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WASHINGTON, OCT. 28, 2015

USDA AWARDS MORE THAN $1 MILLION TO SUPPORT ALFALFA, SEED RESEARCH

THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE'S (USDA) NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE (NIFA) today announced more than $1 million in grants for research and extension to improve quality, sustainability, and resiliency of alfalfa, forage, and seed yields. "The collaborative research and extension work achieved by Alfalfa and Forage Research Program (AFRP) projects lends itself to real-world application by farmers," said Sonny Ramaswamy, NIFA director. "This research can have long-term positive impacts on the production of this important crop."

The Alfalfa and Forage Research Program (AFRP) supports integrated, collaborative research and technology transfer to improve the efficiency and sustainability of conventional and organic forage production systems. AFRP encourages projects that establish multi-disciplinary networks to address priority national or regional science needs of the alfalfa industry. By bringing together expertise from multiple organizations and states, these projects will have greater impact and will enhance the effectiveness of limited state, federal and industry resources.

Fiscal year 2015 grants that address these focus areas have been awarded to:

University of Arizona
Tucson, Arizona | **$206,000**

University of California
Davis, California | **$195,000**

University of Maryland
College Park, Maryland | **$215,000**

Mississippi State University
Mississippi State, Mississippi | **$213,333**

Cornell University
Ithaca, New York | **$203,213**

USDA Agricultural Research Service
Prosser, Washington | **$215,000**

Examples from this year's grants include a project from Mississippi State University that aims to build on recent successes in promoting alfalfa utility on farms, as well as evaluating microbial technologies that can improve alfalfa-grass baleage that will benefit farmers producing this forage. Another project from the University of Maryland involves investigation and extension research in three locations in divergent states that look into economically sustainable improvements for alfalfa resilience to the potato leafhopper pest. More information about these and other grants can be found here.

AFRP will support the development of improved alfalfa forage and seed production systems. Its focus areas include improving alfalfa forage and seed yield through better nutrient, water and/or pest management; improving persistence of alfalfa stands by lessening biotic or abiotic stresses; improving alfalfa forage and seed harvesting and storage systems to optimize economic returns; improving estimates of alfalfa forage quality as an animal feed to increase forage usage in animal feeds; and/or breeding to address biotic and abiotic stresses that impact forage yield and persistence and the production of seed for propagation. More information about AFRP can be found here on NIFA's website.

NIFA invests in and advances agricultural research, education, and extension and seeks to make transformative discoveries that solve societal challenges. To learn more about NIFA's impact on agricultural science, visit nifa.usda.gov/impacts or follow us on Twitter @usda_nifa, #NIFAimpacts.