

ALFALFA

SEED PRODUCTION

Description & Adaptation

Alfalfa is a long-lived, cool season, perennial legume. Its widely grown around the world and known for exceptional forage quality and excellent productivity. Western Canada is well adapted to the production of alfalfa seed, supplying export markets around the world. It requires minimal fertilizer and helps to improve soil fertility and increase organic matter.

Field Selection

Alfalfa is adapted to a wide range of soil conditions, but yields best in well drained soils. Starting with a clean field free of perennial weeds is very important to minimize weeds at harvest and earn top prices. Glyphosate applications in the years preceding alfalfa will help eliminate perennial weeds. Fields with shelter from the wind should be considered as this will benefit the bees during pollination.

Weed and Disease Control

Alfalfa's low seeding rate and wide row spacing offer little competition to weeds. However, there are herbicides registered for use in alfalfa. Alfalfa can be susceptible to leaf and stem diseases. Scout fields regularly to identify diseases and apply appropriate fungicide. Kochia, cleavers, Canada thistle and wild oats can be a problem in alfalfa fields. Insect pressure can be a challenge and most likely will need to be sprayed for.

Pollination

Leafcutter bees are necessary for optimum seed set in alfalfa. Many seed growers use contract beekeeping services to pollinate the crop.

Production Benefits

- Multiple crop years reduce workload during planting season
- Low fertilizer requirements
- Can be swathed or desiccated and harvested
- Improves soil fertility and increases organic matter
- Break-crop effect benefits annual crops in rotations
- Guaranteed minimum contract pricing with opportunity to capture market upside
- Excellent profitability track record



Overview

Seeding Rate	1 - 2 lbs/acre
Seeding Depth	Max ½ inch
Row Spacing	10 - 24 inches
Seed Yield (average)	250 - 600 lbs/ac
Seed Production Life	3+ years
Companion Crop	Wheat, flax, Clearfield canola
Soil pH	5.0 – 8.0
Fertility	Low fertilizer requirements
Swath/Desiccation Timing	September
Harvest Timing	Mid to late September
Seed Moisture	Dry is 10%

<https://brettyoung.ca/seed-production/alfalfa>

1-800-665-5015

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