



## National Alfalfa & Forage Alliance

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## NAFA HOLDS COEXISTENCE STRATEGY MEETING

Denver, CO - *Can't we all just get along?* That was the theme of a meeting coordinated by the National Alfalfa & Forage Alliance (NAFA) intended to craft a strategic plan aimed at fostering a peaceful coexistence among growers of organic, conventional and Roundup Ready (RR) alfalfa. Held at the Radisson Hotel Denver Stapleton Plaza on October 10, ***Peaceful Coexistence: Creating a Strategy for Harmony Among GM, Organic, and Conventional Alfalfa Producers*** brought together more than 70 researchers, industry representatives and producers intent upon airing their concerns with regard to the emergence of Roundup Ready alfalfa and hearing from experts in the field of gene flow, export markets and the regulatory process.

"Considering what's happened over the course of the past year, I think it was very important for people who participated in this meeting to come away with the feeling that their concerns were heard," said Beth Nelson, President of NAFA. "We feel we've made some real progress here towards a plan for coexistence that everyone can support."

In 2005, USDA deregulated alfalfa genetically engineered to resist the herbicide Roundup. However, after a lawsuit challenging USDA's decision was subsequently filed by the Center for Food Safety and others, a permanent order was issued which stated RR alfalfa was once again a regulated product. The court ruled that USDA had failed to follow procedural requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act in granting non-regulated status to Roundup Ready alfalfa under the Plant Protection Act, and would have to prepare an

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Environmental Impact Statement. Despite this fact, growers who had purchased RR alfalfa were allowed to plant the product until March 30, 2007.

Even with a modest amount of RR alfalfa in production, it was thought to be prudent to arrange a coexistence strategy meeting to explore common ground and create a plan for peaceful coexistence with organic producers and exporters concerned about protecting overseas markets which have a low or zero tolerance for genetically modified alfalfa.

Presentations were given by some of the foremost experts in their fields including: Andrea Huberty, *USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS)*; Fred Kirschenmann, *Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture*; Kenneth Hobbie, *U.S. Grains Council*; Jeff Plourd, *El Toro Export*; Gregory Lowry, *Idaho Crop Improvement Association*; Paul Frey, *Cal/West Seeds*; Dave Miller, *Pioneer Hi-Bred International*; Mike Phillips, *Nevada Nile Ranch*; Paul Bertels, *National Corn Growers Association*; James Cane, *USDA's Agricultural Research Service*; and Dan Putnam, *University of California–Davis*.

Afternoon breakout sessions divided participants into categories of forage production, seed production, export and organic in order to address specific issues relevant to those categories. Input from those sessions provided the framework of a strategic plan for industry coexistence.

Following the meeting, a steering committee, consisting of producers and industry experts, met to refine the contributions of the event's participants into a comprehensive strategy for the ultimate purpose of creating an environment in which growers of organic, conventional and RR alfalfa can all coexist in peace.

- 30 -

MEDIA: For more information, please contact Beth Nelson at (651) 484-3888.