



New Mexico State University

Extension Plant Sciences

Alfalfa Market News

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Hay Prices for New Mexico

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County	Contact	Premium Hay (\$/ton)	Top Quality Hay (\$/ton)	Other Hay (\$/ton)	Condition/ Market Activity/Cut Complete
Chaves	Sandra Barraza, County Agent	\$165-185 large delivered; \$200-230 small in barn	N/A	\$125-145 large light-striped delivered; \$180-200 small striped	6 th 50%, some may get a short 7 th ; Hay going into the barn.
Eddy	Woods Houghton, County Agent	\$180-200 large; \$185-240 small	N/A	N/A	6 th 100%; Shortages due to extensive cutworm problems. Replanting needed.
Hidalgo	Christy Rubio, County Agent	\$150 large; \$8.00 per 3-string bale	\$130; \$6.00 per 2-string bale	\$115 oat hay; \$5.00 per bale ryegrass; \$80-100 rained on	7 th 70%; market consistent; mostly dry; growth is slowing.
Lea	Wayne Cox, County Agent	\$165-170 large; \$8.00 small	\$150-155 large; \$6.50-7.00 small	\$145 large poor quality; \$5.00/bale	5 th 100%; Market steady.
Torrance	Gene Winn, County Agent	\$160-175	\$150-160	\$115-125	4 th 50%; Market fair; Warm early fall.
Valencia	Kyle Tator, County Agent	\$5.00-7.50/bale small	\$4.00-5.00/bale small	\$3.00-4.00/bale for cow hay	4 th 100%; Market moderate; Good supplies of good quality hay; Warm Sept. & early Oct.

Alfalfa Cost and Return Estimates

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Long-run continued success of New Mexico's commercial alfalfa crop will, as always, depend upon the profitability of the crop in any or all of its various forms. Table 1 presents typical costs and returns of producing alfalfa in the primary producing areas of New Mexico. These estimates provide comparisons that can be used by current and prospective alfalfa producers.

Alfalfa is the top commodity grown in New Mexico and is grown throughout the state. Supplies typically peak in early May and decline in October each year. Much of New Mexico's hay crop goes straight to dairies, horse farms, and cattle producers in the state.

Increased profit can be generated by obtaining a higher price or reducing costs. The cost-return relationship must be examined carefully by every producer of every commodity, whether in agriculture or manufacturing a commodity or even in service business. Because of the economic structure of agricultural markets, cost and return relationships are particularly important. The basic building blocks of cost and return analyses are enterprise budgets, which are later organized and compiled into other budgets, including whole farm, partial, and cash flow budgets. An enterprise budget includes all costs and returns associated with producing an enterprise in some particular manner. Enterprise budgets are constructed on a per-unit basis, such as per acre, to make a workable comparison among alternative enterprises. An enterprise is any activity that results in a product used on the farm or sold in the market,

and a farm is made up of any one or many enterprises. Each enterprise requires a certain combination of resources, such as land, labor, machinery, capital, and purchased inputs.

Enterprise budgets can estimate costs and returns on enterprises currently in the farm plan, as well as new enterprises being considered. Most enterprise budgets also list physical resources needed for production, which are useful for prospective new producers of a commodity. In addition to producers, many other professionals in agriculture find enterprise budgets valuable sources of information. These include lenders, assessors and appraisers, consultants, and lawyers. The New Mexico State University Cooperative Extension Service publishes representative budgets for various regions of the state annually. These enterprise budgets represent typical costs and returns for a given size and method of production, in a particular region of the state. The budgets are not averages, but represent typical situations.

NMSU budgets represent current conditions for farming situations where management is above average. Adjusting these budgets for prices and yields expected in the future would increase their value as decision-making tools. Projections based upon the unique set of conditions on each farm would be of most value. Some items can be modified easily to build more personalized budgets. Quantities and prices of purchased inputs, yields and prices of crops, the cost of fuel, and labor costs may be readily adapted to individual farms. Another example of a modification to these budgets is to analyze each operation performed on each crop. If these operations are performed in a different pattern, the budgets should be changed. Yields and prices of the crops are highly variable from year to year. In analyzing historical budgets for use in forward planning, the astute manager will decide how much risk can be adsorbed, and select cropping patterns accordingly. In forward planning, the manager should consider both optimistic and pessimistic price and yield combinations to account for risk, and should consider crop rotation plans.

The effect of the various costs on planning decisions and business analysis is very important. These estimates present a *full* cost approach to enterprise analysis. Many of the costs are opportunity costs, that is, they are real costs of doing business, but may not be cash expenditures. For example, if all labor is provided by the operator, then the entire amount listed in these estimates is money that can be kept by the operator – it represents a return to operator and family labor. Similarly, all land and all capital is charged at competitive rates regardless of whether land is rented or owned or whether capital is borrowed or owned.

The key to interpreting the “bottom-line” figure calculated in these estimates lies in the type of decision at hand. For next year’s crop, the important point is the level of gross margins, the returns minus all cash expenses. Can enough cash be generated to meet reasonable family living needs and to cover all financial debt commitments? In the long run, *all* expenses must be covered (of particular importance when trying to determine whether to buy a farm). In the short run, a negative net income is not desirable, but may not necessarily be enough to cause business failure. For a short while, depreciation and other non-cash costs can provide a cushion to get over the hump.

Budgets like these are updated annually. More detailed estimates and a guide to using the budgets (NMSU Extension publication 400 Z-32) may be obtained from each county extension farm management specialist.

***** **Mark Your Calendars** *****

The date has been set for the 2011 Southwest Hay & Forage Conference (January 13-14, 2011). As usual, the event will take place at the Ruidoso Convention Center, Ruidoso, NM. For more information, please contact Gina Sterrett at 575-626-5677.



, Mark Marsalis, Extension Agronomist—New Mexico State University is an equal opportunity employer. All programs are available to everyone regardless of race, color, religion, sex, age, handicap or national origin, New Mexico State University and the U.S. Department of Agriculture cooperating.

Table 1. Costs and returns for producing alfalfa in New Mexico for 2010.

County	Bernalillo Valencia	Chaves	Dona Ana Sierra	Eddy	Curry	Union
Marketing System	Wholesale	Wholesale	Wholesale	Wholesale	Wholesale	Wholesale
Units	Tons	Tons	Tons	Tons	Tons	Tons
Gross Returns (A)	660.00	910.00	1040.00	950.00	845.00	845.00
Cash Operating Expenses						
Seed						
Fertilizer	\$36.00	\$24.00	\$41.90	\$42.00	\$132.00	\$55.60
Chemicals	\$21.71	\$71.93	\$14.40	\$91.66	\$34.93	\$14.50
Crop Insurance	\$.56	\$.66	\$.86	\$.01	\$.55	\$.24
Other Purchased Inputs	\$15.39		\$34.28	\$53.64	\$14.25	\$1.92
Canal Water	\$28.00		\$88.00			
Fuel & Lubricants-- Equipment	\$11.32	\$17.76	\$20.74	\$47.40	\$25.64	\$16.81
Fuel--Irrigation		\$66.74	\$2.50	\$35.90	\$100.95	\$90.21
Repairs	\$1.41	\$6.19	\$6.34	\$33.51	\$7.94	\$3.22
Custom Charges						
Land Taxes	\$5.09	\$1.53	\$9.06	\$1.98	\$.82	\$.24
Other Expenses	\$202.69	\$32.97	\$120.36	\$53.43	\$43.58	\$38.24
Total Cash Expenses (B)	\$322.17	\$221.78	\$338.44	\$359.53	\$360.66	\$220.98
Return Over Cash Expenses (C=A-B)	\$337.83	\$688.22	\$701.56	\$590.47	\$484.34	\$624.02
Fixed Expenses (D)	\$107.99	\$115.19	\$149.33	\$106.75	\$98.30	\$37.02
Total Expenses (E=B+D)	\$430.16	\$336.97	\$487.77	\$466.28	\$458.96	\$258.00
Net Farm Income (F=A-E=C-D)	\$229.84	\$573.02	\$552.24	\$483.73	\$386.04	\$587.00
Labor and Management Costs (G)	\$86.15	\$110.37	\$132.05	\$125.08	\$98.04	\$83.54
Net Operating Profit (H=F-G)	\$143.69	\$462.65	\$420.19	\$358.64	\$288.00	\$503.46
Capital Costs						
Interest on Operating Capital (I)	\$4.28	\$4.69	\$6.46	\$8.39	\$9.89	\$4.82
Interest on Equipment Investment (J)	<u>\$26.32</u>	<u>\$28.82</u>	<u>\$23.25</u>	<u>\$27.87</u>	<u>\$31.70</u>	<u>\$11.96</u>
Total Capital Costs (K=I+J)	\$30.61	\$33.51	\$29.71	\$36.26	\$41.59	\$16.78
Return to Land and Risk (L=H-K)	\$113.08	\$429.14	\$390.48	\$322.38	\$246.41	\$486.69

*(Letters in parentheses refer to definitions in the Glossary)

GLOSSARY

Depreciation expense: Annual allowance for the deterioration of an asset whose productive life is more than one year. Depreciation is not paid in cash, but it is an expense to the business since the purchase price of a long-lived asset cannot and should not be deducted in any one year.

Enterprise budget: A detailed full-cost listing of all returns and cost (whether paid or unpaid) associated with a particular crop or livestock enterprise.

Fixed costs: Expenses that do not vary with the level of production, such as depreciation and personal property taxes. For example, personal property taxes are the same on a tractor regardless of whether that tractor is used on one acre or 300 acres. (Line E)

Gross margins: Returns minus variable costs; the most important short-run planning figure.

Gross returns: Total cash receipts from a crop, i.e. total yield times price. (Line A)

Interest on operating capital and equipment investment: A calculated cost, or opportunity cost, on the use of capital in the farm business. For some farmers, interest cost might outlay while for others it might be an imputed cost. (Lines I and J)

Net farm income: Returns to labor management, capital, land and risk, i.e., gross returns minus purchased inputs, fuel, oil, lubricants, repairs, and fixed costs. (Line F)

Net operating profit: Gross returns minus total operating expenses. (Line H)

Operating capital: Operating expenses minus fixed costs, i.e. the amount of cash required for all purchased inputs (including labor, fuel, oil and repairs) to produce a crop, without regard to machinery, equipment and land investments.

Operating expenses: The total of all costs of producing a crop, except interest.

Opportunity cost: The cost using a resource in one enterprise when it could be used in alternative enterprises or investment opportunities measured by the return that could be obtained from using the resource in an alternative investment. For example, if cash used in crop production could be placed in the bank at a 10% rate of interest, the opportunity cost of cash to the crop would be 10%.

Overhead expenses: Expenses not directly associated with production, such as insurance, employee benefits, land taxes, and utilities. These costs occur without regard to level of production, or whether production exists at all.

Partial budgeting: A planning procedure that lists only items of receipts and expenses that are affected by a particular change in procedure or organization.

Rate of return on investment: Net operating profit divided by the total machinery, equipment, and land investment. A measure of profitability of assets in percentage terms.

Return over cash expense: Gross returns less all cash operating expenses. (Line C = A-B)

Return to capital, labor, land, and risk: Charges for the listed factors of capital, labor, and land have not yet been subtracted from gross returns. Typically, these three factors are owned.

Return to land and risk: Net operating profit minus the interest charge on the use of machinery, equipment, and operating capital. This return figure shows the final return before a land charge is calculated. (Line L)

Return to risk: Return to land and risk minus a charge for land investment; the amount of gross returns left over after charges are made for every factor of production.

Variable cost: Expenses that vary with the level of level of production, such as labor, fuel, oil and repairs, fertilizer, and seed.

Whole-farm budget: Projected crop mix revenues and expenses for a production year. A projected plan and income statement.