# AltaSeeds

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**Forage Sorghum is a Versatile,**

**Economic Alternative to Corn Silage**

Hereford, TX – Dairy and cattle farms across the country are dealing with extensive feed shortages and skyrocketing forage commodity prices due to abandoned fields, reduced acreages, and lower yields of corn and alfalfa. The drought is underscoring the need for productive forage crops with lower water requirements and production costs. Independent studies have shown forage sorghum saves farmers an average of $200 per acre in total production costs compared to corn silage. The following chart details how the newest forage hybrids including the Brachytic Dwarf and Brown Midrib-6 characteristics stack up against corn silage.

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| **Selected Production Costs for Irrigated & Dryland Forage Sorghum and Corn Silage** | | | | |
|  | **Total Production Costs $/Acre** | | **Costs $/Ton** | |
| **State** | Sorghum1 | Corn2 | Sorghum | Corn |
| Texas High Plains (irr.) | 424 | 569 | 17.66 | 27.04 |
| California (irr.) | 665 | 904 | 27.70 | 30.13 |
| Pennsylvania | 402 | 662 | 26.80 | 36.77 |
| **Average** | **497** | **712** | **24.05** | **31.31** |
| 1 – Brachytic Dwarf, BMR-6 Hybrid – 7 lbs seed/acre, 2 – Traited Corn Hybrid – 34,000 seed/acre | | | | |
| 2009 Texas AgriLife Extension Service, University of California Cooperative Extension, Penn State Cooperative Extension Service | | | | |

“Forage sorghum with the Brachytic Dwarf and BMR-6 combination can produce high yield and feed value equal to corn with a variety of uses including hay, silage and grazing,” says Barry Lubbers, U.S. sales manager for Alta Seeds. “Sorghum’s water use efficiency is one of its greatest strengths. Sorghum is a hardy, drought tolerant plant that can perform with up to 40 percent less water than corn. According to research published by Texas AgriLife Extension in 2001, BMR-6 forage sorghums will yield 1.75 tons of biomass per one inch of water applied, while corn will produce less than one ton per inch of water applied. For irrigated producers, greater water-use efficiency means pumping less water, reducing the cost per acre of the forage produced.”

According to Mark Marsalis, an extension agronomy specialist at New Mexico State University, forage sorghum is often a viable alternative to corn silage, especially in areas where rainfall or irrigation is limited. Marsalis released a recent paper\* stating the case for more growers to consider planting forage sorghum. “Input costs can be considerably less with forage sorghum than corn,” Marsalis says. “Silage growers can potentially save on fertilizer expenses when growing forage sorghum. Excellent yields (up to 30 tons/acre with conventional types) have been obtained with 200 lb/ac or less or nitrogen, which is less than what is commonly put on corn for the same yield goal.” Sorghum seed costs approximately $15 per acre compared to corn in the $100 per acre range, including traits.

“Silage producers must face the challenge of growing adequate feed supplies with considerably less inputs than in the past,” Marsalis says. “The drought and heat tolerance of forage sorghum combined with the ability to resume growth after drought makes it an ideal candidate for silage systems in dry climates facing water supply concerns.” His research has shown that forage sorghum can produce comparable or better yields than corn when irrigation water becomes limiting or when growing conditions are less than ideal.

The Alta Seeds product line-up offers several forage options for farmers, ranchers and dairies seeking an alternative to corn silage. “Whether it’s an irrigated or dryland farming operation, sorghum’s adaptive nature, high production efficiency, and versatility make it a valuable tool and the best choice for forage producers demanding a reliable crop that produces high quality feed,” says Lubbers.

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M.A. Marsalis, Extension Agronomist, New Mexico State University, Agricultural Science Center at Clovis, 2346 SR 288, Clovis, NM 88101; In: Proceedings, 2011 Western Alfalfa & Forage Conference, Las Vegas, NV, 11-13 December, 2011. UC Cooperative Extension, Plant Sciences Department, University of California, Davis, CA 95616. <http://alfalfa.ucdavis.edu/+symposium/2011/files/talks/11WAS-10_Marsalis_SorghumSilage.pdf>

**About Alta Seeds**

Alta Seeds is a brand of Advanta US, an operating unit of Advanta. Advanta is an India-based global seed business that combines proprietary crop genetics and plant breeding capabilities with biotechnology to produce high quality seed products and solutions for its customers around the world. Advanta is a member of the UPL group of companies. For more information visit: [www.AltaSeeds.com](http://www.AltaSeeds.com)