



## National Alfalfa & Forage Alliance

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## RESEARCH FUNDING AND CROP INSURANCE SAFETY NET THE FOCUS OF NAFA DC FLY-IN

St. Paul, MN – While many crops enjoy the safety net benefits given to program crops in the Farm Bill, alfalfa is not considered a program crop. 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 case National Alfalfa & Forage Alliance (NAFA) representatives made to lawmakers and agency officials as the focus of its 8<sup>th</sup> annual Washington, D.C., Fly-In held February 6-8.

With nearly 100 meetings scheduled over the course of the 3-day event, NAFA members were kept busy building awareness and recognition for the nation's 4<sup>th</sup> most value field crop. NAFA Fly-In participants met with agency officials, regulators, as well as House and Senate Ag and Ag Appropriations Committee members to discuss NAFA objectives 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 forage farmers. 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 program crops.



*Kansas alfalfa farmer and NAFA board member Darrin Unruh (left) talks research with Congressman Kevin Yoder – KS.*



*NAFA Fly-In participants (from L to R): Tim and Mark Wagoner, alfalfa seed farmers from Touchet, WA, Dan Wiersma of DuPont Pioneer from Johnston, IA, and John Ruedinger, dairy/alfalfa farmer from Van Dyne, WI.*

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 (AFRP) and investments in research funding for alfalfa at USDA's Agricultural Research Service. While alfalfa is the nation's 4<sup>th</sup> 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 seed production, 2) USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA) to discuss crop insurance products on par with other major crops; 3) USDA's Agricultural Research Service (ARS) to discuss how best to use limited research funding to the greatest benefit of the alfalfa/forage industry; and 4) USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) to discuss the Alfalfa Seed and Alfalfa Forage Systems Research Program (AFRP).

"As the new Farm Bill takes shape, we want 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 4<sup>th</sup> most valuable field crop, it is imperative we begin seeing movement toward parity with other major crops in terms of policy and public research funding in order to keep this sustainable crop competitive with other cropping choices."