Impact Statement 2010: Forage Yield Trials

**Project Type:** Research, extension

**Project Category:** Competitive Agricultural Systems in a Global Economy

**Stakeholders:** Dairy and other livestock producers and crop producers in New York as well as northern USA and Canada; Seed companies; Extension educators.

**Title:** Cornell Forage Yield Trial Results Guide Producers in Variety Selection

**Issue:** Hundreds of commercial varieties of forage crop species are available from seed companies. Yield data from New York field trials on varieties of forage crop species provide New York and Northeast producers the necessary information to select forage varieties that perform well. Forage yield data from other states do not necessarily predict performance in New York State. Forage yield data from company trials are limited in the breadth of varieties tested.

**Response:** The Cornell University Forage Yield Testing Program was begun in 1984 with alfalfa, at the request of producers that had attempted to develop and manage their own yield testing program. The program has expanded to test varieties and experimental populations (experimentals) of many forage crops including red clover, birdsfoot trefoil, and annual and perennial forage grasses. In January of each year, trial application forms are sent to seed companies by mail and also are available on the web. Each spring, trials are planted at two New York trial sites, and are managed and harvested for the seeding year through the next three production years. Trials are harvested from three to five times per year after the seeding year. Trial sites are or have been on producer’s farms, SUNY campuses (Cobleskill and Cornell), and Miner Institute. In 2010, the number of varieties and experimentals harvested was 157 for alfalfa, 16 for red clover, 5 for birdsfoot trefoil, and 109 for forage grasses. The data are summarized and widely distributed in the fall of each year. Data summaries are sent by mail and by e-mail to seed companies and Cornell Cooperative Extension educators, and are available on the Forage Project web site (http://plbrgen.cals.cornell.edu/cals/pbg/programs/departmental/forage/). Yield data are also available at the following web sites/publications:
- University of Wisconsin Alfalfa Cultivar Database [http://www.uwex.edu/ces/ag/alfalfa/](http://www.uwex.edu/ces/ag/alfalfa/);
- NAAIC [http://www.naaic.org/Resources/yields.html](http://www.naaic.org/Resources/yields.html);

**Impact:** The data from the Cornell University Forage Yield Testing Program will help New York farmers select forage varieties for replanting the 1.8 million acres of forage harvested in New York in 2009. The 4.76 million tons of forage produced in 2009 was fed to 619,000 milk cows and to other livestock. As plant breeders continue to release improved varieties of forage crops, producers will continue to need forage yield data from variety trials planted in New York State in order to make informed variety selection decisions.
**Funding Sources:** Hatch-CUAES, commodity industry group

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