

alfalfa seed
sample costs
and
production



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

Cost Data Sheet No. 2

UC Cooperative Extension

ALFALFA SEED--SAMPLE PRODUCTION COSTS

Mechanical operations at custom rates. Hand labor at \$1.90 per hour (\$1.50 plus Social Security, unemployment insurance, and fringe benefits).

Yield of 300 pounds of clean seed in 90 days on an established alfalfa stand.

OPERATION	Custom	MATERIALS		HAND LABOR		SAMPLE COSTS Per Acre
	Rate	Type	Cost	Hours	Dollars	
SEED PRODUCTION COSTS						
Irrigate 4x		water 2 ac. ft.	4.60	1.1	4.00	8.60
Insect Control 5x	2.00	insecticide	15.00			25.00
Bees		3 colonies	13.50			13.50
Defoliation	2.00		5.00			7.00
Combining	8.00					8.00
Hauling	2.00/Ton					.35
Cleaning seed	3.50					3.50
TOTAL SEED PRODUCTION COSTS						65.95
Land rent						25.00
Cash overhead 15% of labor and materials						13.64
TOTAL ALL COSTS						\$104.59

Cost per pound = 34.86¢

GENERAL INFORMATION

The average yields for alfalfa seed during the last five years have ranged from 290 to 410 pounds per acre with a selling price of 26.6¢ to 32.0¢ per pound. Some growers will produce 600-800 pounds of clean seed.

STARTING DATES

The best possibilities for a good seed crop occur when the last hay is cut between May 1 and May 15. By June 1 to 15 the field is in full bloom. Seed crops made at this time of the year avoid the Lygus, stink bug and alfalfa seed chalcid infestations which build up from early spring until late fall when the weather breaks. Late crops maturing to August and September may be damaged by rain.

Earlier seed crops may not bloom properly due to cold weather and seed "set" may be light or delayed.

VARIETIES

Sonora, Moapa, and African are usually grown in Imperial County. Varieties that are resistant to the spotted alfalfa aphid, such as Sonora and Moapa, are recommended.

IRRIGATION

Allow the plants to become slightly stressed for water up until the bloom period to prevent rank growth; after bloom begins, the plants should be irrigated no more frequently than necessary to prevent wilting and to help produce well filled seed pods. The flowers of a slightly stressed plant contain higher concentrations of nectar and are more attractive to bees.

PEST CONTROL

Early pest control for Lygus is necessary and much more important than later in the season. See the Pest Control Recommendations for Imperial County Field Crops for more specific information on pests and control.

Control for the alfalfa seed chalcid has not proven successful and none is recommended.

POLLINATION

"Bees" are the only pollinators of any value on alfalfa. In Imperial County it is necessary to rely on honey bees because of a lack of sufficient solitary pollen collecting bees. Usually, at least 3 colonies of bees per acre are used in the higher yielding fields.

HARVESTING

Most seed alfalfa is defoliated using a dinitro general spray applied by airplane at from 1 to 3 pints in 8 to 12 gallons of diesel oil per acre.

Prepared by
Imperial County
Agricultural Extension Service
Staff
Revised March 1968

Co-operative Extension work in Agriculture and Home Economics, College of Agriculture, University of California, and United States Department of Agriculture co-operating. Distributed in furtherance of the Acts of Congress of May 8, and June 30, 1914. George B. Alcorn, Director, California Agricultural Extension Service