



## National Alfalfa & Forage Alliance

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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### **NAFA DC FLY-IN FOCUSES ON RESEARCH, ENHANCED RMA OPTIONS**

St. Paul, MN – The need for research funding to address critical industry needs and enhanced risk management options were the focus of the National Alfalfa & Forage Alliance's (NAFA) 7<sup>th</sup> annual Washington, D.C., Fly-In held February 7-9.

NAFA members met with agencies, regulators, and Capitol Hill staff to promote NAFA objectives and educate members of the House and Senate Ag and Ag Appropriations Committees of the issues important to the alfalfa industry. With more than 100 meetings scheduled over the course of the 3-day event, NAFA members worked hard to build awareness and recognition of the nation's 3<sup>rd</sup> most value field crop.

NAFA met with staff of House and Senate Ag Committee members to bring attention to the need for new and enhanced risk management tools to provide an adequate safety net for alfalfa farmers. Current risk management tools contained in the Farm Bill, Agriculture Risk Coverage and Price Loss Coverage, are not available to alfalfa farmers, potentially encouraging farmers to shift acres away from non-covered commodities such as alfalfa into program crops.

Current crop insurance coverage for alfalfa is widely considered to be inadequate to protect farmers in the event of loss. While the current Forage Production APH insurance program has less than 10% of the alfalfa acres enrolled, the insurance programs for wheat, corn, and soybean, boast participation rates well above 80%, clearly demonstrating the opportunity and need for improvement.

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

To complement research funding received through AFRP, NAFA created the first-ever *U.S. Alfalfa Farmer Research Initiative (aka Alfalfa Checkoff Program)*, a farmer-funded investment in alfalfa-related research. The checkoff officially launched January 1 and is being facilitated by seed marketers.

"Through our new checkoff, the alfalfa industry is clearly demonstrating its commitment to funding alfalfa research," said Beth Nelson, NAFA President. "This program was created to enhance the research funding provided at the public level and share in the obligation to fund critical industry needs."

The checkoff will support research into the improvement of yields and forage quality; weed, insect, and cutting management strategies; and fertility, soil management, soil health, and macro/micro nutrients. For more information regarding the checkoff or for a list of facilitating marketers, visit [www.alfalfa.org](http://www.alfalfa.org).

In addition to Congressional meetings, NAFA met with: 1) EPA to maintain communication about crop protection tools for the alfalfa seed industry, 2) USDA's Risk Management Agency to talk about improvements to current alfalfa and forage crop insurance products; and 3) USDA's Agricultural Research Service to discuss how best to use limited research funding to the greatest benefit of the alfalfa/forage industry.

"Overall, our meetings were very encouraging and productive," Nelson added. "We enjoy coming out here and sharing alfalfa's story because it's such a positive one, especially as the discussions regarding the next Farm Bill begin to develop."