Agricultural Research Service (ARS)

Funding Request

FY 2025 Request: $15 million

Appropriations: 2024 - TBD; 2023 - $1 million; 2021 - $1 million; 2020 - $1 million; 2019 - $1 million; 2018 - $1 million

Alfalfa is key to sustainable agricultural systems and is an economic engine in rural communities - its value for soil conservation, nitrogen fixation, energy savings, crop rotation, and wildlife habitat is unsurpassed. In terms of value, it is the nation's fourth most valuable field crop following corn, soybean, and wheat. It is the ultimate regenerative crop, increasing biodiversity, enriching soils, improving watersheds, and enhancing ecosystems.

However, alfalfa must offer a competitive value for farmers in order to provide these benefits and maintain or expand acreage base. Yields of other major cropping choices have significantly surpassed alfalfa due, in part, to the vast amount of public research dedicated to these other crops.

Appropriations Language

Located in the HOUSE *"AGRICULTURE, RURAL DEVELOPMENT, FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS BILL, 2023" ($1,000,000 included in FY2023 Omnibus Bill)*:

"Alfalfa Research.—The Committee recommendation includes an increase of $1,000,000 above the fiscal year 2022 level to support research focused on alfalfa improvement."

Alfalfa... 4th most valuable field crop! Ultimate regenerative crop!

Need for Research Parity

- USDA's research portfolio needs to be better balanced to provide needed research for the nation's 4th most valuable field crop. **The decline in acres can be partially attributed to the lack of public research.**
- Much public research funding is devoted to the "big 5" (wheat, corn, soybean, cotton, and rice). The value of all hay in 2022 was $23.8 billion; alfalfa alone was $12.9 billion. This compares to wheat at $14.5, cotton at $6.4, and rice at $3.1 (corn is $91.7 and soybean is $61.1).
- 2023 ARS data indicates ARS allocated $62.9 million (74 scientist years) to wheat, $50.3 million (80 scientist years) to corn, $49.7 million (78 scientist years) to cotton, $38.5 million (64 scientist years) to soybean, compared to just $12.4 million (18 scientist years) to alfalfa.

ARS Research Funding by Crop *(Source: ARS; 2023)*