

alfalfa seed
sample costs
and
production



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Agricultural Extension Service
University of California
Imperial County
Court House, El Centro

Cost Data Sheet No. 2

UC Cooperative Extension

ALFALFA SEED--SAMPLE PRODUCTION COSTS

Mechanical operations at custom rates. Hand labor at \$1.90 per hour (\$1.50 plus Social Security, unemployment insurance, and fringe benefits).

Yield of 300 lbs. of clean seed in 90 days on an established alfalfa stand.

OPERATION	Custom	MATERIALS		HAND LABCR		SAMPLE COSTS
	Rate	Type	Cost	Hours	Dollars	Per Acre
SEED PRODUCTION COSTS						
Irrigate 4x		water 2 ac. ft	4.00	1.1	4.00	8.00
Insect Control 5x	2.00	insecticide	15.00			25.00
Bees		3 colonies	12.00			12.00
Defoliation	2.00		5.00			7.00
Combining	8.00					8.00
Hauling	2.00/ton					.35
Cleaning seed	3.50					3.50
TOTAL SEED PRODUCTION COSTS						\$ 63.85
Land rent						25.00
Cash overhead 15% of labor and materials						13.33
TOTAL ALL COSTS						\$ 102.18

Cost per pound = 34.06¢

STARTING DATES

Best possibilities for a good seed crop occur when the last hay is cut between May 1 and May 15. By June 1 to 15 the field is in full bloom. Seed crops made at this time of the year avoid the Lygus, stink-bug and alfalfa seed chalcid infestations which build up from early spring till late fall when the weather breaks. Late crops maturing in August and September may be damaged by rain.

Earlier seed crops may not bloom properly due to cold weather and seed "set" may be light or delayed.

VARIETIES

Sonora, Moapa, and African are usually grown in Imperial County. Sonora and Moapa are recommended due to their resistance to the spotted alfalfa aphid.

IRRIGATION

Allow the plants to become slightly stressed for water up until the bloom period to prevent rank growth after bloom begins; the plants should be irrigated no more frequently than necessary to prevent wilting and to help produce well filled seed pods. The flowers of a slightly stressed plant contain higher concentrations of nectar and are more attractive to bees.

POLLINATION

"Bees" are the only pollinators of any value on alfalfa. In Imperial County it is necessary to rely on honeybees because of a lack of sufficient solitary pollen collecting bees. Usually, at least 3 colonies of bees per acre are used in the higher yielding fields.

PEST CONTROL

Early pest control for Lygus is necessary and much more important than later in the season.

Control for the alfalfa seed chalcid has not proven successful and none is recommended.

HARVESTING

Most seed alfalfa is defoliated using a dinitro general spray applied by airplane at from 1 to 3 pints in 8 to 12 gallons of diesel oil per acre.

YIELD

The county average is around 300 lbs. of clean seed per acre. Some growers will produce 600-800 lbs. of clean seed.

Prepared by
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