

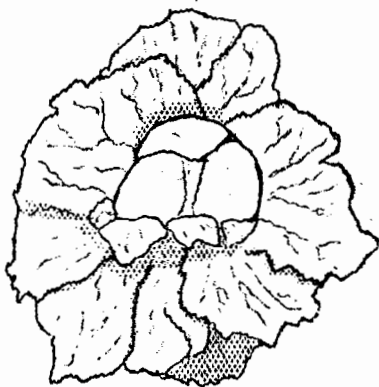
LT-SI-74

lettuce

sample costs

and

production



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

Cost Data Sheet No. 15

UC Cooperative Extension

LETTUCE--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 - 500 cartons per acre (11.7 tons). 90-110 days to maturity.

OPERATION	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		2.00	4.00
Fertilize	2.50	400# 11-48-0	46.00			48.50
Disc 2x	3.50					7.00
Landplane 2x	4.00					8.00
List	4.50					4.50
TOTAL LAND PREPARATION						\$ 95.00
GROWING PERIOD						
Incorporate beds	7.00	Herbicide	5.00			12.00
Plant (Precision)	7.00	Seed 1/2# @ 21.50	10.75			32.00
		Coating	14.25			60.00
Thin				20	60.00	60.00
Cultivate 3x	4.00					12.00
Fertilize-side-dress 3x	4.00	200# N @ 20¢	40.00			52.00
Weed				7	21.00	21.00
Sprinkler Irrigate		Rent	30.00	10	30.00	60.00
Irrigate 6x		Water 3 ac ft	8.10	20	60.00	68.10
Insect Control 10x	3.00	Insecticides	60.00			90.00
GROWING PERIOD						\$407.10
GROWING PERIOD & LAND PREP. COSTS						\$502.10
Land rent						125.00
Cash Overhead - 10% of preharvest costs and land rent						62.71
TOTAL PREHARVEST COSTS						\$689.81
HARVEST COSTS						
Custom harvest: cut, pack, haul 500 cartons @ 1.50						\$750.00
TOTAL ALL COSTS						\$1439.81

Cost per carton - 500 carton yield = \$2.88

YIELDS

The average county yield is about 500-550 cartons per acre. However, some growers have packed over 700 cartons per acre. The Agricultural Commissioner's reports show seasonal average price per ton during the past five years varied from a low of \$68.35 in 1970 to a high of \$131.59 in 1972. There were 42,000 acres grown in 1973.

PLANTING DATES

Plantings extend continually from early September to mid-November. Early plantings are harvested in late November to early December while October and November plantings are cut during January, February, and March. Both coated and noncoated seed is used. Growers feel that coated seed stands require less hand thinning.

VARIETIES

The date of planting affects the variety grown since the season progresses from extreme heat to cool days and freezing nights, then back to moderately high temperatures in early spring. Varieties commonly planted in early-mid-September: GL 659,

Mesa 659, Empire. Mid-late September: Merit (3186). Late September: Merit (3186), 49'er. Early-mid October: 49'er, Climax. Mid-late October: Climax, Vanguard. Late-October-early November: Climax, Vanguard, Golden State D. Early plantings mature in about 90 days while later ones require 120 or more days.

SOILS

Silt loams and sandy soils are preferred. The lighter soils provide better drainage during cold weather and warm up more readily. Lettuce has a moderate degree of salt tolerance. Excess salinity results in poor seed germination and small heads.

IRRIGATION

Lettuce is planted on dry soil and irrigated up. Most growers use sprinklers until the seedlings emerge to provide better stands with reduced seedling rates. Rental and labor costs for sprinkler use are \$45.00 - \$70.00 per acre. Gated pipe is also used especially near harvest. Irrigation labor costs also include shovel work, grader work and pipe setting.

FERTILIZERS

400 lbs of 11-48-0 are broadcast prior to listing. Nitrogen is sidedressed just after thinning and during later growth. Early, warm season lettuce requires less N than that grown in January and February. About 120-150 lbs N is used early while 180 to over 250 lbs are applied to the cold weather crop. Lettuce should not be fertilized from December 25 to January 15 as it is too cold to be of any value.

WEED CONTROL

Herbicides are applied preplant and may be incorporated with a ground or power driven incorporator. Consult the Farm Advisor for latest recommendations.

PESTS AND DISEASES

Watch for crickets, cutworms, salt marsh caterpillars, beet armyworms, and cabbage loopers. Loopers can be especially serious after thinning. The most serious diseases are lettuce mosaic, big vein, damping off diseases, and Sclerotinia. Use mosaic-free seed 0:30000 and keep field weeds down. Consult the Farm Advisor's Office for pest control recommendations.

FUMIGATION

Fumigation is needed on early fields where rootknot and Longidorus nematodes are found. After soil temperatures cool down, Longidorus nematodes are less active. Rootknot should be controlled anytime. Normal fumigation cost is \$30.60.

HARVESTING

Most lettuce is field packed in cartons, trucked to vacuum coolers, and shipped to market in refrigerated trucks and railway cars. Field packing of film-wrapped heads is also done.

Prepared by
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