Orange County
Agricultural Extension Service
University of California

WHAT DOES IT COST YOU TO GROW BELL PEPPERS

(Based on yield of 20,000 lbs.)

A. H. Holland, Farm Advisor — Wallace Sullivan, Extension Economist

ITEMS		Sample Cost Acre	Sample Cost Cwt.	Your Cost Acre	Your Cost Cwt.
Land Preparation					
Disc	1 time	2.00			
Plow	1 time	4.00			
Float	1 time	2.00			
Apply chicken manure		- -			
Disc	1 time	2.00			
Harrow	3 times	6.00			
Miscellaneous		3.00			
TOTAL		19.00	.10		
Planting - (Seed)		2.50	.01		
Transplanting - (Plants)		- -			
Cultural Operations					
Push hoe	1 time	2.00			
Thin - by hand	1 time	12.00			
Cultivation & Furrow	7 times	10.50			
Irrigation	8 times	12.00			
Fertilize	1 time side dress	2.50			
Pest Control	3 times	6.00			
Hoe Weeds	2 times	8.00			
Miscellaneous		5.00			
TOTAL		58.00	.29		
Materials					
Seed	1 1/2 pounds	12.00			
Transplants		- -			
Water Irrigation	18 inches	16.00			
Fertilizer	Chicken - 400 ft.	40.00			
	Commercial - 700 lbs.	27.00			
Pest Control	90 lbs.	10.00			
Miscellaneous		2.00			
TOTAL		107.00	.54		
Cash Overhead					
General Expense	5% above	9.50			
Taxes	(Other than land)	2.00			
Insurance		1.50			
Repairs	(Minor)	2.00			
Miscellaneous		1.00			
TOTAL		16.00	.08		
Harvesting					
Pick, Pack, Haul to Roadside		150.00			
Crates, etc.		150.00			
TOTAL		300.00	1.50		
Depreciation		- -			
Land Rent		100.00	.50		
TOTAL ALL COSTS		602.50	3.02		

BELL PEPPERS AS A MARKET CROP IN ORANGE COUNTY

Introduction: Bell peppers grown in Orange County are usually sold as green mature fruit on the Los Angeles produce market. Some are grown for processing. Recently two to three hundred acres have been grown annually in Orange County. The state average is about 3400 acres. Local peppers are on the fresh market from July through December. Large fruit from one planting will continue to be produced over a period extending eight weeks or more depending upon the vigor of the plants.

Varieties: California Wonder and Yolo Wonder are almost exclusively grown. California Wonder is probably best in fruit shape and production when free of disease. Yolo Wonder, however, has resistance to tobacco mosaic and is the more productive variety when this disease is present.

Climate and Soils: Conditions desirable for growing bell peppers are cool summers and long frost-free seasons which exist in coastal areas of Orange County. Optimum temperatures for growth are from 65° to 85° F. Temperatures exceeding 90° F. may cause poor blossom set or sunburned fruit. Well drained soils in properly graded fields permit frequent light irrigations essential to good management. Well fertilized loams and sandy loam soils are better than sands for growing peppers.

Cultural Operations: Bell pepper plants are often greenhouse grown and then transplanted into fields. Transplanting and covering with hotcaps may begin in February. Hotcapping may continue into March, but frosts sometimes occur as late as mid-April. About 10 thousand plants are required if transplanted 18 inches apart in rows spaced 3 feet. Field seeding is often done when earliness is not required. Field seeded plantings are cheaper than transplantings. Greenhouse plants increase costs, even though there is less hand weeding and no thinning cost.

Fertilization: Poultry or other barnyard manure can be spread before planting. This should be followed by side dressing a nitrogen--containing fertilizer in the early growth of the crop. Sometimes 2 or more applications of fertilizer are made after planting. A total of 200 or more pounds nitrogen per acre should usually be applied for best results.

Irrigation: When plants are small, the soil should be kept moist by light irrigations. Later irrigations may be heavier and less frequent. Unless the soil is quite heavy and the weather cool, irrigations should be at least every 2 or 3 weeks.

Pest Control: Peppers may be attacked by insects from the time of seeding until harvest. Wireworms may attack the seed. Seedlings are attacked by wireworms, cutworms, beetles, thrips, and aphids. Older plants or fruit are attacked by aphids, thrips, earworms, and the pepper weevil.

Wireworms may be controlled by soil or seed treatment. Young seedlings are protected by light dusting or spraying with D.D.T.

Parathion dusts or sprays will control most insect pests. D.D.T. is also effective but will not control aphids. Because of residues these materials should not be applied near harvest.

Diseases most severe to peppers are tobacco and cucumber mosaic. Weeds and ornamental plants are alternate hosts. Tobacco mosaic is spread by aphids, equipment, and handling plants. Yolo Wonder is grown where tobacco mosaic is expected to be severe. No satisfactory control of cucumber mosaic is known.

2/55/200 copies