to finally have the stability the 5-year plan provides.

Water Quality and TMDLs - KyCorn has been monitoring and engaging in water quality efforts across the Commonwealth to protect farmer interests while ensuring the development of sound regulation. In 2013, KyCorn worked to see HB 378 pass the Kentucky General Assembly. The measure ensures the use of sound, scientific data and strong community involvement in the regulation-development process.

Waterways Transportation - KyCorn encourages policy that modernizes inland waterways so the system can handle today’s fleet and can move grain more efficiently to markets around the world. In October 2013, the House of Representatives passed, by a strong bipartisan vote of 417 to 3, the Water Resources Reform Development Act (WRRDA), HR 3080. Included was Congressman Ed Whitfield’s Waterways are Vital for the Economy, Energy, Efficiency, and Environment Act (WAVE 4). We are now urging the Senate to complete action on this important legislation.

Renewable Fuels Standard - Through grower and organization commentary, KyCorn continues to urge the EPA to reconsider a rule that may decrease the corn-based ethanol volume requirement.
ANNUAL KyCORN FINANCIAL STATEMENT
September 1, 2012 – August 31, 2013

Income
Net Checkoff Income $1,615,659
Management Fees $30,000
Interest Income $5,522
Plot Combine Rental $12,000
Total Income $1,663,181

Expenses
Operating Expenses $452,719
Project Expenses $1,138,001
Total Expenses $1,590,720

Carryover $72,461

Distribution of Checkoff Dollars
Administration $165,831
Research $408,933
Education $345,386
Market Development $412,743
Promotion $257,337

The Kentucky Corn Promotion Council is responsible for directing checkoff income to projects that grow opportunities for Kentucky’s corn farmers in a changing industry.

The Kentucky Corn Growers Association Board of Directors provides production, industry, and extension advisement to the Promotion Council on project funding.

RESEARCH

Plot Combine Purchase for the University of Kentucky Corn Performance Trials - KyCorn purchased a Wintersteiger plot combine for use in the Kentucky Corn Hybrid Variety Performance Trials at the University of Kentucky. UK is leasing the combine from KyCorn.

Fragipan Remediation Study - Dr. Lloyd Murdock is investigating methods to remedy the naturally-occurring soil horizon that reduces crop yields by 20-25%. The fragipan virtually stops water movement and root growth through the soil and is present in about 2.7 million acres of Kentucky soils. If the yields on these soils can be improved by 10% on ½ of these acres, the economic returns to Kentucky producers would be about $2.2 billion over a 10 year period.

Precision Technology Research and Workshops - KyCorn is working with the University of Nebraska, Ohio State University and the University of Kentucky to evaluate and test precision technology equipment and software and then share proven methods through a series of producer workshops. The first workshops were held in July 2013 and January 2014.

Market Data Analysis - KyCorn requests economic and market data analysis to determine the impact of Kentucky’s corn industry as well as find areas for market growth.
EDUCATION PROGRAMS

CORE Farmer Program - KyCorn coordinates a renewing 18-month program to prepare young, full-time farmers and provide the best agronomy knowledge available. The CORE Farmer Program began its third class in 2013 and implemented an alumni program to further develop its strong peer networking component.

Kentucky Commodity Conference & Extension Programs - KyCorn supports a number of education meetings for growers and extension personnel that provide the latest production and market information. The Kentucky Commodity Conference and Annual Meeting now provides the largest grain-focused trade show featuring Kentucky companies and services.

Kentucky Farms Feed Me and School Programs - Providing educational resources about corn and agriculture to schools and educators has always been a primary objective of KyCorn. This past year, KyCorn was honored by the National Agri-Marketing Association for the Kentucky Farms Feed Me Virtual Field Trip Series. KyCorn increases agriculture education opportunities for school children by supporting the Kentucky Department of Agriculture’s Mobile Science Activity Centers, Kentucky Farm Bureau’s Teacher Workshops, Agriculture Adventures, and local ag education events.

Consumer and Public Education Programs - KyCorn supports and helps coordinate an in-state education and outreach program aimed at moms. With the help of volunteer farm women, CommonGround provides information on topics such as production methods, technology, livestock care, food prices, and food safety. KyCorn also supports the public education efforts of the Kentucky Livestock Coalition, Corn Farmers Coalition, and the US Farmers and Ranchers Alliance.

MARKET DEVELOPMENT

National Corn Growers Association - KyCorn supports a number of market development programs spearheaded by the National Corn Growers Association. Those include trade and biotechnology acceptance programs, ethanol promotion across many industries, DDGS research and promotion, livestock feed promotion, and business development assistance among others.

US Grains Council - KyCorn supports the corn and corn product trade promotion programs of the US Grains Council across the globe. It is estimated that up to one third of cash farm receipts are generated through agricultural exports. As the global marketing arm of U.S. farmers and agribusinesses, and a trusted ambassador for free and fair trade between U.S. agriculture and customers around the world, the Council believes that expansion of established export markets and development of new markets will drive the success of American agriculture for years to come.

US Meat Export Federation and USA Poultry and Egg Export Council - Livestock producers continue to be the number one customer for US and Kentucky corn. KyCorn believes there is potential for substantial growth in meat and animal product exports, and these markets provide additional opportunity for corn and DDGS sales.

Bourbon, Spirits and Kentucky Food Processing - KyCorn has been working with a number of cooperators to grow local markets for Kentucky corn as demand for bourbon and locally-processed foods continues to rise.

CORN & CORN PRODUCT PROMOTION

Corn Maze Program - KyCorn provides corn fact signs to more than a dozen corn mazes located across Kentucky. These mazes are open September through the end of October and welcome thousands of enthusiasts and school groups. Corn fact publications are also provided by KyCorn.

Social Media Programs - KyCorn utilizes a number of social media platforms and the Internet to share information about Kentucky corn and corn products. Those include YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and blogging sites. This past year we launched Kentucky Food & Farm Files, a web and social media program, which shares recipes, farmer profiles, and food information for the public growing more interested in local foods. This effort is also a part of CommonGround, a national program working to share more farm and food information with consumer moms.

Events & Program Sponsorships - KyCorn participates in a number of youth, leadership, community, farm, food/beverage events and programs throughout the year in order to promote Kentucky corn. Some of those events include the Kentucky State Fair, the Incredible Food Show, 4-H competitions, FFA Camp, and the Kentucky Bourbon Trail Craft Distillers Tour.

Ethanol Promotion - KyCorn is a supporter of the American Ethanol/NASCAR partnership which provides positive ethanol promotion to the sport’s 80 million fans. KyCorn also supports the National Tractor Pullers Association Region VI Shootout in return for ethanol promotion to its fans. To increase ethanol fuel blends at home, KyCorn works with local retailers to provide ethanol information to its customers.
KyCorn Growers Association
Leadership

President: Russel Schwenke, Boone Co.
Vice President: Richard Strode, Daviess Co.
Secretary: Dale Appelman, Bracken Co.
Treasurer: Mark Roberts, Henry Co.

District & Local Association Directors:
Henry Sanger, Fulton Co.
Stephen Kelley, Carlisle Co.
Joe Nichols, Trigg Co.
Joseph Sisk, Christian Co.
Dustin White, Union Co.
Richard Preston, Hardin Co.
Andy Perkins, Simpson Co.
Chris Pierce, Pulaski Co.
Michael Buckman, Lincoln Trail
Travis Hancock, Union Co.
Charles Craig, Green River
Jeff Hawk, Southeast Ky.

Industry & Extension Directors:
Bill Meacham, Pioneer
Jeff Rice, Rice Agri-Marketing
John Danesi, Whayne Agri-Business
Curt Judy, Todd Co. Extension

Agronomy Advisor:
Dr. Chad Lee, University of Kentucky

KyCorn Promotion Council
Leadership

Chair: Philip McCoun, Shelby Co.
Vice Chair: Terry Rhodes, Daviess Co.
Finances: Ray Allan Mackey, Hardin Co.
Bob White, Union Co.
Joe Neal Ballance, Warren Co.
Tripp Furches, Calloway Co.
Danny Wilkerson, Adair Co.

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