

pear cost study



for
sonoma county

AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SERVICE
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

INTRODUCTION

This cost study sets forth information to enable an understanding of the costs of producing a crop of pears in Sonoma County. It may be used as a convenient guide in analyzing an individual orchard situation.

The figures in this publication resulted from grower's records. Twenty-five other growers have reviewed the study and find both the operations and costs to be typical under the conditions set forth.

The value of this publication is mainly in its use as a guide to analyze a single orchard situation and for budgeting purposes. It is not intended that these data be used to establish averages for cultural practices, costs to perform a job or for price bargaining purposes. Price is a result of supply and demand rather than the cost to produce in any one year.

Two blank columns have been provided on the analysis sheet for your use to compare costs. Use the cost categories and existing figures in the study as a guide in calculating individual orchard profit or loss. Costs projected against a given sales price and productive level give this answer.

Growers who participated in this study supplied their actual costs on all practices, then through arbitration agreed that the figures used are a fair and honest appraisal. These are the usual practices under current costs. Orchards used for comparison are mature trees and for all practical purposes, represent a complete stand. The 15-ton-per-acre yield, while slightly above the county average, is considered typical of commercial plantings in Sonoma County.

few, are factors which force a shift in production and a noticeable change in long-term management. Growers must lower production costs and increase yields to meet competition, stay alive and make a profit.

Selection of the correct rootstock and a careful insect control program is necessary to stay ahead of Pear Decline. The pear industry has not retreated on the face of this problem, but rather has increased plantings to meet it. Growers handle this disease as they would rodent damage, oakroot fungus, crown rot and other problems and have continued to plant new orchards and make replacements in worthy stands.

The new concept for pear orchards is more trees per acre than was common in old plantings. New plantings, either hedgerowed or closely spaced, are resulting in reducing production costs. Pruning, spraying and harvest costs have been reduced under good management practices with higher per-acre profits as a result. Hedgerows with tree densities of over 300 per acre, closely spaced squares, diamonds or rectangular patterns, to increase numbers well over 200 trees per acre, will challenge the productivity of old orchards, with 75 to 100 trees. The concept of huge trees occupying large areas of land is questionable. Smaller trees, closely spaced, offer real advantages for good management and are more noticeable every year in California orchards.

Spray costs are an expensive part of pear growing. Spray equipment has changed from the hand gun method of application to the speed sprayer and now to concentrate or low-volume sprayers to further reduce costs. Concentrate sprayers cover as much as six times the area from one tank load compared to the high-volume speed sprayer. Chemical costs can sometimes be reduced by as much as twenty-five per cent by using concentrate equipment.

Chemical weed control is beginning to play a major role in reducing tillage costs. With the use of

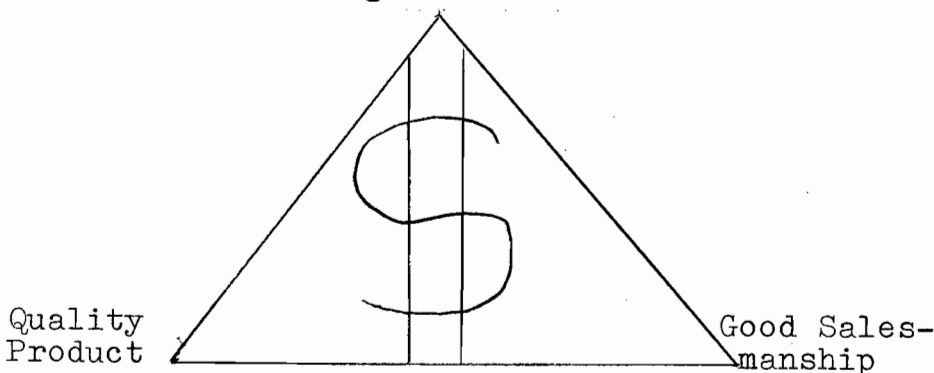
new herbicides, the need for hand hoeing around the tree is greatly reduced if not eliminated as is the hazard of working tillage equipment close to tree trunks.

WHAT IS A TON OF PEARS WORTH?

The sale value of a crop is what the buyer is willing to pay for it. The cost to produce may remain the same but price can fluctuate widely depending on the quantity and quality of the product to be sold. The grower is faced with the problems of investing in advertising to promote consumption, supporting research to solve unanswered questions and producing within acceptable margins of profit or changing to other crops which offer a more reasonable return on invested capital and management skills. Some growers will show profits by regulating input costs and reaching the needed yields while others will experience continued loss. Neither can justify how much a pear sells for by how much it costs to produce.

Is this your triangle for success?

High Yield



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