

**EXPERIENCES WITH SEED PRODUCTION
FROM FLORIDA FORAGES**

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Most operations like ours are family run companies. In our business, we operate a share-harvest program. Usually, seed is harvested on a 50/50 share basis, with the seed company providing all harvesting, hauling, drying and processing. It also provides for the storage and sale of the product. Seed production offers an opportunity for anyone

with a little acreage to either provide themselves with more income for their operation, or to cut costs by creating a source of seed for future improvements.

Legume seed production has been something I have been interested in for many years. C.M. Payne & Son has worked with the extension service, various experiment stations (IFAS), and others, regarding the seed varieties of *Aeschynomene americana*, Common hairy indigo, *Desmodium heterocarpon* and Phasey bean. Our purpose is to try and find legumes that will grow in Florida, and that will provide forage for livestock and wildlife. Most of you know about *Aeschynomene*, and many of you may have tried it or have it in your present program. Those of you who are still using it, know that *Aeschynomene* is our best all-around legume. It has a long season of productive growth in late summer and fall, which provides additional protein at a time when our grasses lose their nutritional value. We also know that *Aeschynomene* needs to be shook up every so often to revitalize the stand. We can do this by burning or renovating in the Spring on a regular basis. Grazing this crop prior to seed production is possible; however, be aware that you must pull the cattle in September so that a full bloom and resultant seed crop are possible. Commercial seed production is feasible under many different management schemes.

Indigo, alyceclover and the other legumes that have been around for a long time will fill certain needs: Indigo will grow on higher and dryer soil, alyceclover will make excellent high quality hay, and in certain special cases, you may be able to get *Desmodium heterocarpon* to perform very well. Crops like Japanese millet, may only pay for renovation costs after sodding operations. In addition, many of these legumes will enhance your soil with organic nitrogen. In the majority of cases, we find that the value of your seed crop will fertilize two acres for each acre harvested.

New crops or variations of existing crops appear from time to time, and we try most of them. However, I think that when you try them, plant one or maybe two at a time to test new forages on your place. Locate your test block in an area you can control, and use a relatively small amount of acreage at first. Observe the test block for two

to three years before you commit to any full-scale involvement with any particular variety. Study the information published by IFAS carefully; it could save a lot of time and trouble.

Seed production and seed costs are reflected by production quantities and the demand of the particular product in question. If a particular seed becomes desirable, for whatever reason, demand pushes the price of that variety up. In most cases, increased production results, and prices will come down. As I have mentioned earlier, you can insulate yourself from this by starting a seed production program, producing those varieties that are useful to you and maybe generate extra revenue by selling your surplus.