

A Success Story

EPA and Western Alfalfa Seed Growers Association

A partnership that ensures a consistent supply of high-quality alfalfa seed for the nation's fourth largest crop.

Alfalfa seed requires pollination by specific kinds of bees. In the Northwest, leafcutter and alkali bees are used. In California, leafcutter and honey bees are used.

Alkali bees are the only native pollinator used commercially in the United States. They are used to pollinate alfalfa seed in the Touchet area of Washington State.

- In the mid 1980's, alfalfa seed growers were losing effective pesticides that were safe to use during bloom time when pollinating bees were in the fields.
- In 1988, the Northwest Seed Growers petitioned EPA to regulate alfalfa seed production as a non-food/non-feed crop.
- In conjunction with State Departments of Agriculture, new state regulations were adopted to formalize agreements with the EPA. In Washington State for example, WAC 16-228-1270 states that for purposes of pesticide registration, alfalfa grown for seed, is considered a non-food/non-feed crop.

State Departments of Agriculture continue to audit and monitor seed production and seed conditioning practices.

Seed farmers themselves are the biggest advocates and policing group. They recognize and appreciate the importance of this law.

For over 20 years, the partnerships between EPA, State Agriculture Departments and alfalfa seed growers in 7 western states have allowed the growth and prosperity of the alfalfa seed industry, while simultaneously protecting our essential, sensitive bees.

In 2018, \$67.0 million worth of alfalfa seed was exported from the United States to countries around the world.

Providing high quality alfalfa seed for the nation's third largest crop, and other countries around the world, requires continued success of this unique partnership.



The Western Alfalfa Seed Growers Association is a proud affiliate of the National Alfalfa & Forage Alliance (NAFA).