



News from NAFA

Excerpts from the NAFA 2008-2009 Annual Report

By Beth Nelson, NAFA President

In a departure from the interviews with leading agricultural policymakers normally printed here, a summary of NAFA initiatives from the past year is appropriate as we wrap up our fiscal year. For a complete copy of the NAFA Annual Report, visit www.alfalfa-forage.org.

Farm Bill/Conservation Stewardship Program. Due to the persistence of NAFA in raising awareness in Congress of alfalfa's environmental benefits, the 2008 Farm Bill included a new Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) with supplemental payments to producers agreeing to adopt "resource-conserving crop rotations." USDA's secretary passed the responsibility of identifying "resource-conserving" crops to the states. States have the flexibility to decide whether these rotations are available statewide or tailored for geographic areas within a state.

NAFA contacted each state's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) office to ensure that alfalfa received strong consideration as one of the crops which will be defined as "resource-conserving." To date, alfalfa has been identified as a "resource-conserving crop" in these states: California, Colorado, Delaware, Idaho, Iowa, Louisiana, Michigan, Montana, New Jersey, Nevada, South Dakota, Vermont, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. *Please contact your NRCS office for details about this program.*

ARS - U.S. Dairy Forage Center Western Positions. NAFA has been working with ARS to establish enhanced forage research in the West to work in collaboration with the U.S. Dairy Forage Research Center located in Madison, Wisconsin. With the release of the administration's budget for FY 2010, ARS Administrator Dr. Edward Knipping shared the Agency's plans on the matter.

"To help alfalfa producers respond to ... changing conditions there is a proposed reallocation of \$317,000 in the President's FY 2010 budget to expand ARS' alfalfa research capacity. We will use this funding, if provided, to add staff as a first step in building a new ARS research team in the western states directed at irrigation-based alfalfa production systems." Dr. Knipping indicated that this research will focus on evaluating promising alfalfa germplasm and breeding lines for tolerance to salinity, sodicity, and pests and resilience to changing climate conditions. This information will then be used to develop alfalfa varieties better adapted to using degraded ground water and recycled waters and having increased water-use efficiency. "We will continue to seek new funding to add additional positions until we have a fully staffed interdisciplinary team in place that will work closely with the region's producers and our university partners to help meet the alfalfa industry's needs."



Dr. Edward Knipping
ARS Administrator

Prosser Funding Request. NAFA endorsed an effort with other Northwest agricultural groups to increase funding at the ARS Station-Prosser, WA. As a result, the Senate Ag Appropriations Committee authorized \$200,000 for "Forage Crop Stress Tolerance and Virus Disease Management." While this funding is still subject to the conference committee process, the senate 'mark' is a critical step.

Growing Alfalfa in the South Publication. This popular publication has been updated by a team of forage specialists led by Dr. Garry Lacefield, University of Kentucky. The publication features requirements for successful production and management factors affecting quality of harvested and stored forage, and economic information. The new publication will be available on the NAFA website.

Irrigated Alfalfa Management for Mediterranean and Desert Zones. NAFA is proud to be a platinum sponsor of Irrigated Alfalfa Management for Mediterranean and Desert Zones, published in November, 2008. This publication is a product of the University of California Alfalfa and Forage Systems Workgroup. This publication is available for purchase on the NAFA website.

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