At House Hearing, NAWG President Voices Support for Multi-Legged Safety Net
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The coming reauthorization of federal farm and food policy should include a multi-legged farm safety net with crop insurance as its foundation, NAWG President Erik Younggren testified Thursday to Members of the House Committee on Agriculture’s Subcommittee on General Farm Commodities and Risk Management.

Speaking at a hearing held to get stakeholder views prior to mark-up of 2012 Farm Bill legislation in the full Committee, Younggren stressed the importance of crop insurance to farmers’ risk management plans, which has made it the top priority for wheat growers and other crop producers in the 2012 Farm Bill.

However, he and other panelists recognized that crop insurance alone is not a fully-functioning safety net, and he voiced support for a revenue-based Title I program modeled on ACRE and SURE with an on-farm trigger and coverage by commodity.

“While we support a revenue-based program in Title I, we recognize and are grateful for concerns from the leaders of the House Agriculture Committee about protecting farmers and farm businesses in times of low prices,” Younggren said. “As a farmer, I share these concerns and recognize the risks of changing the existing safety net so dramatically that it removes the price protection currently available in Title I.”

The Wheat Growers president, who farms near Hallock, Minn., described a number of additional core principles that should guide House leaders when developing new farm policy, including:

- building on the aspects of existing Title I programs that functioned well;
- striving to bring Title I coverage as close to the farm as possible;
- ensuring that any new programs do not unnecessarily distort planting decisions; and
- ensuring programs are compliant with World Trade Organization (WTO) obligations.

He also strongly reiterated calls for Congress to complete its work on the 2012 Farm Bill quickly, before the current farm and food law expires on Sept. 30. This is made more critical for wheat growers, who will be planting winter wheat early this fall.

“If you take anything away from my testimony today, take this: it is of the utmost urgency to our farmer-members that you and your colleagues in the Senate approve new farm policy soon,” he said.

Thursday’s testimony was Younggren’s third appearance before a Congressional panel in preparation for the 2012 Farm Bill. His full written statement and statements from past hearings are available at www.wheatworld.org/farmbill.

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