

NAFA Priorities

NAFA requests agencies use sound science in policy development and adhere to established comment procedures.

• Alfalfa Safety Net

- Since the Nation's 3rd most valuable field crop does not receive program crop benefits, NAFA requests additional public investment in alfalfa research to help keep this sustainable crop competitive with other cropping choices
- Forage Crop Insurance (enhance existing APH and Forage Seeding programs; work with developers to craft new revenue and/or quality policies available in other major field crops)
 - Develop a reliable and accurate system for alfalfa price discovery (NASS/AMS)
- Include alfalfa in any national ad hoc disaster or assistance programs for agriculture

• Public Research

- ARS – Request parity in research funding with other major crops
 - Request an additional \$16 million investment in ARS alfalfa research
 - Request continued support for U.S. Dairy Forage Research Center
 - Request continued support for St. Paul ARS Forage Unit
 - Request continued support for Logan ARS Units; Bee Lab & Forage Unit
 - Maintain support for Research Geneticist position
- Request continued funding for Alfalfa Pollinator Research Initiative (APRI)

NIFA – Request \$5 million in funding for ASAFS

- Work with NIFA on land grant commitment to forages (i.e., fill vacant land grant forage positions)
- Continue to work with NIFA on grant opportunities (e.g., BRAG, new investigator)

• Sustainable Agriculture

- Work with NRCS and other appropriate agencies to acknowledge alfalfa's sustainable contributions to the agricultural landscape

• NASS Data

- Develop a reliable and accurate system for alfalfa price discovery
- Continue and enhance statistical reporting for alfalfa

• Maintain and Enhance Key Export Markets

- Work with agencies and other associations to establish LLP tolerances, synchronized registrations, etc.

• Crop Protection Tools

- Continue to work with EPA to support and maintain alfalfa seed crop protection tools
(seed industry has non-food use status)
- Continue to work with EPA to support and maintain forage crop protection tools

• Miscellaneous

- Monitor the Endangered Species Act (ESA)





National Alfalfa & Forage Alliance 2021 Priority Background

Alfalfa Safety Net – Crop Insurance

- The current Forage Production APH is severely inadequate, demonstrated by the fact that less than 10% of the acreage is enrolled in the program (compared to corn, soybean, and wheat which are all >80% enrollment).
- The Forage Seeding Program, viewed by alfalfa and forage farmers as the best of a deficient group of coverage options, is not widely available, does not include fall seeding, and does not include a reseeding option.
- The lack of additional insurance offerings such as revenue and/or quality protection (which other major crops have) is a major factor in competing with other cropping choices.

Public Research

- USDA's research portfolio needs to be better balanced to provide needed research for the nation's 3rd most valuable field crop. The decline in acres can be partially attributed to the lack of public research.
- Much public research funding is devoted to the "big 5" (wheat, cotton, corn, soybeans, and rice). The value of all hay in 2019 was \$20.6 billion; alfalfa alone was \$10.6 billion. This compares to wheat at \$8.8, cotton at \$6.0, and rice at \$2.4 (corn is \$52.9 and soybean is \$31.2).
- In its December 2012 report on Agricultural Preparedness and the Agriculture Research Enterprise, the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology (PCAST) noted:

"The waning public investment in agricultural research in the United States contributes significantly to the risk of losing its international leadership in agriculture."

"The vast majority of agricultural research funding is now spent on a very small number of major or commodity crops, in particular corn and soybeans."

"Although the U.S. is the undisputed world leader in agricultural production today, continued innovation and investment are essential to maintaining a competitive advantage in the future."

- 2020 ARS data indicate ARS allocated \$58.5 million (80.8 scientist years) to wheat, \$48.7 million (86.9 scientist years) to corn, \$34.6 million (69.4 scientist years) to soybean, \$44.3 million (77.8 scientist years) to cotton, compared to just \$8 million (14.3 scientist years) to alfalfa.
- NIFA's research commitment to alfalfa and forage crops is equally dismal. In fact, at many land grant universities throughout the nation the forage program has either been eliminated or rolled into cropping systems.

NASS Data

- The accuracy of alfalfa and forage acre, yield, and market price data must be improved:
 - in order for RMA to provide adequate coverage levels through its crop insurance policies (RMA relies on NASS estimates to administer programs providing U.S. farmers with a safety net against unpredictable growing conditions).
 - to provide greater confidence in an alfalfa/forage farmer's ability to make well-informed marketing and production decisions.
 - to provide banks and other lending institutions the information they need to accurately project estimated yield and revenue likely to be realized by potential borrowers.
 - in order to accurately project coming trends, interpret their implications, and evaluate alternative courses of action.

Why Is This Important?

- Alfalfa is key to sustainable agricultural systems – its value for nitrogen fixation, soil conservation, crop rotation, and wildlife habitat is unsurpassed.
- It is the ultimate regenerative crop, increasing biodiversity, enriching soils, improving watersheds, and enhancing ecosystems.
- If policy and research funding decisions are not balanced we will continue to see this economically and environmentally friendly crop disappear from the agricultural landscape, leaving in its place more problematic issues (e.g., Gulf of Mexico dead zone).

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