Wine Grapes — Vine to Winery

SAMPLE COSTS OF FOUR WINE GRAPE HANDLING METHODS

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harvesting of wine grapes, picking and hauling to the winery is the largest cost group and exceeds all cultural operations in total cost. It is undergoing some changes in order to reduce costs and improve the quality of the product. A shift is in progress from picking and hauling in wooden lug boxes to using metal picking containers and hauling from vineyard to wineries in gondola trailers and trucks.

Word is out that wineries will receive grapes only in bulk in gondolas - no more boxes. Growers still using lug boxes in the vineyard will need to dump them into a highway gondola truck in or alongside the vineyard.

A newer method is to have picking done in aluminum boxes or pans that are emptied directly into larger bulk tubs or trailers that are emptied into a larger highway gondola truck or are pulled directly to a local winery.

In order to be helpful to growers facing a change in harvesting and hauling methods, we present herewith some sample investment and operating costs for four methods upon which information and costs were obtained in 1958 and 1959. Several factors should be considered in selecting a method for the future, the most important being the size in total tons that is to be handled in a harvesting season of around 20 days - more or less.

The costs shown in the table on the center pages of this pamphlet are not actual as for any individual but are calculated for a specific tonnage and at uniform or suitable piece and hourly rates for the jobs and tractors and trucks used. Here are brief descriptions of the four methods:

A - Lug Boxes - Pickers pick in lug boxes which they carry to avenues. These filled boxes are hauled by farm truck or platform trailer and tractor to a place where they can be emptied by hand into a contract gon-

dola truck when it comes. No special equipment is needed and this method is adapted to any size of business. For a large vineyard a mechanical loader is usually used and the truck may be driven through the avenues and boxes emptied as they go without hauling out. The hand method will probably be used in the smaller vineyards without special equipment, so we show sample costs for 100 tons.

B - 4-Ton Trailers - Pickers dump picking containers directly into this four-wheeled gondola trailer. It is pulled down a vineyard row by a tractor with pickers working on both sides. When filled, the trailer is drawn directly to a winery by a pickup. Sample costs are shown for 200 tons. Crew is 8 to 12 pickers, a supervisor who also drives the tractor and someone who takes the loaded trailer to the winery with a pickup.

C - 7-Ton Trailers - This is similar to the above in method except three trailers are needed and a tracklayer to draw the larger trailer in the vineyard. A dolly is placed under the front end while the trailer is filled. A highway truck tractor takes it to the winery. About 600 tons is considered economical for this method and used to show sample costs.

D - 1-Ton Trailers - Several picker crews empty grapes into small gondola trailers that can be drawn down rows by tractors, usually two at a time. When filled, these are taken to a convenient place where a fork lift is used to pick up the tubs and empty them into a large highway gondola trailer. This is well suited to a large vineyard with 1,000 tons or more and a long haul to a winery.

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Method	A. Lug Boxes to Contract Hauler		B. 4-Ton Trailers to Winery		C. 7-Ton Trailers to Winery		D. 1-Ton Trailers to Contract Hauler	
Season's tonnage used in figuring costs	100 tons		200 tons		600 tons		1200 tons	
Investment in special equipment:								
Lug boxes at $1, picking boxes $4	400 lugs	$400	12	$ 48	20	$ 80	40	$ 160
Gondola trailers used in vineyard			2	2400	3	4500	12	7200
Other special equipment					Truck Tr.	2500	Fork Lift	2700
Tractor, charged hourly basis *			Tractor				5 Tractors	
Truck or pickup	Truck	- - -	Pickup		Track Tractor--		Pickup	---
Interest at 6% on 1/2 of cost		$ 24		$ 73		$ 212		$ 302
Total investment for harvesting only		$400		$2448		$7080		$10,060
Depreciation		$ 40		$ 125		$ 558		$ 676
Annual operating costs	Total	Per T.	Total	Per T.	Total	Per T.	Total	Per T.
Picking at box or ton, piece rates	$900	$ 9.00	$1600	$ 8.00	$4800	$ 8.00	$9600	$ 8.00
Supervision, including tractor, driving;	100	1.00	200	1.00	300	.50	576	.48
Loading, emptying & placing boxes ($1.25/hr)	55	.55						
On farm tractor or truck driving, ($1.25/hr)	23	.23			270	.45	1080	.90
Highway tractor or truck driving, ($1.50/hr)			128	.64	325	.54		
Subtotal man labor cost	$1078	$10.78	$1928	$ 9.64	$5695	$ 9.49	$11,256	$ 9.38
Tractor and on farm truck work *	55	.55	160	.80	432	.72	1,040	.87
Pulling trailer to winery-pickup or truck			171	.86	500	.83		
Hauling to winery, gondola truck, own or hire	250	2.50					3,000	2.50
Insurance, general expense, repairs	90	.90	280	1.40	450	.75	900	.75
Depreciation special harvest equipment	40	.40	125	.62	558	.93	676	.56
Interest on investment " "	24	.24	73	.36	212	.35	302	.25
Total cost, vine to winery	$ 1537	$15.37	$2737	$13.68	$7847	$ 13.08	$17,174	$14.31

In the above sample costs, we presumed picking in lugs and carrying to avenues would cost the small grower $9.00 a ton in Method A. Picking in aluminum picking containers and emptying in gondola trailers in a nearby row would cost $8 a ton in the other three methods. Tractor driving on farm was assumed at $1.25 an hour and driving truck or pickup on highway was figured at $1.50 per hour in all methods.

*Tractors for all methods were figured at the following hourly rates: small wheel tractors $1.00, track layers $2.00. A farm truck was figured at $2.50 an hour, a pickup at $2.00 and the truck-tractor for pulling trailers to winery in Method D at $2.50 an hour. Hourly rates for truck and tractors used for other farm work are presumed to cover depreciation and interest on investment, so these are not included in the investment shown for special harvesting equipment.

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