

# Forage is good for the environment!



## Forages help hold soil in place.

- Forages grow deep root systems underground that keep soil from washing away, or eroding.
- Forages can grow close together with lots of leaves. This makes a green 'blanket' that further protects the soil.
- Many grass and legume forages come back every year without planting new seeds (perennial crop versus an annual crop like corn or soybeans). So there are fewer times when the soil is plowed up and exposed to rain and wind that can remove the top layer of soil.
- Forage crops can be grown in areas, such as steep hillsides, to reduce soil loss.



rich organic soil



nodules make nitrogen

## Forages improve soil health.

- The deep roots increase the amount of living material (organic matter) in the soil, giving it more nutrients for future crops and making it better able to hold water.
- The deep roots also help the soil soak up rain; this decreases the amount of rain that runs off and means there's more rainwater to feed the crops.
- Legume forages add nitrogen to the soil for future crops, thereby reducing the need for chemical fertilizers.

## Forages help protect well water, lakes, and streams.

- Because they cover the ground year-round, forage crops help prevent rainwater from washing nutrients into our lakes and streams where they can upset the natural balance by causing too many plants, like algae, to grow.
- Forages can utilize nutrients that would otherwise seep down into our well water where we don't want them.



# Nutrient Recycling on Dairy Farms



Crop **nutrients** harvested  
and fed to cows.



Cows put **nutrients** into  
milk that we  
drink!



We all need  
**nutrients**:  
crops, cows,  
and people.

Manure spread  
on field to give back  
**nutrients** to the next crop.



Cows make manure  
with **nutrients** they don't use.