

Farm & Home Advisors Office  
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### SUGAR BEET PRODUCTION IN FRESNO COUNTY

A firm contract with a processor should be made before sugar beets are planted in Fresno County.

Soils: Sugar beets are deep rooted. Deep, fine textured soils are well adapted. They are fairly tolerant of saline and alkaline soils.

Irrigation: Sugar beets require about 3 acre feet of water. The soil should be wetted to 5 feet before planting and available moisture maintained to a depth of 5 feet during the growing season. The beets should never be allowed to wilt.

Planting: Sugar beets are commonly planted two rows 14 inches apart on a 40 inch bed. Another common spacing is a single row on 30 inch beds. The single 30 inch spacing is more desirable if weed control is a serious problem. The seed is planted from 1/2 to no more than 2 inches deep in a fine, firm seedbed. From 4 to 6 pounds of seed per acre is planted. Seed is supplied by the processor at a price agreed upon in the contract.

Thinning: From 150 to 300 plants per 100 feet of row should remain after thinning. Gaps over 12 inches should be avoided.

Fertilizer: Crop rotation, fertilizer history and past experience influence the amount of fertilizer applied. Usually 80 to 200 pounds of actual nitrogen per acre are required. Applications should start early and be added at intervals during the growing season. Nitrogen in the soil should be depleted about 4 to 6 weeks before harvest.

Insects and Diseases: Curly top is transmitted by the beet leafhopper. This disease is controlled by the development of resistant varieties and by control of the leafhopper by the State Department of Agriculture.

Damping-off of seedlings is usually controlled adequately by seed treatment.

Sugar beets should not be planted on land infested by either root-knot nematode or sugar beet nematodes. Sugar beet nematodes have not been reported in Fresno County.

Insects have not created a serious economic problem in Fresno County.

Harvest: Most beet growers rent a sugar beet digger from the sugar company with whom they contract. Custom harvesters are also available.

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**WHAT WILL IT COST TO GROW SUGAR BEETS IN FRESNO COUNTY**

Based on yield of 20 tons per acre

Labor at \$ .90 per hour; light tractor at \$1.20;  
medium tractor at \$1.60; heavy tractor at \$2.50 per hr.

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The table below contains sample costs of growing sugar beets in Fresno County based on what is considered good management practices for this area. Most beets have been thinned by hand but it is expected that mechanical thinning will replace hand labor in the future. Where hand labor is used, costs for this operation will be about \$7.00 per acre higher than the cost given.

This table is designed as a guide in helping you to determine your costs of growing sugar beets and in aiding you in appraising and planning your crop program. Where your costs vary from those given, you can make the necessary adjustments.

	<u>Sample Costs : My Costs</u>	
	<u>'Per</u>	<u>'Per</u>
	<u>'Acre</u>	<u>'Ton</u>
<b>PRE-HARVEST LABOR AND MATERIAL COSTS:</b>		
Land preparation - 4 hrs., man & tractor	\$10.00	
Plant - .5 hr. 2 men & tractor, planter rent	2.20	
Seed - 5 lbs. @ 50¢	2.50	
Mechanical thinning - 1.5 hrs., man & light tractor	3.15	
Hand hoe & weed, 12 man hrs.	10.80	
Cultivate & fertilize - 3 hrs., man & light tractor	6.30	
Fertilizer - 100 lbs. nitrogen at 13¢ per lb.	13.00	
Irrigate - 1 pre & 8 crop - 10 man hrs.	9.00	
Water - power for 4 acre feet @ \$2.50	10.00	
Miscellaneous labor & materials	5.00	
<b>Total Pre-Harvest Labor &amp; Material Cost</b>	<b>71.95</b>	<b>3.59</b>
<b>HARVEST COSTS:</b>		
Harvest - 3 hrs., 3 men & heavy tractor	17.60	
Haul - contract @ \$1.00 per ton	20.00	
<b>Total Harvest Costs</b>	<b>37.60</b>	<b>1.88</b>
<b>CASH OVERHEAD COSTS:</b>		
General Expenses - office, phone, car, etc.	5.80	
Insurance, repairs & misc. cash costs	7.00	
County taxes	5.00	
<b>Total Cash Overhead Costs</b>	<b>17.80</b>	<b>.89</b>
<b>TOTAL CASH, LABOR &amp; FIELD POWER COST</b>	<b>127.35</b>	<b>6.36</b>
<b>DEPRECIATION:</b>		
Bldgs. & irrig. facilities - \$80 cost, 17 yrs. life	4.75	
Tillage, harvesting & other equipment except tractor, \$30 cost - 10 yrs. life	3.00	
<b>Total Depreciation</b>	<b>7.75</b>	<b>.39</b>
<b>INTEREST ON INVESTMENT AT 5%:</b>		
Bldgs., irrigation facilities & equip. @ 1/2 cost	2.75	
Land @ \$400 per acre	20.00	
<b>Total Interest on Investment</b>	<b>22.75</b>	<b>1.14</b>
<b>TOTAL COST OF PRODUCTION</b>	<b>157.85</b>	<b>7.89</b>