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CN-SI-55

University of California
Agricultural Extension Service
Imperial County

CANTALOUPE'S
1955

WHAT DOES IT COST YOU TO GROW COVERED CANTALOUPE'S?
(Based on 150 crates per acre)

ITEMS	SAMPLE COSTS		YOUR COSTS	
	Per Acre	Per Crate	Per Acre	Per Crate
LAND PREPARATION				
Plow 1x	5.00			
Disc 2x	3.00			
Float 1x	1.25			
Border	.75			
Irrigate 1x	1.00			
Knock down borders	.50			
Disc 1x	1.50			
Float 1x	1.25			
Fertilizer (preplant)	1.00			
Bedding	5.00			
Ditching	.75			
TOTAL LAND PREPARATION	21.00	.14		
CULTURAL LABOR & FIELD POWER				
Mulch beds	1.75			
Planting	2.25			
Capping 1½x	35.00			
Thinning & weeding	25.00			
Cultivate 6x	13.50			
Fertilization 2x	4.50			
Vine turning 3x	25.00			
Irrigation 10x	7.00			
Pest control 6x	12.00			
Ditching & knocking down ditches 1x	2.50			
Setting irrigation pipes	5.00			
Miscellaneous	14.00			
TOTAL CULTURAL LABOR & POWER	147.50	.98		
MATERIALS				
Water	7.50			
Seed 1½ lbs.	2.65			
Fertilizers (60 N + 120 P ₂ O ₅)	21.00			
Insecticides & fungicides 6x	20.00			
Paper caps	21.00			
Wire	6.00			
Eridging	2.00			
Miscellaneous	6.00			
TOTAL MATERIALS	86.15	.57		
CASH OVERHEAD				
General expense 5% of the above	13.14			
Taxes	2.00			
Insurance	1.00			
Miscellaneous	2.00			
TOTAL CASH OVERHEAD	18.14	.12		
LAND RENT (1 year)	65.00	.43		
DEPRECIATION	2.00	.03		
TOTAL ALL COSTS	339.79	2.26		

NOTE--For open-planted cantaloupes, deduct the cost of the capping operation
Above costs based on large company operations, contract rates, and normal
growing seasons. Weather, insects, and plant diseases often raise above costs.
Estimate your own costs in the last two columns based on your expected yields,
cost of operations, and material required on your land.

CANTALOUPE PRODUCTION

CLIMATE: Cantaloupes require plenty of sunshine, low humidity, and little or no rain. Cantaloupes are susceptible to frost during all stages of growth and need protection during the cooler winter months. Temperatures above 85° F. are desirable for good vine growth.

SOIL: In Imperial Valley cantaloupes are grown on sandy loam, loam, and clay loam soils. Melons planted on the light soils mature fruits earlier than those planted on the heavier types.

ACREAGE: The cantaloupe acreage has been on the decline the last few years due to competition from other areas and "Crown Blight", a serious disease of cantaloupes. In 1953 there were close to 13,000 acres planted to cantaloupes. The acreage has fluctuated between 10,000 and 20,000 acres.

PLANTING DATE: Most of the acreage is planted in the month of December and capped for frost protection. A small acreage is open planted in February or March after the danger of frost has passed. The fall crop is planted in August for harvest in late October and November.

LAND PREPARATION: See cost sheet under land preparation.

VARIETIES: The most popular variety and planted on 95% of the acreage in 1953-54 was Sulfur Resistant #91 (SR91). Each year there is a small acreage planted to #45's, #450's and #6's.

IRRIGATION: After the beds have been formed, the first irrigation is applied. The water runs until the beds are completely subbed. When the beds have dried enough to allow mulching, they are then mulched, shaped with a V shaper and planted. After planting, the beds are irrigated again to insure moisture for good germination. The next irrigation is delayed and usually follows soon after cap removal. When the plants begin to set fruit, the crop is irrigated approximately every two weeks. When harvesting begins, water is applied more frequently (3 to 5 days intervals). It is necessary to keep a good supply of moisture in the beds throughout the growing season for maximum yields.

FERTILIZATION: The kind and quantity of fertilizer needed is modified by crop history and soil type. Cantaloupes respond well to applications of nitrogen and phosphate if the soil is deficient in these materials. From 80 to 120 pounds of phosphate is usually applied broadcast before the beds are formed. Sixty to 100 pounds of nitrogen are applied in a split application. Half the material is put on at planting time and the balance soon after cap removal.

PESTS AND DISEASES: Cutworms, aphids, leafhoppers, leafminers, and red spider mites are pests that can cause serious injury to cantaloupes. Growers should inspect their fields regularly for these pests.

Crown blight, virus diseases, powdery mildew, nematodes, seedling diseases and root rot are diseases found in Imperial Valley. The cause of Crown Blight is unknown. However, it is felt that if a good supply of moisture and fertilizer in the beds is available throughout the growing season, losses from this disease can be minimized.

HARVESTING: The cantaloupe reaches its maximum sugar content when the melon is at full-slip. Once the melon has been picked, the sugar content does not increase. Melons picked half-slip are immature and never reach top quality. Melons that are left on the vine too long, become soft and do not ship well. For most cantaloupes varieties, full-slip is the best time to pick. Melons picked at this stage arrive at the markets in the best condition.