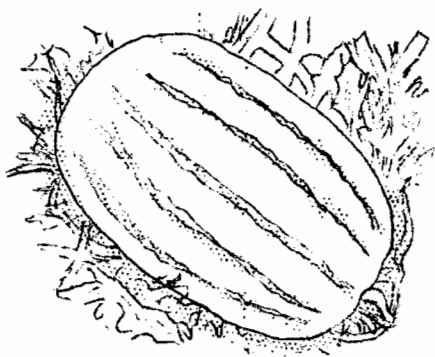


watermelons
sample costs
and
production



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

Cost Data Sheet No. 5

UC Cooperative Extension

WATERMELONS--SAMPLE PRODUCTION COSTS

Mechanical operations at custom rates. Hand labor at \$3.00 per hour (\$2.53 plus Social Security, unemployment insurance, transportation, supervision and fringe benefits).

Yield - 10 tons per acre. 85 - 90 days to maturity.

OPERATIONS	Custom Rate	MATERIALS		HAND LABOR		SAMPLE COSTS Per Acre
		Type	Cost	Hours	Dollars	
LAND PREPARATION						
Plow or subsoil	\$12.00					\$ 12.00
Disc 2x	3.50					7.00
Border & break border	4.00					4.00
Flood		Water .75 ac ft	2.00	1	2.00	4.00
Fertilize	2.50	400# 11-48-0	46.00			48.50
Border disc	6.00					6.00
TOTAL LAND PREPARATION						\$ 81.50
GROWING PERIOD						
Plant & shape beds	6.75	Seed 2# @ \$5.00	10.00			16.75
Pollination		1.5 hives @ 10.00	15.00			15.00
Thin				8	24.00	24.00
Cultivate 2x	3.50					7.00
Fertilize - side-dress 2x	5.00	200# N @ 20¢	40.00			50.00
Weed 1x				45	15.00	15.00
Irrigate 6x		Water 3 ac ft	8.10	10	30.00	38.10
Pest Control 5x	3.00	Insecticides	40.00			55.00
Turn Vines 2x				10	30.00	30.00
GROWING PERIOD						\$250.85
GROWING PERIOD & LAND PREP COSTS						\$332.35
Land Rent						125.00
Cash overhead - 10% of preharvest costs and land rent						45.74
TOTAL PREHARVEST COSTS						\$503.09
HARVEST						
Pick, haul, selling commission, load \$28.00 ton						\$280.00
TOTAL ALL COSTS						\$783.09

Cost per ton = \$78.31

YIELDS

County average yields have been between 8 to 10 tons per acre. The Agricultural Commissioner's reports show seasonal average price per ton during the past five years varied from a low of \$52.64 in 1972 to a high of \$101.21 in 1973.

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 tough rind, which makes it an excellent shipper.

HOT CAPS

Early planted watermelons are hot capped. Hot caps are paper tents over a wood frame used to produce miniature "greenhouses". The plants receive increased heat and frost protection. Labor and materials for hot capping costs about \$150.00 per acre.

SOILS

Watermelons are best grown on non-saline, sandy loam or silt loam soils. Soil temperatures of 95 F are optimum for germination.

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 200 pounds of nitrogen are later sidedressed in split applications. Irrigation costs include shovel work, pipe setting and grading.

PESTS AND DISEASES

Cutworms, aphids, spider mites, darkling ground beetles, leafhoppers, cabbage loopers, and leafminers are the most serious pests of watermelons. Bacterial rind rot is the most serious disease of watermelons. 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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