

4. Conservation sense

Reduced soil erosion and runoff—Alfalfa is recognized as an excellent ground cover. Alfalfa reduces soil erosion and also reduces runoff of phosphorus and pesticides into streams and lakes. Alfalfa is one of the best crops for trapping nitrogen before it gets into groundwater due to its deep root system which extends below the shallow root-absorption zone of most other crops.

Added manure management options—Alfalfa provides opportunities for manure application several times a year. This helps producers spread their workload and minimize storage facilities.

Improved soil health—Since alfalfa is a perennial crop that lasts several years, only a portion of a grower's entire acreage needs to be seeded each spring. In many areas alfalfa can be seeded in the summer after canning crops or short season small grain crops, reducing the need to seed alfalfa into wet fields in early spring. Absence of tillage during the life of the stand reduces the breakdown of soil structure compared to annually tilled row crops.

Wildlife benefits—Alfalfa is an incredible home for many insects that are beneficial, and that prey on other insects, produce honey, and serve as a food source for birds. Alfalfa attracts many birds and small mammals to feed and nest because it provides ground cover for a long season.



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Alfalfa for profit

Alfalfa makes sense for your farm

- **Increased profit**
- **High quality forage**
- **Conservation sense**
- **Reduced risk**



Alfalfa makes sense 4 ways

1. Nutritional sense

Low fiber—Low fiber content of alfalfa maximizes a cow's daily dry matter intake while still meeting the animal's rumen fiber requirements. Each additional pound of intake translates directly into increased milk production.

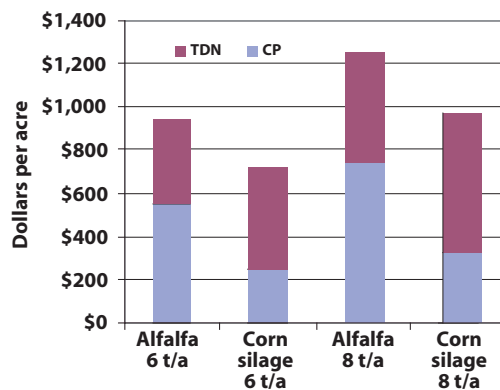
Protein—Protein is the largest supplemental expense on most dairy farms. Because alfalfa is high in protein, optimal use of alfalfa in the ration can reduce purchased supplement expenses.

High potassium—Dairy cattle need large quantities of potassium. Alfalfa supplies much of the requirement.

High calcium—Alfalfa provides more calcium per ton than any other forage or grain. High milk production requires large amounts of calcium.

More protein per acre—Alfalfa produces at least 3 times more protein per acre than other crops grown in U.S. dairy regions. Because protein remains the highest priced nutrient, alfalfa in the ration can significantly improve cash flow. Protein supplementation is necessary with high corn silage diets.

Value of alfalfa and corn silage



2. Economic sense

Increased profits from alfalfa—Top dairymen know alfalfa is their most profitable crop. The high yield of high quality forage results in the greatest milk or meat production per acre of any forage. Alfalfa is cost competitive with corn silage on a dry matter basis. Check any farm management records program and see that alfalfa has been the most profitable crop when compared to other commodity crops over a number of years, especially in the absence of subsidy payments.

Alfalfa benefits cropping systems—Alfalfa reduces nitrogen fertilizer expense for most succeeding crops and provides a 10% to 15% yield boost to corn following alfalfa. Alfalfa also helps break disease and insect cycles for other crops, thereby reducing yield losses and/or the need for insecticides. Corn and soybeans risk lower yields without alfalfa in the rotation.

Higher yields per acre—Improved varieties and better management tools continue to increase yields of alfalfa. In on-farm yield checks reported by the Wisconsin Forage Council Green Gold program, yields have averaged over 7 tons dry matter for about 10 years. In two of those years, individual farmers produced more than 10 tons of alfalfa per acre.



3. Reduced risk

Reduced risk—Alfalfa is a rugged crop. Improved winterhardiness and disease resistance of new varieties continue to enhance its ability to grow and survive difficult conditions. Alfalfa also offers the opportunity for several cuttings during the year—bad conditions for one period don't ruin the entire year's forage supply.

Better production under droughty conditions—With its deep root system, alfalfa will continue to grow and produce more yield under moisture stress than most other crops. Alfalfa begins to regrow once moisture conditions improve while most grain crops suffer irreversible yield loss.

A dependable crop for grazing—Grazing alfalfa or alfalfa-grass mixtures provides high quality forage well into the dry portion of hot summer months. New grazing-tolerant alfalfa varieties combined with improved winterhardiness will help extend persistence of alfalfa under grazing—reducing production costs over other less drought tolerant legumes and grasses.