

ALFALFA SEED
SAMPLE COSTS
AND
PRODUCTION



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

Cost Data Sheet No. 2

UC Cooperative Extension

ALFALFA SEED--PROJECTED PRODUCTION COSTS

Mechanical operations at custom rates. Labor at \$3.50 per hour (\$3.00 plus Social Security, unemployment, and fringe benefits).

Typical yield of 300 pounds of clean seed in 90 days on an established alfalfa stand.

OPERATIONS	Custom Rate	MATERIALS		HAND LABOR		SAMPLE COSTS Per Acre
		Type	Cost	Hours	Dollars	
SEED PRODUCTION COSTS						
Irrigate 4x		Water 2 ac ft	7.00	1.86	6.51	\$13.51
Insect Control 5x	3.00	Insecticides	20.00			35.00
Bees	10.00	3 colonies	30.00			30.00 ^{a/}
Defoliation	3.50		9.00			12.50
TOTAL PREHARVEST COSTS						\$91.01
Combining	20.00					20.00
Hauling	5.00/ton					.75
Cleaning seed	3.00/cwt plus cost of bags					9.00
TOTAL HARVEST COSTS						\$29.75
Land Rent						110.00
Cash Overhead - 15% of all except harvest costs						31.61
TOTAL ALL COSTS						\$262.37

<u>Yield per acre</u>	<u>Cost per pound</u>
200	\$ 1.31185
300	87.46¢
400	65.59¢
500	52.47¢
600	43.73¢
700	37.48¢

^{a/}This is for twenty days at 50¢ per day per colony. For each extra colony-day add 50¢.

GENERAL INFORMATION: The average yield, acreage and value for non-certified alfalfa seed during the last five years are given below.

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>ACRES</u>	<u>YIELD/ACRE</u> (lbs)	<u>VALUE/POUND</u>
1970	12,400	255	.367¢
1971	9,000	191	.345¢
1972	3,000	285	.42¢
1973	8,600	262	\$1.06
1974	15,000	373	.98¢

STARTING DATES: The 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 to 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

A number of non-dormant varieties are grown in Imperial County. Varieties that are resistant to the spotted alfalfa aphid, such as U.C. Salton, El Unico and Mesa Sirsa, are recommended.

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.

PEST CONTROL

Early season control of Lygus is necessary and more important than later in the season. Stink bugs can cause damage to maturing seed and should be controlled. See the Pest Control Recommendations for Imperial County Field Crops for more

information on pests and control.

POLLINATION

"Bees" are the only pollinators of any value on alfalfa. In Imperial County it is necessary to rely on honey bees 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.

Five or more colonies are suggested on seed fields with both high plant and flower populations.

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.

Prepared by
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