

# watermelons

sample costs

and

production



*Watermelons*

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

Cost Data Sheet No. 17

UC Cooperative Extension

WATERMELONS--SAMPLE PRODUCTION COSTS

Mechanical operations at custom rates. Hand labor at \$2.00 per hour (\$1.50 plus Social Security, unemployment insurance, transportation, supervision and fringe benefits.). Costs below do not include capping and related operations.

Yield - 10 tons per acre.

OPERATION	Custom Rate	MATERIALS		HAND LABOR		SAMPLE COSTS Per Acre
		Type	Cost	Hours	Dollars	
<b>LAND PREPARATION</b>						
Flow or subsoil	\$ 8.00					\$ 8.00
Disc 2x	2.00					4.00
Border & break border	1.00					1.00
Flood		water	75 ac ft	1.73	2.00	3.73
Fertilize	1.00	400#	11-48-0	19.00		20.00
Border disc	5.00					5.00
<b>TOTAL LAND PREPARATION</b>						<b>41.73</b>
<b>GROWING PERIOD</b>						
Plant and shape beds	3.00	seed 2# @ 2.00	4.00			7.00
Thin				8	16.00	16.00
Cultivate 3x	3.00					9.00
Fertilize - side-dress 2x	2.00	150# N @ 10¢	15.00			19.00
Pollination		1.5 hives	6.00			6.00
Turn vines 3x				15	30.00	30.00
Hoe 1x				4.5	9.00	9.00
Irrigate 6x		water 3 acre ft @ 2.30	6.90	3	6.00	12.90
Pest control 4x	2.00	insecticides	22.00			30.00
<b>TOTAL GROWING PERIOD</b>						<b>138.90</b>
<b>TOTAL PREHARVEST COSTS</b>						<b>180.63</b>
<b>HARVEST COSTS</b>						
Pick, haul, selling commission, cover vines 16.50 ton						165.00
<b>TOTAL HARVEST COSTS</b>						<b>165.00</b>
Land rent						65.00
Cash overhead 15% of preharvest and land rent costs plus 2% of harvest costs						40.14
<b>TOTAL ALL COSTS</b>						<b>\$ 450.77</b>

Cost per ton = \$45.08
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The Agricultural Commissioner's reports show seasonal average price per ton during the past five years varied from a low of \$51.50 in 1963 to a high of \$56.26 in 1965.

**YIELDS**

County average yields have been between 8 to 10 tons per acre.

**PLANTING DATES**

Plantings to be capped are seeded from mid-December to February. Open melons are planted from February through mid-March.

**VARIETIES**

Improved Peacock is the most popular variety. It has a very tough rind, which makes it an excellent shipper.

## SOILS

Watermelons are best grown on non-saline, sandy loam or silt loam soils.

## IRRIGATION

After planting, the first irrigation runs until the beds are completely subbed. Following emergence, water may be withheld until flowering.

## FERTILIZERS

400 pounds of 11-48-0 are often applied before listing. Up to 150 pounds of nitrogen are later sidedressed in split applications.

## PESTS AND DISEASES

Cutworms, aphids, spider mites, darkling ground beetles, leafhoppers, cabbage loopers, and leafminers are the most serious pests of watermelons. Watermelon wilt (fusarium), and root rot are the most serious diseases of watermelon. If you know the field has wilt, be sure to plant a resistant variety. For latest recommendations, consult your farm advisor.

## HARVESTING

Use a sharp knife to cut melons from the vines. Pulling may cause melons to crack open. Melons are picked on the basis of color change, thumping, and rind roughness. Color change is the most reliable. Avoid rubbing of melon fruit with hands during vine turning. Loss of natural protection on the fruit can increase sunburn. Cover exposed fruit during harvest to prevent sunburning.

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