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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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Agricultural Marketing Service
Agricultural Research Service
Commodity Stabilization Service
Foreign Agricultural Service
Forest Service
and
Federal Extension Service Cooperating

PROGRAM

33rd ANNUAL AGRICULTURAL OUTLOOK CONFERENCE

Washington, D. C.

Nov. Dec.
~~December 28-January 1, 1955~~

X TRENDS TOWARD PRODUCTION OF IMPROVED VARIETIES
OF GRASS AND LEGUME SEED

Forage grasses and legumes as hay, pasture and silage comprise half of the nation's food supply and the proportion is increasing. From about 14 million in 1940, alfalfa acreage has expanded to nearly 23 million. Many factors contributed to this increased planting but release of improved varieties, research on alfalfa seed production, and a sound program to provide ample supplies of foundation stock seed helped greatly to increase plantings on farms throughout the country.

After an improved variety is tested and released, two functions must be performed before it is of any value to producers: first, an adequate and dependable seed supply must be made available and second, the producer must be made aware of the advantages he can receive by replacing the variety being grown on his farm with the improved variety.

To accomplish the first objective, the National Foundation Seed Project was organized in 1949. The Foundation is guided by a 16-man advisory committee made up of representatives from the sponsoring agencies. Its membership is composed of 8 representatives from the agricultural experiment stations, 4 from the USDA, and 2 each from the International Crop Improvement Association and the American Seed Trade Association. At the present time there are 5 varieties in the project including: Atlantic, Buffalo, Narragansett, Vernal, and Ranger alfalfa; Dollard, Kenland and Pennscott red clover; Tift sudangrass; Climax lespedeza; and the 5-blend lines of Midland red clover. At the time the project began in 1949, the total certified seed produced from these varieties was 1,477,548 pounds as compared to 46,310,000 pounds in 1954.

The following table shows the annual production of certified seed of the small-seeded grasses and legumes 1942-1950, produced under the supervision of 43 State Crop Improvement Associations.

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Table - Annual Production of Certified Seed of the
Small-Seeded Grasses and Legumes-1942-1950

Year	Legumes (pounds)	Grasses (pounds)
1942*	3,359,729	7,809,454
1943*	5,174,161	5,647,434
1944*	3,718,570	8,057,929
1945*	8,470,219	9,176,720
1946*	7,840,605	9,686,492
1947*	8,691,995	13,606,937
1948*	8,801,539	13,336,378
1949*	12,331,737	15,224,703
1950	22,395,313	29,903,827

* Includes all classes of seed - Foundation, Registered, Certified.

Informing producers of the new and improved varieties of grasses and legumes, and in demonstrating their superiority over the varieties currently used is primarily the job of the 5,840 county and assistant county agricultural extension agents with the assistance of the Soil Conservation Service, Agricultural Conservation Program Service, Agricultural Research Service, Agricultural Marketing Service, and the Forest Service.

Though our economy is burdened now by surpluses of certain commodities, forage feeds are not now, nor are they likely to be, in surplus. Moreover, in recent years there have been acute shortages of forage. Trends toward production of improved varieties of grasses and legumes has shown a consistent increase and can do much in the future toward better soil conservation and more efficient food production.