

SAMPLE COSTS
AND
LOCAL PRACTICES
FOR
GROWING LETTUCE
IN
VENTURA COUNTY

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YIELD

Anything over 200 crates (four to five dozen heads weighing 80 pounds) is a good yield. Yields over 300 crates are exceptional. Cardboard cartons hold a half crate.

WHEN TO PLANT AND HARVEST

Most Ventura County lettuce is harvested in November and December and in March through May when production in both Salinas and Imperial Valleys is low. Fall lettuce is planted immediately after Fordhook and lima beans are harvested in late August and September. Spring lettuce is planted in November and December. Near the coast, lettuce can be planted and harvested any time. Lettuce harvested in January and February usually has small size heads.

COST FIGURES

Cost figures were developed by conferring with shippers and growers familiar with local practices. This set of figures should be considered as a sample. Your costs will not be exactly the same. Where you know your costs will differ, substitute your own figures to develop your own estimate.

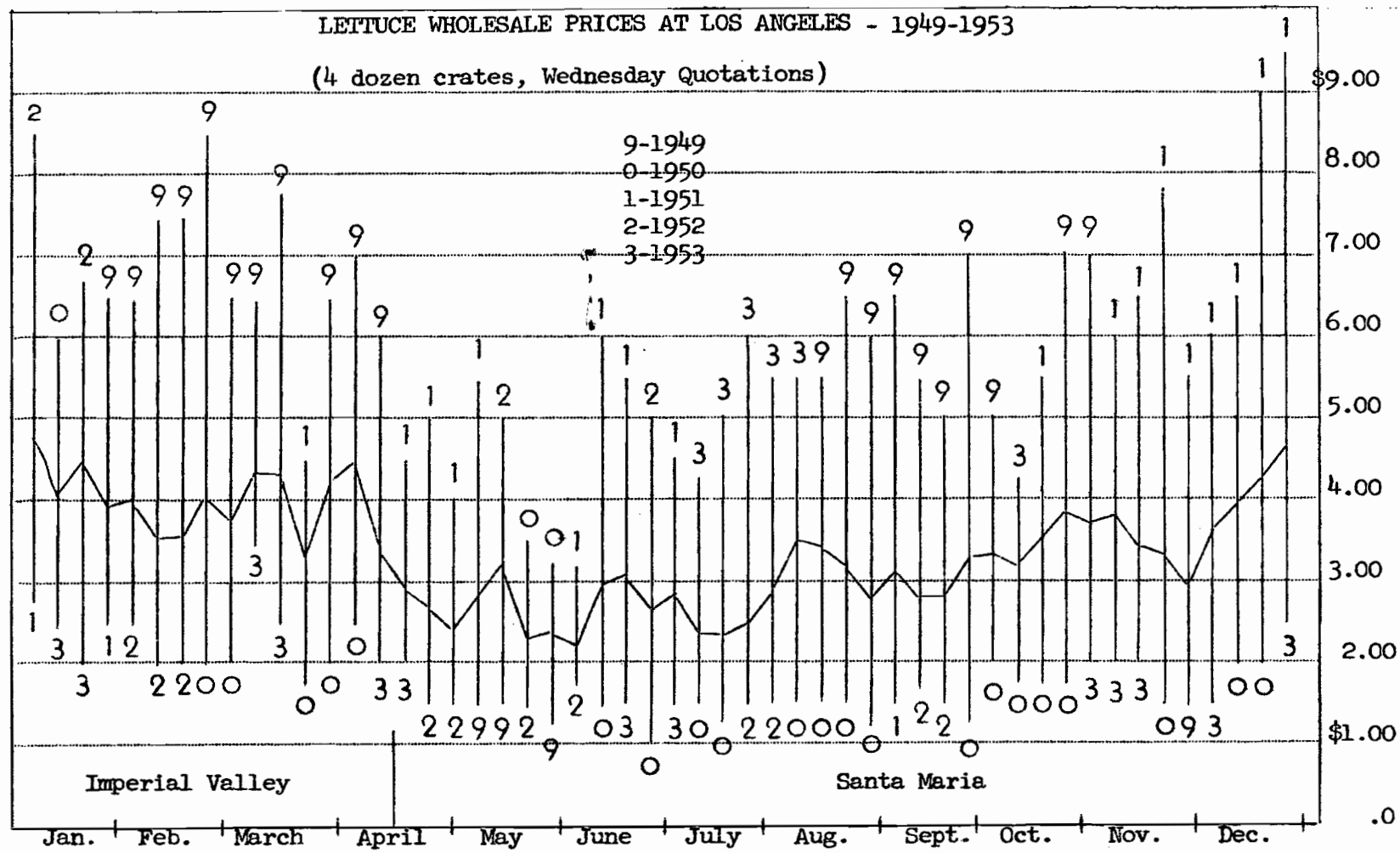
For operations involving machinery, for rent, and for water, figures used are to cover all overhead charges, such as interest on investment, taxes, upkeep, and depreciation.

"General and Miscellaneous" should include charges for interest on operating capital, supervision not charged above, and such business and administrative costs as accountant fees, your own transportation, telephone, etc.

COST OF PRODUCING LETTUCE
 (Based on yield of 200 crates,
 4-5 doz./crate, 80 lbs./crate)

Items	per Acre	per Crate
Labor, power and equipment		
Plow, 1 x	\$4.00	
Disk and harrow, 1 x	1.50	
Land plane, 3 x	3.00	
Springtooth, 1 x	1.00	
Furrow, 1 x	1.40	
Roll or shape beds	1.40	
Plant and fertilize	3.00	
Irrigate, 3 x	8.00	
Thinning, 1 x	18.00	
Hoeing, 1 x	9.00	
Fertilize, 1 x	2.50	
Cultivate and furrow out, 3 x	6.00	
Total	58.80	
Contract Work		
Spray or dust, 3 x	22.00	
Materials		
Water $1\frac{1}{2}$ acre feet at \$6.00	9.00	
Seed 1 $1/3$ pounds	7.00	
Fertilizer	29.00	
Total	45.00	
Other Costs		
Land rent, $1/2$ year	50.00	
Compensation insurance	1.50	
General expense and misc.	7.00	
Total	58.50	
Total Pre-harvest costs	\$184.30	\$.92
Harvest and pack at \$1.75/crate	350.00	1.75
Total all costs	\$534.30	\$2.67

Vertical lines indicate range between highest and lowest quotations. Numbers at ends of vertical lines indicate latest year in which this quotation occurred. Broken horizontal line indicates average Wednesday quotations for 5 years - 1949-1953.



PRICES

Supply and demand rule. The price you get depends on the market when your crop is harvested. Once the crop is established, the harvest date cannot be shifted more than a few days and the harvested product cannot be stored.

PRICE/CRATE TO GROWER
(4-5 doz., 80 lbs.)

	1949-51		
California Lettuce	3 yr. Av.	1952	1953
Winter, Jan. Feb. Mar.	\$3.42	\$3.50	\$2.75
Spring, Apr. May, June	3.02	3.05	2.65
Summer, July, Aug. Sept.	2.85	2.90	3.50
Fall, Oct., Nov., Dec.	3.53	3.10	3.30

VARIETIES

Great Lakes is the most common variety. Some Imperial varieties are grown for early spring production. Variety is usually determined by shippers.

THE LAND

Most of our irrigated soils are suitable for lettuce. Extremes of sand or clay are objectionable. Uniformity of soil texture and evenness of grade are necessary for uniform maturity. Harvest costs are high if maturity is not uniform.

PLANTING, CULTIVATION, AND WEED CONTROL

Lettuce is usually planted in two rows, 14 inches apart, on beds spaced on 40 inch centers. Plant from one to one and a half pounds of seed per acre. Thin to 12 to 14 inches. Cultivate only deep enough and frequently enough to control weeds and keep furrows open for irrigation.

FERTILIZER

Drilling nitrogen and phosphorus directly under seed at planting time has become an established practice. Fifty to eighty pounds per acre of P_2O_5 and 15 to 80 pounds per acre of nitrogen are usual rates. Accuracy of placement is especially important because if there are spots where the fertilizer band is misplaced to the side by more than an inch or two, these spots will be too late for harvest with the rest of the field. Sixty to one hundred pounds of nitrogen side dressed, injected, or applied in irrigation water immediately after thinning brings the total nitrogen up to around 120 pounds per acre.

IRRIGATION

Most lettuce is germinated by irrigation. In dry, warm weather you may have to hold water in the furrows for more than 24 hours. Two irrigations between thinning and harvesting, along with the normal rainfall, will usually be enough. In dry seasons extra irrigations may be needed. Lettuce must be kept growing rapidly; so watch plants closely whenever weather is dry and warm.

DISEASE AND PEST CONTROL

Three sprayings or dustings using a combination of DDT and Parathion to control worms and aphids are usually adequate. A dust or spray just before thinning is considered important to prevent movement of pests from thinned plants to the crop. Downy mildew, lettuce drop, botrytis, and tip burn are diseases that sometimes cause losses; but control of them is seldom practical.

Lettuce mosaic is an aphid-carried and seed-borne virus disease that causes serious losses some seasons. Mosaic-free seed will control mosaic. Mosaic-controlled seed is effective only if the amount of mosaic in the seed is zero. If a tenth of one per cent of the seeds carry mosaic, there will be over 300 mosaic plants from each pound planted. Each mosaic plant serves as a source of infection.

HARVESTING AND MARKETING

Shippers usually handle harvesting and make a standard charge to growers. Most lettuce is marketed through a small number of shippers who contract with growers for the crop.