

AF-VS-55-3

ALFALFA SEED

COSTS & GENERAL HINTS ON PRODUCTION

University of California
Agricultural Extension Service
Kern County
Revised August, 1955

UC Cooperative Extension

GROWING ALFALFA FOR SEED
Roy M. Barnes - Farm Advisor

LAND QUALIFICATIONS:

Ask for "Standards for Certified Seed in California", and "Can I Grow Certified Seed". These publications will furnish you with all the standards connected with producing certified seed.

SOIL REQUIREMENTS:

Soils that grow other crops will grow good alfalfa for seed.

VARIETY:

The most popular varieties for seed production are: Ranger, Buffalo, Atlantic, Narragansett, Vernal and Caliverde.

SEED TREATMENT:

Ordinarily, seed treatment will not be necessary.

PREPARATION OF SOIL AND PLANTING:

A well prepared seed bed is essential for a good stand. A good seed bed is firm and moist. A ring roller is excellent to firm a loose and open soil. Row planting is the general practice. Any convenient row width is good. Pre-irrigation is best to provide the desired moisture at planting time.

PLANTING RATE:

One pound per acre when planting in rows is sufficient.

8/55

WHAT WILL IT COST TO GROW ALFALFA SEED IN KERN COUNTY - MATURE STAND
 BASED ON A YIELD OF 700 LBS. OF CLEANED SEED PER ACRE
 (bulk handled)

Roy M. Barnes*

Burt Burlingame**

Man Labor \$.95 hr., Medium tractor \$1.60 per hour

	Sample	Costs	My Costs	
	Per Acre	Per Lb.	Per Acre	Per Lb.
PRE-HARVEST LABOR AND MATERIAL COSTS:				
Irrigate: 4 times, 8 man hours	\$ 7.60			
Irrigation water: 2-1/2 acre-ft. @ \$4.50	11.25			
Pest Control: dust by plane (40#-5c) 3 times	6.00			
Dust Material: 120 lbs. D.D.T. @ 9-1/4¢	11.10			
Weed control: hand work 16 hrs. (ave. over 6 yrs.)	15.20			
Renovate & cultivate: man & tractor 4 times over 1.6 hrs.	4.08			
Total pre-harvest labor and material cost	55.23	7.9¢		
HARVESTING COSTS:				
Harvesting: contract @ 3¢ per lb.	21.00			
Hauling: contract @ \$3 per ton	1.05			
Total box rental	1.00			
Total harvesting cost	23.05	3.3¢		
CASH OVERHEAD COSTS:				
General expense	3.91			
County taxes	6.25			
Repairs, compensation insurance & miscellaneous	4.00			
Bee rental	21.00			
Certified seed fees (inspection, cleaning & bags)	13.46			
Total cash overhead cost	47.90	6.8¢		
TOTAL CASH, LABOR AND FIELD POWER COSTS	126.18	18.0¢		
DEPRECIATION:				
Stand-net cost after 1st yr. \$30 - 5 year life	6.00			
Irrigation facilities & other equipment	16.00			
Total depreciation cost	22.00	3.1¢		
INTEREST ON INVESTMENT AT 5%:				
Stand @ 1/2 cost (\$15)	.75			
Irrigation facilities & equipment 1/2 of \$210 (\$105)	5.25			
Land @ \$500 per acre	25.00			
Total interest on investment	31.00	4.4¢		
TOTAL COST OF PRODUCTION	179.18	25.5¢		
CREDIT FOR VALUE OF HAY IN FIELD - 3/4 ton	9.00	1.3¢		
NET COST OF PRODUCTION OF SEED	\$170.18	24.2¢		

*Farm Advisor

**Extension Specialist in Farm Management

The first year's costs per acre may be actually higher due to land preparation, planting and perhaps considerably higher weeding costs. Yield per acre, of course, influences total costs per acre because of the variation in harvesting costs when figured on a contract per pound basis. Net cost of stand at end of first year is depreciated over remaining 5 years.

PLANTING TIME:

Alfalfa may be seeded either early spring (February and March) or in the fall (November to December 1). Plants should have about six weeks growth to sustain heavy frosts.

PLANTING DEPTH:

Depth of seeding should not exceed 1-1/2 inches in the light soil or 3/4 inches in heavier soils.

FERTILIZATION:

Generally, in Kern County, alfalfa does not require fertilization. In two or three areas in the county, however, tests have shown a phosphorus deficiency. In these areas, then, the application of phosphate may be profitable.

IRRIGATION:

Irrigations will depend upon the kind of soil and its ability to retain moisture. Over-irrigation will result in excess foliage, which usually does not set seed. Water should be applied often enough to keep the plants in a good, healthful condition. Avoid late irrigations as it may shatter seed from ripened pods if exposed to water, and will darken seed.

WEED CONTROL:

The presence of primary noxious weeds or an abundance of other weeds is the most common cause of field rejections. It is, therefore, important to keep the fields free of weeds by any method convenient to the grower. Planting fields for seed production when any noxious weeds are known to be present, or fields badly

infested with weeds in general, is not recommended.

POLLINATORS:

Domestic bees are necessary to trip the flowers. From two to five strong hives per acre, spaced in groups as nearly as possible 500 to 600 feet apart over the field is recommended.

CONTROL OF HARMFUL INSECTS:

To produce high yields, the control of lygus bugs is very necessary. It is recommended that at least 1 pound of D.D.T. (20 pounds of 5% D.D.T.) be applied in the bud stage when one lygus bug is found per sweep of an insect net. Subsequent dustings may be necessary.

HARVESTING:

Harvesting may be done either by windrowing, then threshing, or by combining direct. Most important is the proper adjustment and speed of the cylinder to avoid injuring the seed. Injured seed will not germinate. Such speeds and adjustments may be obtained at the Farm and Home Advisors' Office.