

FIVE ALFALFA RESEARCH PROJECTS FUNDED THROUGH NIFA ASAFS

USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) recently awarded funding to five alfalfa-related research projects through the Alfalfa Seed and Alfalfa Forage Systems Research Program (ASAFS).

The ASAFS, now in its ninth year, is an integrated research and extension program that supports technology transfer to improve overall agricultural productivity, profitability, and conservation of natural resources through conventional and organic alfalfa seed and forage production systems. The program encourages projects that establish multi-disciplinary networks to address priority national or regional science needs of the alfalfa industry. Over the course of the nine-year program, more than \$21 million has been dedicated to 59 alfalfa research projects, demonstrating both the popularity of the program and the need for alfalfa research funding.

The National Alfalfa & Forage Alliance (NAFA) worked with Senator Jerry Moran (R-KS) and others to secure program funding to begin the program in 2014. Since that time, Congress has appropriated \$1.35 million in both FY '14 and '15; \$2 million in '16; \$2.25 million in both '17 and '18; \$3 million in '19, '20, and '21, and \$3.5 million in '22 marking the highest level of funding yet for the ASAFS.

NIFA awarded funding to the following 2022 recipients:

AFRP Project Title	Principal Investigator	Award
Dissecting Effects of Insect-Transmitted Viruses on Yield and Quality of Forage Alfalfa Crops	Erik Wenninger University of Idaho	\$299,965
A Novel Approach to Expand Our Understanding of Alfalfa Hay Spoilage and Improve the Efficacy of Hay Preservatives	Juan Romero University of Maine	\$668,456
Establishing Alfalfa in Intercropping with Sunflower and Sorghum to Improve Alfalfa Yield and Profitability	Marisol Berti North Dakota State University	\$587,671
Forage: Fall Armyworm Outreach and Research for Alfalfa Growers and Educators	Andrew Michel Ohio State University	\$868,104
The Compatibility and Contribution of Natural Enemies in Western U.S. Alfalfa Management	Ricardo Ramirez Utah State University	\$855,164

ASAFS funds are collaborative in nature, meaning each project submission must include regional collaboration represented through participation of at least two states within the same geographic region. If the project has a goal of national coordination, states from at least two regions must have significant involvement in the project. ASAFS supports the development of improved alfalfa forage and seed production systems, practices, and supporting technologies and its priority areas include: 1) Increase alfalfa forage and seed yields and forage quality through improved management practices, plant breeding, and other strategies to reduce biotic and abiotic stresses and costs of production; 2) Improve alfalfa forage and seed harvest and storage systems, including automation that reduces labor costs, to optimize economic returns to alfalfa producers as well as end-users including milk producers; 3) Develop methods to estimate alfalfa forage yield and quality to support marketing as a livestock feed and instruments to reduce producer risks; 4) Explore new uses for alfalfa such as in fish feeds, nutritive supplements, alternative protein sources for human consumption, high-value chemical manufacturing, or other novel uses; 5) Develop improved insect, disease and weed management strategies, including spotted aphid in alfalfa seed production and potential herbicide carry-over issues; and 6) Document the contribution of alfalfa production systems to climate-smart agriculture, including the sequestration of carbon.

To keep tabs on the progress of these projects, be sure to check out [NAFA's research database](#) to find comprehensive information regarding three of the alfalfa industry's most important research programs – the Alfalfa Seed and Alfalfa Forage Systems Research Program (ASAFS), the Alfalfa Pollinator Research Initiative (APRI), and the Alfalfa Checkoff. The information available includes individual project objectives, program priorities, and details regarding each program's request for applications.

Also available is a search tool which allows users to search for projects based on keywords, researcher, university/entity, year of project, category, or research program.

As these projects reach completion, results and conclusions will be posted to the site as they become available. Please take a moment to visit the site (<http://alfalfa.org/research.php>) for more information.