

WHEAT COSTS & GENERAL HINTS ON PRODUCTION

By Douglas J. Munier, Farm Advisor

Soil Requirements

Wheat may be grown on most Kern County soils. It is not as tolerant as barley to alkali but slightly more so than grain sorghum. Wheat is best adapted to fertile medium textured soils that are slowly but completely drained. The silt and clay loams are preferred, but wheat can be grown successfully on either clay or fine sandy soils.

Varieties

Each variety has characteristics that should be considered before a choice is made. Check with the Farm Advisor's Office for your individual case. It is best to plant certified seed to insure purity, high germination, and freedom from weed seeds. There are new varieties being treated currently that may supersede the present varieties.

Land Preparation and Planting

A good firm seedbed is preferred. If possible pre-irrigate so that ample moisture will be available during seed germination and tillering stage. A grain drill is recommended because of the depth control of seed placement. If seed is broadcast and disked or harrowed in, extreme care must be taken not to get the seed too deep.

Planting Rate

For irrigated, November and early December plantings by drill, 80 to 90 pounds per acre are sufficient. Late December and January plantings by drill, 90 to 120 pounds per acre should be used. If broadcasting seed, add about 20 percent to the drilled amount. Under dry land conditions, about one-half of the above rates should be used.

Planting Time

Optimum planting time is November 15 to December 15. Earlier planting dates are subject to frost and yellow dwarf virus disease. Later plantings beyond January 20 are reduced in yield because of reduced tillering and hot weather late in the growing season.

Planting Depth

Planting depth will vary depending on soil moisture but wheat should not be planted deeper than 1½ inches. Reduced emergence will occur at depths greater than 1½ inches.

Fertilizer

Most wheat crops will respond to nitrogen applications unless a high residual exists from a previous crop. Fertilization depends upon the soil's capability to produce and the amount of water available. With good soil potential and ample water, 125 to 175 pounds of nitrogen should be used. With less productive soil, reduce the rate accordingly. If water is short also reduce the rate of fertilizer.

Irrigation

For maximum yields wheat must be grown without water stress. Depending on the soil, the general weather, and the amount of precipitation, wheat may be watered 2 to 6 times. The most yield will be lost if wheat is water stressed while the grain is in the flower and milk stages.

Harvest

Harvest usually begins about the first of June. Prolonged delay of harvesting certain varieties will result in shattering and yield loss, especially if located in a windy location.

1986 SAMPLE COSTS TO PRODUCE WHEAT IN KERN COUNTY

The following costs are based on very competitive custom farming rates. An individual grower's costs may be lower or higher, depending on the cost of his equipment and the degree of utilization. In most cases, a grower could do his own operations in a more timely manner than a custom operator who must satisfy many customers. Manual labor costs are calculated at \$5.50 per hour including all benefits.

	<u>Sample Costs/Acre</u>	<u>My Costs</u>
<u>Preharvest Cash Costs:</u>		
Disk - 1 time stubble (\$17) and 1 time finish (\$8)	\$ 25.00	
Fertilizer - 170 lbs. N @ 20¢/lb, \$3.00 applied	37.00	
Plant - 100 lbs. seed @ \$14.00 cwt., \$8.00 drilling	22.00	
Irrigate- 4 times @ 4 in./irr., \$30./acre-ft., 2.0 hrs. labor	51.00	
Herbicide	10.00	
Miscellaneous office & bookkeeping - 3% total cash costs	5.00	
Interest on operating capital - @ 15% for 5 months	9.00	
TOTAL PREHARVEST CASH COSTS	159.00	
<u>Harvest Costs:</u>		
Custom harvest - \$9.00/acre plus 33¢ cwt., 6,000 lbs./acre	29.00	
<u>Land Costs:</u>		
Rent - including taxes	125.00	
<u>Depreciation and Interest</u> (included in above costs)	-	
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TOTAL COST OF PRODUCTION (\$104/ton @ 6,000 lbs./acre)	313.00	