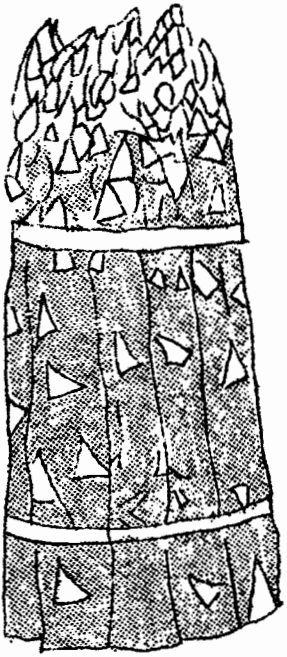
asparagus

sample costs and production



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

Cost Data Sheet No. 11

DIRECT SEEDED ASPARAGUS--PROJECTED PRODUCTION COSTS

Mechanical operations at custom rates. Hand labor at $3.75 per hour ($3.00 plus Social Security, unemployment insurance, transportation, supervision and fringe benefits).

Yield - 135 crates from an established field. (2 tons).

OPERATION	Custom Rate	1st Year	2d Year	3d Year
LAND PREPARATION				
Plow	$ 13.50	$ 13.50		
Disc 4x	4.50	18.00		
Landplane 3x	5.00	15.00		
Border - Break border	4.50	4.50		
Flood		21.30*		
Float	4.00	4.00		
Fertilize	3.00	33.80		
List - Shape Beds	10.00	10.00		
TOTAL LAND PREPARATION		$ 120.10		
GROWING PERIOD				
Plant (10# @ 8.00/#)	8.25	88.25		
Cultivate 3x	5.00	15.00		
Fertilize 2x	4.50	49.00		
Sprinkler Irrigate	70.00	70.00		
Irrigate 8x		36.75*		
Hand Weed Control		160.00	$ 10.00	$ 10.00
Pest Control 2x	3.00		20.00	20.00
Chemical Weed Control	10.00	35.00	35.00	35.00
Chop Fern			6.00	6.00
Rolling Cultivator 2x	4.50		9.00	9.00
Rotovate & Shape Beds			10.00	10.00
Fertilize 3x	4.50		75.00	75.00
Irrigate 15x			78.00*	78.00*
GROWING PERIODS		$ 454.00	$243.00	$243.00
GROWING PERIOD & LAND PREP. COSTS		$ 574.10	$243.00	$243.00
Rent - new lease		150.00	150.00	150.00
Amortization[1]		0.00	81.10	81.10
Overhead - 12% of preharvest costs and land rent[2]		86.89	47.16	47.16
TOTAL PREHARVEST COSTS		$ 810.99	$521.26	$521.26
HARVEST				
Cut, haul to shed, pack, cool, sell @ 10.00			$400.00[3]	$1350.00
TOTAL ALL COSTS		$ 810.99	$921.26	$1871.26

[1] Amortize first year's establishment costs over 10 year period. Begin amortization in second year.

[2] Excluding Amortization cost.

Cost per crate = $13.86

[3] Light cut second year.

*Includes shovel labor, pipe setting, miscellaneous tractor work.

Year	Acres	Yield/Acre	Value/Ton
1970	2800	1.29	$ 658.56
1971	3600	1.40	740.80
1972	4000	1.53	518.68
1973	4500	1.91	678.14
1974	4600	1.63	887.74

PLANTING: Direct seeding is best done January through April. Eight - 12 pounds of seed per acre has been satisfactory. Presently four rows are planted on a 30 inch bed top. Beds center to center are 60 inches, or 2 rows per 42 inch bed center. Seed depth is from 1 - 1 1/2 inches. Germination irrigation follows. It is desirable to have an in-row plant spacing of at least four inches.

VARIETIES: The main varieties grown are 500W, UC309, UC72, and Brock selections.

SOILS: Well-drained sandy loams and loams are best for asparagus.

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IRRIGATION

Timing and method of application are very important during harvest season. Every other row irrigation will tend to maintain even production by keeping the beds warm. Over 15 irrigations per year will not be unusual. Irrigation interval during the summer is from 10 - 15 days.

FERTILIZERS

From 100-200 pounds of phosphate and 200-600 pounds of nitrogen are used. All of the phosphate and at least half the nitrogen are applied in winter before the cutting season. The remaining nitrogen is applied after the harvest season.

PESTS & DISEASES

Consult the University of California Vegetable Crop Pest and Disease Control Guide for latest recommendations.

HARVESTING

Spears are hand cut from mid-January through mid-April. Only the most vigorous plants should be cut during the second season for a 2-4 week period. Overcutting often leads to a decline in production and small spears. During the third year of growth, cutting may be continued the full season - about 60 days. Spears are cut at an angle just below the soil surface with an asparagus knife. They are cut every 2 or 3 days early in the season, but during warm weather the field will be cut each day. The harvested spears are hauled to shed for grading, trimming, washing, packing, cooling and packing.

CUTTING FERN

Fern is chopped and either rototilled into the surface soil or burned during December. The burned beds are also rototilled.

Fertilization and irrigation follow before the cutting period begins.

Prepared by
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