

Alfalfa Forage System Management Strategies & Social Concepts for Expanding the Integration of Alfalfa into Southern Forage-Livestock Operations

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The South is an area often overlooked when considering increasing alfalfa acreage. Increased research and Extension efforts have determined there is growing interest among producers in the utilization and management of alfalfa in the South, however there is still much hesitation as producers try to determine how alfalfa might fit in their forage system. Data is needed to determine the optimum management strategies to maximize both forage and livestock performance and profitability. Applied evaluations of the use of alfalfa-grass systems for cut, graze, and dual purpose cut and graze systems are needed to decrease risk and provide guidance to potential alfalfa producers in the region. This project began in 2019 with establishment of alfalfa into bermudagrass in two locations (Tifton, GA and Headland, AL) and the development of an Alfalfa use survey to identify barriers to the adoption of alfalfa among stakeholders and create awareness on management for alfalfa in the South. In 2020 surveys were distributed, evaluated, and results utilized in development of Extension education products including online webinars, workshops, and digital materials. In field evaluations were conducted for two years (2020-2021) to evaluate varied harvest management strategies of alfalfa forage systems in the South to improve management practices and expand alfalfa utilization in the region. Final stages of in-lab and statistical analysis and development of upgraded economic tools for producers considering alfalfa are underway. In 2021 a manuscript was published with survey results.

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