



American Malting Barley Association, Inc.

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Press Release: Growers and Industry Advocate for Barley

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Washington, DC - February 10, 2016 - The producers and end-users of barley met February 1-3, 2016 in Washington, DC to promote the interests of barley. The National Barley Growers Association (NBGA), which has historically been funded by state grower organizations, now gets at least half of its support from brewing end users and life science companies. Interest from end users has increased as barley has gone from being a major feed grain to being primarily processed into malt for use by the food, beer and distilling industries.

Currently, over 68% of the crop is used by these industries and they want to ensure that there is an adequate supply of barley grown in the US for their needs. Acreage has declined 57% in the last quarter century and further declines are likely to lead to increased imports of barley and malt. Competition with other crops, diseases, and farm policies have all played a role in this decline.

The NBGA meeting prioritized issues of federal farm policy, research, trade, taxes and other matters and brought them to the hill to discuss with members of Congress. Crop insurance was cited as a very successful private-public partnership that provides the needed safety net in the event of a crop failure. Unlike past government run insurance programs or ad hoc disaster assistance, it provides timely, cost effective relief to producers, and offers a level of security to the nation's food supply. Members of Congress were thanked for restoring \$3 billion of cuts to crop insurance that became part of the budget bill last fall. These cuts would have had a dramatic negative effect on the delivery and choice of crop insurance products, hitting major barley states particularly hard.

Federal research programs were also reviewed and the NBGA supports the FY 2017 goals of the National Barley Improvement Committee (NBIC). The number one goal of the NBIC is bringing funding for the US Wheat and Barley Scab Initiative up to \$10 million authorized in the 2014 Farm Bill. This USDA-Agricultural Research Service program is currently funded at \$6.7 million and supports research on wheat and barley in 28 states in an effort to combat this serious disease. Losses to Scab are estimated in the hundreds of millions of dollars, so addressing this disease is a wheat and barley priority.

During the winter meeting, the Beer Institute and NBGA hosted a "Barley, Brews, and Boots" reception for members of congress and their staff. Dale Thorenson, NBGA Secretary/Treasurer, noted that "this is one of the more successful congressional receptions and is important in getting the attention barley deserves". Nearly 500 showed up in the Hart Senate Office building to visit and talk about barley while taking in a view of Capital Hill at night.