

alfalfa seed  
sample costs  
and  
production



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

---

Cost Data Sheet No. 2

ALFALFA SEED--SAMPLE PRODUCTION COSTS

Mechanical operations at custom rates. Labor at \$2.15 per hour (\$1.90 plus Social Security, unemployment insurance, and fringe benefits).

Yield of 310 pounds of clean seed in 90 days on an established alfalfa stand.

OPERATION	Rate	MATERIALS		HAND LABOR		SAMPLE COSTS
		Type	Cost	Hours	Dollars	Per Acre
<b>SEED PRODUCTION COSTS</b>						
Irrigate 4x		water 2 ac. ft.	4.60	1.86	4.00	\$ 8.60
Insect control 4x	2.25	insecticides	14.00			23.00
Bees		3 colonies	15.00			15.00
Defoliation	2.00		5.00			7.00
Combining	9.00					9.00
Hauling	3.00/ton					.45
Cleaning seed	2.50/cwt					7.50
<b>TOTAL SEED PRODUCTION COSTS</b>						<b>\$ 70.55</b>
Land rent						35.00
Cash overhead 15% of labor and materials						15.83
<b>TOTAL ALL COSTS</b>						<b>\$ 121.38</b>

Cost per pound = 39.15¢

GENERAL INFORMATION

The average yields for alfalfa seed during the last five years have ranged from 222 to 367 pounds per acre with average selling prices ranging from 28.5¢ to 44.0¢ per pound. Some growers will produce 600-800 pounds of clean seed.

## 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 until 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

Sonora, Moapa, Mesa Sirsa, and African are usually grown in Imperial County. Varieties that are resistant to the spotted alfalfa aphid, such as Sonora and Moapa, 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 pest control for Lygus is necessary and much more important than later in the season. See the Pest Control Recommendations for Imperial County Field Crops for more specific information on pests and control.

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

## 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.

## 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  
Imperial County  
Agricultural Extension Service  
Staff  
Revised September 1970

-----  
Co-operative Extension work in Agriculture and Home Economics, College of Agriculture, University of California, and United States Department of Agriculture co-operating. Distributed in furtherance of the Acts of Congress of May 8, and June 30, 1914. George B. Alcorn, Director, California Agricultural Extension Service.