PRODUCING PROFITABLE FORAGE REQUIRES GROWERS TO MAKE A FEW CRITICAL CHOICES

Producing profitable forage requires growers choose products with high yield potential and have a solid understanding of management needs for your specific fields. For most growers, forage profitability comes down to growing dense, healthy, fast-growing stands of alfalfa. Growers also need to consider yield potential, pest resistance, fall dormancy, winterhardiness, and weed control for optimal profitability.

**Yield potential**

When choosing a seed product, alfalfa growers should look for products proven to perform with high average yields across multiple years and locations. Crop performance varies by growing region so growers should choose alfalfa products with proven high yield that thrive in soil types and climates similar to their own farms.

When considering yield potential, growers should contemplate the end use. Alfalfa forage quality and yield potential are inversely related to the alfalfa growth cycle. Early harvest can result in low yield but high forage quality. Late harvest can result in high yield but low forage quality. Generally, cutting based on the growth stage of alfalfa may result in more consistent and predictable forage yield potential and quality than when harvested on a calendar basis.

**Pest resistance**

Growers should identify the most significant pests in their growing regions and select seed products with resistance to those pests. Products are available to help growers manage aphids, nematodes, potato leaf hopper, silverleaf whitefly or other insects that pose threats to a particular area.

If using a coated seed for pest resistance, a few important adjustments should be considered. Growers should use the most suitable seeders for their specific soil conditions and calibrate the seeders for best results. The planting rate should be consistent with the rate used for uncoated seed, and the correct amount of seed should be placed in firm soil at the proper depth for better seed-to-soil contact to enhance germination and uniform emergence. A local extension office or brand representative can provide additional recommendations.

**Fall dormancy**

When selecting alfalfa products, growers should determine which fall dormancy and winterhardiness ratings are best for their acres. Fall dormancy and winterhardiness ratings should be considered as separate characteristics.

Fall dormancy relates to how soon an alfalfa product stops growing in the fall and how early it begins growing in the spring or late winter. Non-dormant alfalfa products have faster shoot elongation after harvest and erect shoot growth in autumn. In contrast, fall dormant products produce shorter, prostrate shoots in the fall and have slower shoot elongation after harvest.¹

The length of the season is determined by a height measurement. Higher fall dormancy ratings indicate more fall growth, whereas length of dormancy affects yield and winterhardiness. Because fall dormant products have slower regrowth after harvest, the number of cuttings per year and yield may be reduced.

Ratings vary from 1 to 11, with 1 being Very Dormant and 11 being Very Non-Dormant.

Keep in mind that some alfalfa products may be capable of surviving lower temperatures than indicated by their fall dormancy rating, while some products with a lower fall dormancy rating may not be capable of withstanding cold temperatures over multiple years.

**Winterhardiness**

Winterhardiness is determined by the ability of an alfalfa product to withstand winter temperatures. The winterhardiness rating helps indicate how well a product will survive the cold. The lower the winterhardiness rating means the greater the ability of a product to withstand winter temperatures. Ratings vary from 1 to 6, with 1 being Extremely Winterhardy and 6 being Non-Winterhardy.

If an alfalfa stand is planted for short-term production, a moderate winterhardiness rating may be adequate. For long-term stands, alfalfa products with lower winter survival ratings should be considered. In areas that usually receive snow cover of 4 inches or more, planting products with very low winterhardiness ratings might not provide much additional protection. Snowfall can be unpredictable and protection from a snow cover should not be relied upon. In areas with less snowfall, products with lower winterhardiness ratings should be considered.

Alfalfa products with lower fall dormancy and winterhardiness ratings go dormant earlier in the fall, which can limit productivity and yield for the season. However, single-year productivity can be balanced by the greater likelihood of fall dormant and winter hardy products surviving multiple winters and, thereby, adding years to the life, overall productivity, and total yield potential of the stand.
Weed control

To help optimize yield potential, growers should protect their alfalfa crop with agricultural herbicides. Conventional alfalfa products have limited weed control options, which can hinder stand establishment and persistence and result in lower yield potential. However, alfalfa products with trait technology, such as Genuity® Roundup Ready® Alfalfa, can provide more weed control options than a conventional alfalfa product. Roundup Ready Alfalfa provides broad-spectrum weed control and greater application flexibility to help reduce crop injury or rotational concerns.

Based on the weeds present in the field, one or more herbicides with different modes of action should be used at least once during the middle years of the stand to help prevent weed shifts or resistance.


Do not export Genuity® Roundup Ready® Alfalfa seed or crop, including hay or hay products, to China pending import approval. In addition, due to the unique cropping practices do not plant Genuity® Roundup Ready® Alfalfa in Imperial County, California, pending import approvals and until Monsanto grants express permission for such planting.

Monsanto Company is a member of Excellence Through Stewardship® (ETS). Monsanto products are commercialized in accordance with ETS Product Launch Stewardship Guidance, and in compliance with Monsanto’s Policy for Commercialization of Biotechnology-Derived Plant Products in Commodity Crops. This product has been approved for import into key export markets with functioning regulatory systems. Any crop or material produced from this product can only be exported to, or used, processed or sold in countries where all necessary regulatory approvals have been granted. It is a violation of national and international law to move material containing biotech traits across boundaries into nations where import is not permitted. Growers should talk to their grain handler or product purchaser to confirm their buying position for this product. Excellence Through Stewardship® is a registered trademark of Excellence Through Stewardship.

Individual results may vary, and performance may vary from location to location and from year to year. This result may not be an indicator of results you may obtain as local growing, soil and weather conditions may vary. Growers should evaluate data from multiple locations and years whenever possible.

ALWAYS READ AND FOLLOW PESTICIDE LABEL DIRECTIONS. Roundup Ready® crops contain genes that confer tolerance to glyphosate, the active ingredient in Roundup® brand agricultural herbicides. Roundup® brand agricultural herbicides will kill crops that are not tolerant to glyphosate. Genuity®, Roundup Ready®, and Roundup® are trademarks of Monsanto Technology LLC. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners. ©2016 Monsanto Company.