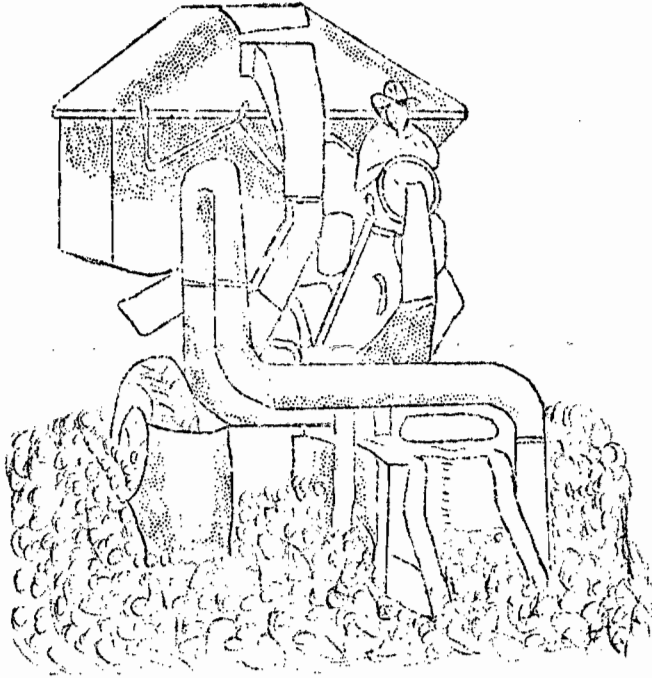


CAN I GROW

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COTTON



A short treatise on cotton growing for the beginner including
a
Survey of Production Costs

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UC COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

CAN I GROW COTTON?

Prospects for an increased cotton acreage in 1951 look favorable. Why? There are many reasons for this statement. The following are a few:

1. A good price for lint and seed is indicated.
2. Restrictions on acreage by the government have been lifted.
3. Demand for cotton is unusually heavy because of huge domestic and export needs. This demand is exceeded only by the demand for steel.

If you decide that you will grow cotton be sure that you consider carefully the fundamentals of cotton growing so that your books will show black figures and not red ones. First lets consider the soil.

SUITABILITY OF THE SOIL:

Cotton is tolerant of a fairly high concentration of alkali. But if you have such soils don't be fooled into thinking that you can produce a bumper crop. The best soil produces the best cotton unless other factors such as insects take an unusual toll. You might also consider Verticillum wilt when you are speaking of the suitability of the soil. If you have recently purchased cotton land find out if wilt took its toll the year before. If so, leave the stands fairly thick, three to four inches between plants. Better consider weeds. Remember a weed in a cotton field is any plant other than cotton. This could mean grasses such as Johnson grass or Water grass. The cleanest soil will normally cost less to produce cotton than weedy soils. If you plant weed-infested fields add extra costs for weed control. Don't give up; the relentless farmer as far as weeds are concerned usually has the cleanest fields. Remember too, that the miracle weed killer has not been found. As yet the Hoe cannot be abandoned.

WATER: Do you have enough?

Cotton is not a water conserving plant, neither is it a heavy user such as irrigated pasture. On some Kings County soils, those that are heavy, three acre feet is sufficient. Water should be supplied particularly during the months of June, July and August. On sandy soils we apply more than that amount because considerable losses occurs due to deep penetration below the root zone. Frequent irrigations to provide ample water at all times is essential. Using water sparingly during the early season to enable the root system to develop has been disappointing. Higher yields have been found when ample water was applied early in the season. Be sure you have plenty of water to cover your fields frequently, particularly if you have sandy soil. Don't depend too heavily on gravity water. If you are in an area where there are water districts or ditch companies check with the water officials to make sure of your supply.

FERTILIZERS:

Field tests not chemical tests have shown that most Kings County soils show a response to nitrogen. Phosphorus and Potash have either given a depressed yield on none at all.

Land that has come out of alfalfa and is being planted to cotton might not need commercial fertilizers since alfalfa has probably added sufficient nitrogen to the soil to carry it through. Better check with commercial suppliers at once if you expect to use commercial nitrogen. Purchase enough to supply about 80# of available nitrogen per acre. Some fertilizer supplies are already sold out. Don't forget that weed free barnyard manure is good for the soil. If you have a supply on hand it is wise to apply it thickly on the ground, about twelve ton per acre, as soon as possible. It doesn't supply much nitrogen.

but it gives added benefits, particularly the physical improvement of the soil.

MACHINERY AND LABOR NEEDS:

You probably have ground-preparation and seeding equipment already. Perhaps you should consider mechanical pickers for the operation. If you are a small farmer a home operated mechanical picker won't be economical. However, on larger fields you can save money. The supply of hand labor has been estimated by Farm Employment Service to be short during the next picking season. Some mechanical pickers will probably be available for custom harvest. If you want custom work done, make your contacts at once. Remember, mechanical harvesting can be better accomplished if you plant with a uniform spacing of rows; forty inches between rows is preferred, cultivate uniformly, irrigate uniformly, keep your field free from clods and weeds. Better check with the Agricultural Extension Service office if you have questions about mechanical harvesting.

INSECTS:

There's always some sort of insect present on your cotton plants unless you dust every day. But remember that nature's method of holding insects in balance is to provide predatory insects to feed and live on the harmful ones. Periodic application of insecticides may not only destroy most of the harmful insects but also the useful ones so that in a few weeks the population of harmful ones is much greater than the useful ones. This unfavorable balance costs money since extra applications of insecticides are necessary. Be careful-----get all the advise from trained Entomologists on insect control that you can. Attend the insect demonstrations carried on by the Agricultural Extension Service. These are held every year in the field for you, the cotton farmer, to help.

DEFOLIATION:

In some years defoliation should be practiced more so than in others. The season is the deciding factor. Applications of various kinds of chemicals are usually made by aeroplane. Calcium Cyanamide seems to be one of the better defoliant where dew is present. The Agricultural Extension Service and the Cotton Experiment Station at Shafter test defoliant nearly every year. If you want more detailed information see the Agricultural Extension Service.

FINANCING, MARKETING:

Cotton is a crop handled through the gin. Most of the financing and marketing as well as the ginning is handled by the gin manager. See him about such problems.

More detailed information can be had from your Agricultural Extension Service Office on any of the cultural subjects mentioned. UC COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

WHAT DOES IT COST TO GROW AN ACRE OF COTTON

This cost sheet will not reflect your costs completely. It is made up for the average grower with some costs being approximate. You may find that some items such as picking can be reduced by mechanical picking. The two columns on the right of the sheet are for your convenience in recording your actual costs.

(Yield 1800# seed cotton) (Man labor \$.90 hour)
(Large tractor \$3.00 per hour) (Light tractor \$1.50 per hour)

	Typical Costs		My Costs	
	Per Acre	Per Cwt.	Per Acre	Per Cwt.
Land preparation, man and heavy tractor 2 hours @\$3.90.	\$ 7.80			
Plant and fertilizer, 2 men and lt. tractor .6 hr.	1.98			
Irrigate one pre. and 5 crop-21 hrs. @ \$.90	18.90			
Thin and weed. 7 hrs. @ \$.90	6.30			
Cultivate 1x at $\frac{1}{2}$ hr. man and tractor	4.80			
Hoe and weed, twice total 7hrs. @ \$.90	6.30			
Pest control-dust twice-contract @ 5¢ pound	2.50			
Miscellaneous other work	3.00			
Picking contract, hand, @ \$4.00 cwt., 18 cwt.	72.00			
Hauling----field to gin	1.00			
Ginning including bagging and ties	12.00			
LABOR AND FIELD POWER COSTS	\$136.58	7.58		
Irrigation water, $3\frac{1}{2}$ A. Ft. @ \$2.50	8.75			
Seed 20# @ \$174.00-T	1.74			
Fertilizers to provide 100# N	14.00			
Insecticides for pest control 50# @ 9¢	4.50			
MATERIAL COSTS	28.99	1.61		
General expense	7.50			
County taxes \$60.00 value at \$4.60	2.76			
Miscel., repairs, insurance, etc.	2.50			
CASH OVERHEAD COSTS	12.76	.71		
TOTAL CASH EXPENSE	\$178.33	9.91		
Depreciation-Irrigation facilities, cost \$80.-20 yr. life	4.00			
Crop equipment other than tractors \$12. acre by 10 yrs.	1.20			
DEPRECIATION COSTS	5.20	.29		
Interest on investment at 5%				
Facilities and equipment \$56.00 average value	2.80			
Land \$300.00 per acre	15.00			
INTEREST ON INVESTMENT COSTS	17.80	.99		
TOTAL ALL COSTS	\$201.33	11.19		