GROWING SWEET CORN IN THE WESTERN VALLEYS OF RIVERSIDE COUNTY

1955

Sweet corn is fairly well adapted to Western Riverside County. Yields of 250 to 275 five-dozen crates per acre are not unusual, but are well above average. Although yield is important for reducing the per-crate cost, at least equally important is production when demand is good. Since Western Riverside County rarely produces "early" corn, growers often plant for harvest in late September, October or early November.

SOILS: Because corn is shallow and coarse rooted it is easiest to grow and to maintain adequate soil moisture on Sandy loam or finer textured soils. By increasing irrigation frequency corn can be produced on sandy soils. Alkali soils should be avoided.

PLANTING:

Varieties: The most commonly planted varieties are strains of Golden Cross Bantam (i.e. T-Strain); Ioana and Variety 870 are also planted.

Time: Corn planted in warm weather for harvest in warm weather is ready in 90 days. A July 20 planting, for example, can be picked about October 20 to 30. A risky but occasional practice is to plant April 1 for "early" market picking. Also risky but occasionally done is planting after August 1 for late pick. Early and late plantings take 100 to 110 days to maturity.

Method: Corn may be planted "flat" to pre-irrigated land 1½ to 2½ inches deep (to moisture). Another highly successful method is to plant at the bottom of lister furrows which are used for pre-irrigation and for one or two crop irrigations before re-furrowing in the middles. Row spacings vary from 32 to 40 inches with plants in the row spaced 8 to 9 inches apart. Wider row or in-row spacings tend to produce larger ears (i.e. 4-dozen ear crates). Semi-precision planting often avoids high thinning costs.

FERTILIZERS: Where corn follows grain or other non-leguminous crops, 160 pounds of actual nitrogen may be needed per acre for maximum production. Half to two-thirds of this amount may be needed after alfalfa. Phosphate is needed on some Riverside County soils. If in doubt, try phosphate on a few rows.

IRRIGATION: On sandy loam soils, irrigation every ten days is usually sufficient. On sandy soils irrigation may be necessary every eight days or oftener. Depending on efficiency of irrigation layout, 2½ to 3 acre feet of water per acre is often used.

PEST CONTROL: Earworm is the most damaging insect. For summer produced corn - when the infestation may be severe - the worm is controlled by injecting the ears at tasselling with 1% DDT in mineral oil with an eye dropper or paint spray gun - or 5% DDT dust applied with a stencil brush. Some late fall produced corn can often be satisfactorily treated with a special multiple nozzle boom, applying the insecticide three or four times during the tasselling period. Early planted corn should be treated with Lindane just before planting, for wireworm control.

HARVESTING AND MARKETING: Corn should be iced after picking if it is to be shipped to the Los Angeles market. A few growers on limited acreage have had success with producing corn for roadside sale, wherein the corn is picked shortly before or when the customer arrives.

WHAT DOES IT COST TO GROW SWEET CORN IN THE WESTERN VALLEYS OF RIVERSIDE COUNTY

Based on a Yield of 250 five-dozen (approx. 50#) crates per acre. (A Good Yield)

ITEMS	SAMPLE COSTS		YOUR COSTS	
	Per Acre	Per Crate	Per Acre	Per Crate
Land Preparation and Planting				
Plow 1x (or chisel)	$ 5.00			
Disc 2x	3.00			
Furrow for pre-irrigation	1.50			
Pre-irrigate (labor only)	1.25			
Plant (2 men, light tractor)	2.00			
TOTAL	$ 12.75	$ .05		
Cultural Labor and Field Power				
Cultivate and/or Furrow 3x	$ 4.50			
Side-dress fertilizer 1x	1.50			
Hoe and thin 1x (not always necessary)	8.00			
Earworm control (machine) 3x	4.50			
Irrigation Labor 10x at 1.00	10.00			
TOTAL	$ 28.50	$ .11		
Materials				
Irrigation water-3 acre ft. @ $13.00	39.00			
Fertilizer 160 lbs. N	24.00			
Seed-12 lbs. at 40¢	4.80			
Insecticide (where machine applied)	30.00			
TOTAL MATERIALS	$ 97.80	$ .39		
Cash Overhead				
General Expense at 5% of above	$ 6.95			
Taxes	6.00			
Insurance (Comp. and Miscellaneous)	1.80			
Miscellaneous costs	2.00			
TOTAL CASH OVERHEAD	$ 16.75	$ .07		
TOTAL GROWING COST EXCEPT RENT	$155.80	$ .62		
Rent (Estimate your own) Example: 1/2-$50.00 minus taxes to corn	$ 22.00	$ .09		
TOTAL PRE-HARVEST COSTS	$177.80	$ .71		
Harvest and Process				
Pick, Hand-pack at 75¢ per crate (includes ice)	. . .	$ .75		
Crates (re-used) 10¢	. . .	$ .10		
TOTAL HARVEST	$212.50	$ .85		
TOTAL ALL COSTS	$390.30	$ 1.56		

Note: Freight to Los Angeles approximately 12½¢ per crate including unload. Brokerage for marketing usually 15% of market price.

Note: The above SAMPLE COSTS are at the contract rates and are in some cases higher than efficient owner operator costs. To estimate YOUR COSTS, use the column at the right of the page.

Data compiled and tabulated by Otis A. Harvey, Farm Advisor; University of California Agricultural Extension Service, Room 7, Post Office Building, Riverside, California.