



National Alfalfa & Forage Alliance

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NAFA STRESSES RESEARCH FUNDING, CROP INSURANCE DURING DC FLY-IN

St. Paul, MN – Alfalfa farmers descended on Washington, DC, for the National Alfalfa & Forage Alliance's (NAFA) DC Fly-In to stress to lawmakers the importance of research funding and crop insurance. As a non-program crop, alfalfa farmers aren't afforded the opportunity to take advantage of safety net programs provided in the Farm Bill. Instead, alfalfa farmers would like their safety net to come in the form of parity with other major crops in terms of public research funding and crop insurance. This is the message NAFA representatives took to lawmakers and agency officials as the focus of its 10th annual Washington, D.C., Fly-In.

The three-day event encompassed nearly 100 meetings and kept NAFA members busy building awareness and recognition for the nation's 3rd most value field crop. NAFA Fly-In participants met with agency officials, regulators, and House and Senate Ag and Ag Appropriations Committee members to discuss NAFA priorities and issues important to the alfalfa industry.

When talking with staff from the House and Senate Ag Committees, NAFA brought attention to the need for risk management tools that provide an adequate safety net for alfalfa farmers. The current APH insurance product is not on par with insurance products available to other major crops and since alfalfa is not a program crop, current risk management tools contained in the Farm Bill, Agriculture Risk Coverage and Price Loss Coverage, are not available to alfalfa farmers. This situation incentivizes farmers to shift acres away from non-covered commodities, such as alfalfa, into other cropping choices with better risk management tools.



From L to R: Ernie Johnson (NAFA), Congressman Greg Gianforte (MT).



From L to R: Randy Welch (Croplan), Congressman Austin Scott (GA), Glenda Blindert (NAFA), Jon Dockter (NAFA).

Meetings were also held with staff members of the House and Senate Ag Appropriations Committees to discuss funding needs for the Alfalfa Seed & Alfalfa Forage Systems Research Program (ASAFS) and further investments in research funding for alfalfa at USDA's Agricultural Research Service. While alfalfa is the nation's 3rd most valuable field crop, the public research investment devoted to alfalfa is only a fraction of that which is dedicated to program crops.

NAFA's DC Fly-In participants also met with: 1) the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to ensure continued dialogue regarding crop protection tools important to alfalfa hay and seed production; 2) USDA's Agricultural Research Service (ARS) to discuss how best to use limited research funding to the greatest benefit of the alfalfa/forage industry; 3) the National Agricultural Statistics Service to encourage enhanced collection of alfalfa-related statistics; 4) USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) to discuss the Alfalfa Seed and Alfalfa Forage Systems Research Program (ASAFS); and 5) USTR to discuss trade issues, particularly with China.

"We are continuing to make strides in our efforts to ensure lawmakers are aware of the alfalfa industry's priorities," said Beth Nelson, President of the National Alfalfa & Forage Alliance. "As the nation's 3rd most valuable field crop, it is critical for us to have greater parity with other major crops in terms of policy and public research funding in order to keep alfalfa competitive with other cropping choices."