



NAFA - Year in Review

National Alfalfa & Forage Alliance 2012-2013 Annual Report

D.C. Fly-In Focused on Alfalfa Safety Net & Research

The lack of a legitimate safety net and adequate research funding to address alfalfa/forage industry needs were the focus of the National Alfalfa & Forage Alliance's (NAFA) 3rd Annual D.C. Fly-In held February 12-14.

With more than 100 congressional meetings, NAFA members representing 13 states met with agencies, regulators, and Capitol Hill staff in an effort to promote NAFA objectives, educate members of the House and Senate Ag and Ag Appropriations Committees of the issues important to the alfalfa/forage industry. The Fly-In continues to build awareness and recognition for the nation's 3rd most valuable crop.

In meetings with House and Senate Ag Committee members staff, the focus was on the lack of an adequate safety net for alfalfa producers. Alfalfa is not a Title I crop, nor does it have an adequate crop insurance program. In both the Senate and House versions of the new Farm Bill, program crops continue to maintain protection under the newly created "shallow loss" programs. None of these programs, however, cover alfalfa/forage crops and all versions hold the potential of encouraging producers to shift acres away from non-covered commodities such as alfalfa.

Further compounding the issue is the fact that current crop insurance coverage for alfalfa/forage crops is widely considered to be inadequate to protect producers in the event of loss. While the current Forage Production APH insurance program has less than a 10% participation rate among producers, the insurance programs for wheat, corn, and soybean, boast participation rates well above 80%, clearly demonstrating the need for improvement.

NAFA members also met with the House and Senate Ag Committees and Ag Appropriations Committees staff to address the need for parity with other major crops through public research conducted by both the Agricultural Research Service (ARS) and land grant universities through the National Institute of Food & Agriculture (NIFA). ARS spends in excess of \$34 million dollars a year on other major crops, such as corn, soybean, and wheat, in comparison to less than \$4 million for alfalfa. The disparity is similar at land grant universities. As a result of the lack of public research, yield in alfalfa has not kept pace with other major crops.

In addition to Congressional meetings, NAFA met with: 1) EPA to maintain communication about crop protection tools for the alfalfa seed industry; 2) the U.S. Trade Representative for Ag Affairs regarding low level presence tolerance issues in export markets; 3) USDA's Risk Management Agency to discuss improvements to the Forage Production APH insurance program; 4) USDA's National Ag Statistics Service to talk about how to improve alfalfa and forage-related statistics; 4) USDA's Research, Education, & Economics Office, National Institute of Food & Agriculture, and Agricultural Research Service to discuss how best to use limited research funding to the greatest benefit of the alfalfa/forage industry.



NAFA Board Member Mark Rogen (SD Producer) and Congresswoman Kristi Noem – SD.

The 3rd Annual "Alfalfa on the Hill: Bluegrass Style" reception provided Congressional members and their staff the opportunity to visit informally with NAFA members about industry issues. The reception featured an alfalfa-intensive 'grazing' menu.

"Overall, our visits were extremely positive," said Beth Nelson, NAFA President. "While there are obviously some budgetary issues Congress is dealing with, I think it's clear we're making an impact and ultimately that will lead to improvements for the industry."

Alfalfa is key to sustainable agricultural systems and is an economic engine in rural communities - its value for soil conservation, nitrogen fixation, energy savings, crop rotation, and wildlife habitat is unsurpassed. Alfalfa must offer a competitive value for farmers in order to provide these benefits and maintain or expand its acreage base. Being recognized in policy and research funding decisions is critical in keeping pace with other cropping choices.

The industry has already seen a 25% acreage decline since 2002. Without addressing the safety net and research needs, it is likely acreage will continue to decline.

NAFA Summer Tour, Board of Directors Meeting Hosted by Forage Genetics International & Cal West Seeds

NAFA board members gathered in La Crosse, WI, to meet for their annual summer board meeting on June 25 & 26 hosted by Forage Genetics International and Cal West Seeds. La Crosse is home to research facilities for both FGI and Cal West Seeds (now Alforex Seeds) who together provided guided tours of local research facilities. The summer meeting gives the board a chance to network and get a better understanding of the forage industry in different regional settings. The meeting is open to any NAFA member interested in attending.



From L to R: NAFA Board Member Barb Kinman (NE Alfalfa Marketing Assn.), Congressman Adrian Smith-NE, Kirk Shane (NE Producer).

NAFA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Dan Undersander- Ex Officio
University of Wisconsin

Doug Walsh-Ex Officio
Washington State University

MISSION STATEMENT

To ensure the ability of all segments of the alfalfa and forage industry to compete effectively and profitably, domestically and abroad. The objective of NAFA is to be a forum for consensus building among the various stakeholders and to be an effective advocate on behalf of the alfalfa and forage industry.

EDUCATION

2013 Variety Leaflet

NAFA's 2013 "Winter Survival, Fall Dormancy, and Pest Resistance Ratings for Alfalfa Varieties" was published in the November issue of Hay & Forage Grower magazine. The Variety Leaflet gives marketers the opportunity to list alfalfa varieties approved by the Association of Official Seed Certifying Agencies (AOSCA) and the National Alfalfa Variety Review Board (NAVRB) report. The variety leaflet is a valuable resource for alfalfa producers looking for information on the varieties which may perform well in their particular region. The 2013 leaflet contained information on 222 alfalfa varieties from 26 companies. The Variety Leaflet is available for purchase or low-resolution download on the NAFA website at www.alfalfa.org.



AITs - Sioux Falls, SD

NAFA's highly respected and popular Alfalfa Intensive Training Seminar (AITs) was held on November 13-15, 2012 in Sioux Falls, SD. The 2012 was one of the largest AITs classes to date. AITs featured the latest information with regard to genetics, varieties, seed production, growth and development, soils, fertility, management, and a host of other topics intended to give participants the knowledge they need to make the most of their alfalfa investment. The 2012 seminar featured nationally recognized speakers: Dr. Garry Lacefield, University of Kentucky; Dr. Dan Undersander, University of Wisconsin; Dr. Randy Shaver, University of Wisconsin; Dr. Marvin Hall, Penn State University; and Dr. Neal Martin, U.S. Dairy Forage Research Center, Madison, Wisconsin.

POLICY INITIATIVES

CROP INSURANCE

NAFA, RMA Officials Meet to Address Forage Crop Insurance Deficiencies

A contingent of NAFA members and staff traveled to Kansas City in April to meet with officials of USDA's Risk Management Agency to begin discussions of improvements needed in the Forage Production APH program for a more efficacious yield-based crop insurance product. In 2011, acres enrolled in the Forage Production APH crop insurance program were estimated to be less than 10%. Conversely, the participation rates of crop insurance for covered commodities such as corn, wheat, and soybean, are all above 80%, demonstrating the lack of confidence in the Forage APH crop insurance program as a wise economic choice when considering risk protection.

RMA officials were eager to hear from NAFA and agree that the program could be modified to make participation more appealing. A number of issues were discussed including:

1. methods to improve forage price discovery
2. premium coverage for purer stands of alfalfa (80-90%) where the producer has documented yield measurements
3. expand the states and counties in which the program is available
4. enterprise units
5. insurance coverage based on stem counts rather than stand age
6. being able to insure spring-planted forages at a reduced coverage rate
7. the availability of higher coverage levels

In addition to the APH Program improvements, discussion also focused on the possible development of new insurance products such as a revenue protection product that could address quality issues such as rained on hay and other perils affecting revenue. NAFA received confirmation in late-September that the administration has made the alfalfa/forage crop protection tools a priority.

FARM BILL

Moran Amendment Passes with Senate Farm Bill

In what was quite possibly the first time the word “alfalfa” was mentioned on the floor of the U.S. Senate, Senator Jerry Moran (R-KS) addressed the members informing them of the virtues of the nation’s 4th most valuable crop in his attempt to generate support for his amendment #987. The amendment, which passed by the large margin of 72-18, directs the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation (FCIC) to conduct research and development regarding a policy to insure alfalfa and issue a report describing the results of the study.

Although alfalfa is one of America’s most valuable crops – behind only corn, soybean and wheat – it does not have the type of safety net that is generally afforded to the program crops. The only safety net currently available for the alfalfa/forage industry, is an inadequate Foage Production APH crop insurance program. Due in part to this fact, alfalfa acreage has declined 25% since 2002 and 10% in 2012 alone.



Senator Jerry Moran (R-KS)

NAFA Supports Appropriations Bill’s Farmer Assurance Provision

An appropriations bill signed March 27 by President Obama has an important section that farmers need to fully understand, according to a coalition of farm organizations, including the National Alfalfa & Forage Alliance, that support the provision. Known as the Farmer Assurance Provision, it was designed to mitigate the effects of repeated and future procedural lawsuits from anti-biotechnology activists aimed at driving the technology out of the marketplace – including technology that has already gone through a stringent regulatory review process.

In addition to NAFA, those supporting the provision are the American Farm Bureau Federation, American Soybean Association, American Sugarbeet Growers Association, National Association of Wheat Growers, National Corn Growers Association, and the National Cotton Council of America.

The provision assured farmers the crops they plant could continue to be grown, subject to appropriate interim conditions, while disputes about the sufficiency of federal paperwork are resolved. This protects farmers by providing the assurance that once they have adopted an approved product, their ability to plant and harvest their crop will not be jeopardized.

CROP PROTECTION TOOLS

EPA

NAFA continues to foster its relationship with Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) officials. In an effort to enhance its interaction with the agency, NAFA established two internal committees, hay and seed, to monitor product re-registration and phase-out activities at EPA. Both seed producers and forage producers are encouraged to contact NAFA with a list of crop protection tools important to their operation and region; NAFA will add those products to its list of products to be monitored and supported.

BIOTECHNOLOGY

NAFA Fosters Coexistence

NAFA continues to foster industry coexistence between producers of genetically enhanced, conventional, and organic alfalfa seed production by facilitating the formation of grower opportunity zones (GOZs), seed grower defined geographies within which growers elect to focus on the production of either APS or GE alfalfa seed (including RRA). In addition, NAFA annually reviews its coexistence documents to ensure the strategy is effective and adapt with industry changes.

NAFA Contingent Visits Key DC Offices Prior to Farm Bill Markup

A contingent of NAFA representatives followed up its February D.C. Fly-In with a quick visit to key offices prior to the Farm Bill Markup on May 8 & 9. Key offices visited were USDA-NIFA to discuss the alfalfa research directive contained in the March 2013 passed Continuing Resolution, USDA-ARS to discuss alfalfa/forage research positions, the staff of the House and Senate Ag Committees to remind members of the lack of a true safety net for alfalfa/forage producers, and key members of the House and Senate Ag Appropriations Committees to emphasize the need for research funding for the nation’s third most valuable crop.

While there, the group also attended the Senate Agriculture Appropriations Committee hearing on the FY14 Department of Agriculture Budget at which virtually all members of the Committee expressed the benefits of and their strong support for ag research.

2012-2013 MEMBERS/SPONSORS

\$20,000+

Cal West Seeds
Dairyland Seed Co.
DuPont Pioneer
Forage Genetics International
Monsanto

\$10,000 - \$19,999

America’s Alfalfa
CA Alfalfa Seed Prod. Research Brd.
CROPLAN
DEKALB
Hay & Forage Grower
NEXGROW
WA Alfalfa Seed Comm.
W-L Research

\$5,000 - \$9,999

ID Alfalfa & Clover Seed Comm.
John Deere
Producer’s Choice
S & W Seed Co.
Western Ag Enterprises

\$1,500 - \$4,999

J.R. Simplot
MacDon Industries Ltd.
Midwest Forage Association
MT Alfalfa Seed Committee
NE Alfalfa Marketing Association
The Samuel Robert Noble Foundation
WA State Hay Growers Assoc.
WY Alfalfa Seed Council

\$500 - \$1,499

American Seed Trade Association
Calibrate® Technologies
CA Alfalfa & Forage Association
Colorado Hay & Forage Assoc.
FMC
Harvest Tec
ID Hay & Forage Association
MI Forage Council
Monadnock Valley Beef and Bison
Nelson Irrigation Corp.
Novozymes BioAg Inc.
NV Alfalfa Seed Commission
Oregon Hay & Forage Assoc.
San Joaquin Valley Hay Growers Assoc.
Summit Seed Coatings

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RESEARCH

New Scientist Joins Prosser ARS Unit to Work on Alfalfa

Dr. Long-Xi Yu joined the USDA-ARS, Vegetable and Forage Crops Research Unit in Prosser, WA, with the primary responsibility of performing basic and applied research on enhancing resistance to diseases and abiotic stresses in alfalfa. He will also develop molecular markers for resistance to these stresses, which will then be used in the variety improvement program.

Dr. Yu received his PhD from the University of Orleans, France, and completed postdoctoral research at Cornell University and Texas Tech University. Prior to joining ARS in Prosser, he was a Senior Scientist at Nova Flora, Inc., Philadelphia, PA, a Research Officer at the University of Quebec in Montreal, and most recently, a Research Associate in the Department of Plant Breeding and Genetics at Cornell University. Dr. Yu has conducted research in plant molecular biology and genetics for 25 years and has authored or co-authored 50 peer reviewed publications, received 10 special invitations to present seminars or review papers, and presented research findings at 20 national and international conferences. He has one published patent and two pending patents.

Most recently, Dr. Yu has conducted original research on the identification, characterization, and development of wheat germplasm with resistance to rust using new and improved techniques. He analyzed the haplotype diversity of CIMMYT wheat breeding lines and validated markers linked to major stem rust resistance genes. Using genome-wide association, he identified 15 QTLs associated with stem rust resistance in spring wheat and 11 in winter wheat. He investigated gene interactions between rust resistance loci and reported the gene interaction contributing partial resistance to the Ug99 stem rust, which plays an important role in rust resistance. Based on these studies, Dr. Yu developed the first consensus map of QTLs associated with Ug99 resistance in wheat by meta-analysis. This map contains molecular markers (SNP, DArT and SSR markers) near the resistance loci throughout the genome and provides useful information for fine mapping and cloning rust resistance genes in wheat. Dr. Yu developed additional diagnostic markers for stem rust resistance. He then used them in marker assisted selection to pyramid multiple stem rust genes into a single wheat line. Previously, Dr. Yu cloned and characterized two drought resistance genes in wild tomato, a proflin gene in cultivated tomato, and identified more than 200 genes regulated by water stress in developing maize kernels. Three drought responsive genes were characterized and successfully expressed in commercial varieties of tomato and rice for enhancing drought and salt tolerance. Dr Yu's past experience will play a significant role as he seeks to enhance alfalfa varieties.

Dr. Yu is working in collaboration with forage scientists from various Universities, ARS, Noble Foundation, genetic suppliers (Forage Genetics, DuPont Pioneer, Alforex Seeds), as well as hay and seed growers in the Pacific Northwest. His research accomplishments will contribute to the National Alfalfa Roadmap.



PUBLIC RELATIONS

Hay & Forage Grower Magazine

NAFA renewed its agreement with Hay & Forage Grower magazine as its official publication. A column is featured four times a year with news relating to current NAFA initiatives and interviews with national policymakers. 2012-2013 articles included:



- Agricultural Roots Drives Senator's Commitment to Public Service (Sen. Tim Johnson, D-SD) (August)
- NAFA Drives Industry Recognition (November)
- Need for Safety Net & Research Funding Parity with Major Crops, Focus of NAFA DC Fly-In (March)
- A Friend of Agriculture – Senator Jerry Moran (R-KS) (May)

NAFA Chair Presents at USDA's 2013 Ag Outlook Forum



NAFA chair, Robin Newell,
DuPont Pioneer

Robin Newell, DuPont Pioneer senior forage business manager and National Alfalfa & Forage Alliance Chairman, participated as a luncheon speaker at USDA's 2013 Ag Outlook Forum "Managing Risk in the 21st Century," held in Arlington, VA., February 21-22, 2013.

USDA has hosted the Agricultural Outlook Forum since 1923 to provide farmers and ranchers, government, and agribusinesses with sound information for decision-making. Attendees generally include members of farm organizations, food and fiber firms, academia, foreign governments, and the news media.

Among this year's distinguished speakers were Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack, Deputy Agriculture Secretary Kathleen Merrigan, and Former Senator and DLA Piper Senior Policy Advisor Thomas A. Daschle. The Forum also featured an exhibit hall with exhibits from some of USDA's mission areas, offices, and initiatives.

Among the 25 breakout sessions were risk-management sessions and 85 distinguished experts in the fields of international trade, forestry, conservation, transportation, energy, nutrition, local foods, and food safety. The Forum continues to feature the traditional USDA commodity supply and demand and food price outlooks as well.

Newell's presentation fell under the heading of The Outlook Forum for the U.S. Forage Sector and was titled *Forages Outlook: Is the Game Changing with Drought, High Feed and Commodity Prices, and Ag Policy?*