

ALFALFA HAY PRODUCTION

AF-SI-51

WESTERN PORTION - RIVERSIDE COUNTY

LAND REQUIREMENTS:

Alfalfa prefers a deep medium soil (sandy loam to loam) but will grow on lighter and heavier soils by adjusting irrigation techniques. On the sandy soils frequency of irrigation may need to be increased; and also on shallow hardpan soils.

WATER REQUIREMENTS:

Alfalfa for hay production requires between four and five acre feet of water per acre per year. On average soils, one irrigation per cutting may be needed of between five to six acre inches per irrigation. On sandy soils and shallow hardpan soils as many as two to three irrigations per cutting may be necessary.

VARIETIES:

California Common is recommended for most areas of the western portion of Riverside County. California Common 49 (dwarf resistant) alfalfa for the Riverside-Corona-Chino triangle - Africa alfalfa may be planted where short-lived stands (two to three years) are desired.

PLANTING DATES:

Where possible, October and November plantings are preferred, but where alfalfa follows a late harvested summer crop (~~blackeye beans, milo or sudan-grass~~) February or March seedings are successful.

LAND PREPARATION:

Alfalfa requires a well-worked level seed bed. Fill in furrows along borders where a border disc has been used. A drag scraper working across the irrigation run or roadgrader lengthwise builds excellent borders and takes out side fall. Borders will vary from 15 feet on light sandy soils to 40 feet in heavier soils.

SEEDING:

Rates from 15 to 30 pounds of seed per acre are commonly used (15 is adequate on a well prepared seed bed.) Seed 1/2 to 1 inch deep into moist soil. A "ring-roller" following the drill or broadcaster is often desirable.

FERTILIZERS:

Alfalfa supplies its own nitrogen and no addition of nitrogen fertilizer is deemed necessary. Increased production from 60 to 70 pounds actual phosphate per acre has been noted in the Arlington area and the northern portion of the San Jacinto area. Where you are in doubt about your phosphate needs, trial applications to every other border check for several border checks is recommended.

HARVESTING:

Good quality hay is made only in weed free fields. Control weeds by use of selective sprays, clipping or keeping solid stands. Cut when 1/10 to 1/2 bloom stage is reached, or when new shoot growth is starting. Bale at proper moisture content to avoid loss of leaves.

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WHAT DOES IT COST TO GROW ALFALFA

Riverside County

(Based on 6 Tons Per Acre Average Yield and Four Year Life)

Cost Item	Cost Per Acre	Cost Per Ton	My Costs
Labor and Materials			
Renovate 2x	\$ 2.00		
Irrigate 8x	14.00		
Water 4'	24.00		
Bordering and Miscellaneous	1.00		
Total Materials and Labor	\$ 41.00	\$ 6.83	
Harvesting			
Mow 6x	\$ 7.50		
Windrow 6x	7.50		
Bale 6x @ \$4.50 per ton	27.00		
Haul and Stack @ \$2.00 per ton	12.00		
Total Harvest	\$ 54.00	\$ 9.00	
Depreciation			
Stand (\$36.00 per acre)	\$ 9.00		
Irrigation and Equipment	4.00		
Total Depreciation	\$ 13.00	\$ 2.17	
Land Rent or Interest on Investment	\$ 50.00	\$ 8.33	
Total All Costs	\$ 158.00	\$26.33	
Income* (#2 Leafy)	\$ 120.00 - 180.00	\$20.00 - 30.00	

* Income - Income on alfalfa hay varies from year to year, and cutting to cutting. In the Hemet Valley, No. 2 Leafy alfalfa hay markets at from \$20.00 to \$30.00 at the roadside (approximately \$4.00 below the Los Angeles market).

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