

ADVANCES IN ALFALFA PROMOTION

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Kentucky grain farmers have experienced several successful years seeing high prices and good yields, with the exception of the drought in 2012. If you were insured in 2012, which most lenders required, you probably also came out with a profit during that challenging time. Alfalfa producers in Kentucky have also seen high prices and decent yields. While the drought of 2012 affected them, most still harvested an 80 % crop with extremely high prices and demand. The fact that alfalfa is a deep rooted plant, coupled with timely rains proved beneficial to this group. Alfalfa is the third most valuable crop across the US. Even with this success, the current crop insurance program is very antiquated and need to be updated. The number of farmers that sign up for alfalfa forage insurance is surprisingly less that 10%.

The National Alfalfa and Forage Alliance was formed in 2006 to promote alfalfa and forages. This alliance has worked closely with AFGC, of which KFGC is also a member. Ray Smith and myself are liaison members from AFGC, and also serve on the board for NAFA. In February, NAFA will host a trip to Washington D.C., with the purpose of heightening the awareness of the nation's third most valuable crop. Efforts are focused on enhancing research funding, and networking with congressional offices and regulators as they set agricultural, conservation, and renewable fuel polices. Initiatives addressed:

- ARS funding & projects
- Bioenergy
- Biotechnology
- Crop Protection Farm Bill NIFA Funding
- Risk Management – Alfalfa Crop Insurance

The Alfalfa Forage Research Program just received 1.35 million in Research Funding for 2014. Senator Jerry Moran of Kansas was very helpful in this success.

NAFA was also instrumental in keeping crop payments from being coupled to only the crop planted. Had this not been addressed, bankers would not have been eager to loan money on non program crops.

Alfalfa genetics will also be promoted heavily with the upcoming stacked Roundup Ready and Low Lignin from Forage Genetics. Dow has made a significant investment in Alfalfa Research with the acquisition of CalWest/ Producers Choice which will compliment Dairyland Seed. These programs have the resources to put out some value added products.

Seed coatings and seed treatments are also becoming prominent and companies are now selling specific coatings for certain agronomic regions. We see this as the largest growing market, and the major companies are consistently looking at seed treatment and additives in the early screening process.

Alfalfa is being promoted as it never has in the past, and with new technology it looks to a bright and successful future.