NAFA KICKS OFF FIRST-EVER ALFALFA CHECKOFF PROGRAM
Farmers Asked to Encourage Their Seed Marketers to Facilitate Checkoff

St. Paul, MN – The National Alfalfa & Forage Alliance (NAFA) announces the creation of the first-ever U.S. Alfalfa Farmer Research Initiative (aka Alfalfa Checkoff Program), a farmer-funded investment in alfalfa-related research to help drive innovation and profitability in the alfalfa industry.

“Until now, alfalfa was the only major crop without a farmer-funded checkoff program,” said Beth Nelson, NAFA President. “That needed to change in order for alfalfa to remain competitive with other cropping choices.”

The NAFA board of directors voted unanimously to begin a national checkoff program to facilitate a farmer-funded research program to advance industry research. The U.S. Alfalfa Farmer Research Initiative, implemented voluntarily by seed brand, will be assessed at the rate of $1/bag of alfalfa seed. One-hundred percent of the checkoff funds will be used to support public research into alfalfa and alfalfa forage systems.

- The Alfalfa Checkoff Program will be assessed at a rate of $1/bag, implemented voluntarily by seed brand.
- The Alfalfa Checkoff Program has broad grassroots support from state and regional hay associations and farmer members.
- Unlike other commodities, alfalfa does not have a common “first purchaser.” Seed marketers are the common industry partner helping to facilitate the checkoff program.
- Farmers and industry members will assist in developing research priorities. A request for proposals will be circulated to all known public U.S. alfalfa researchers.
- NAFA will not assess any administrative costs, investing 100% of the checkoff funds in alfalfa research.

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Alfalfa is key to sustainable agricultural systems and is an economic engine in rural communities—its value for soil conservation, nitrogen fixation, energy savings, crop rotation, and wildlife habitat is unsurpassed. In terms of value, it is the nation’s third most valuable field crop following only corn and soybean.

However, alfalfa must offer a competitive value for farmers in order to provide these benefits and maintain or expand acreage base. Yields of other major cropping choices have significantly surpassed alfalfa due, in part, to the vast amount of public research dedicated to these other crops.

While advances are being made in federal funds dedicated to public research (i.e., Alfalfa Seed & Alfalfa Forage Systems Research Program - AFRP, Alfalfa Pollinator Research Initiative - APRI), USDA’s public research portfolio needs to be better balanced to provide needed research to the nation’s third most valuable field crop (see chart). In addition to enhanced USDA commitment, it is imperative U.S. alfalfa farmers also make a financial commitment to public research supporting the industry.

**How will checkoff funds be spent?**

The funds will be spent on public research into alfalfa and alfalfa forage systems (100% of funds will support public research; NAFA will not assess administrative costs). The checkoff will support research into the improvement of yields, water conservation, development of new storage and harvest systems, creation of new uses, and other research areas holding the potential to advance the alfalfa and alfalfa forage industry through integrated, collaborative research and technology transfer.

**How will checkoff funds be distributed & outreach be conducted?**

Research Priorities: NAFA, with input from farmer and industry members, will develop a list of research priorities.

Requests for Proposals: An RFP will be circulated to all known public U.S. alfalfa researchers.

Review Panel & Awards: NAFA will identify a subcommittee made up of university researchers, industry representatives, and farmers to evaluate proposals on scientific merit, conceptual adequacy, innovation, institutional qualifications, and relevance to industry priorities.

Outreach: Researchers will be required to submit a final project report that will be archived in a searchable database on the NAFA website. Additionally, researchers may be requested to present their findings at forage meetings and provide summaries that can be published in industry magazines.
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Contact: Beth Nelson, President

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While NAFA has been successful in securing federal research funding for the Alfalfa & Forage Research Program and the Alfalfa Pollinator Research Initiative, USDA’s public research portfolio needs to be better balanced to provide needed research to the nation’s 3rd most valuable field crop.

“We’ve been making the case to lawmakers of the need for parity among the major crops in public research funding,” Nelson added. “This checkoff clearly demonstrates how serious alfalfa farmers are about their commitment to fund alfalfa research. It is imperative we come to the table with our own funding.”

The checkoff will support research into the improvement of yields, water conservation, development of new storage and harvest systems, creation of new uses, and other research areas holding the potential to advance the alfalfa industry.

Seed marketers who have committed to facilitating the checkoff, helping farmers invest in the future of the alfalfa industry include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alforex Seeds</th>
<th>Latham Hi-Tech Seeds</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>America’s Alfalfa</td>
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<td>Dyna-Gro</td>
<td>S&amp;W Seed Company</td>
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<td>Fontanelle Hybrids</td>
<td>Simplot Grower Solutions</td>
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<td>Gold Country Seed</td>
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It’s not too late. If your favorite alfalfa brand is not on the list, contact NAFA (651.484.3888) for information on how a seed marketer can become a participating brand.

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Media Availability:

Beth Nelson, NAFA President 651.484.3888
Ron Cornish, NAFA Chair (Alforex Seeds) 901.825.8646
Brent Johnson, NAFA Class 4 - Seed Marketers Chair (Forage Genetics International) 952.715.2646
John Ruedinger, NAFA board member (Wisconsin Farmer; Midwest Forage Assn. Rep.) 920.602.0695
Drex Gauntt, NAFA board member (Washington Farmer; Washington State Hay Growers Assn.) 509.539.4563
Darrin Unruh, NAFA board member (Kansas Farmer; Kansas Forage & Grassland Council) 620.727.2341
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