

Custom Rates for Farm Services in Missouri

The rates reported in this guide summarize a statewide survey conducted online and by solicitations of University of Missouri Extension specialists in the spring of 2023. We asked farmers, agribusiness firms and land improvement contractors to provide the rates they were charging or paying in 2022 for custom services, excluding the cost of materials being applied. Thank you to those who provided information — even if it was just for one activity.

Fewer people respond to this survey every time it is taken – every three years. There may be fewer farmers using custom operators or fewer businesses conducting custom activities. But it is still a very popular Extension guide.

The number of responses to many questions asked was too low to have statistical confidence in the results. However, the results presented here have been compared to custom rates guides in Iowa to see if our rates are in line with their rates. These results have also been compared to previous custom rates surveys to see if the direction and magnitude of changes seems reasonable.

There is no assurance that the average rates reported in this guide will cover your costs for performing the service or that you will be able to hire a custom operator in your area for the rates shown.

Calculate your own costs carefully before deciding the rate to charge or pay. Before entering into an agreement, discuss with the other party all the details of the specific job to be performed.

Custom rates cover the cost of machinery, fuel, labor and, occasionally, a product such as lime or bale wrap. The USDA reports that machinery values and labor costs have increased by about 23 percent and 18 percent,

respectively, since our last custom rate survey in 2019. Diesel prices have increased by 38 percent in the last three years. This increase in the costs of inputs into custom activities suggest that custom rates should have increased over the past several years.

Explanation of the rates in this guide

Rates in this guide reflect each respondent's judgment of a "normal" job. Operators may add charges if they consider a job abnormal, such as distance from the operator's base location, the amount of product or labor involved, the difficulty of the terrain, or special requirements of the customer or location.

The "Number reporting" and "Range of responses" columns are important. They indicate the number of responses for that activity and the variation in those responses. A small number of responses combined with a large range of responses means that there is less confidence in those results. The "Average rate" column indicates the average charge for all of the rates in that row. The "Median rate" had an equal number of responses higher and lower.

As in past years, this guide reports the average rate, and the low, mid and high rates reported by those providing responses. When few responses are averaged, a single response can move the average a lot. In this situation, the extremes may have unduly influenced the average reported. The range of responses also give the user an idea of how variable the rates charged for field activities might be.

Possible explanations of the wide ranges are the type or size of equipment used, the mix of labor and equipment used, or different business objectives of full-time custom operators compared to local farmers supplementing their income.

Table 1. Field work activities.

Activity	Average rate	Median rate	Range of responses	Number reporting
Chisel plow	\$27.10 / acre	\$25.00	\$18.00 - \$35.00	5
Heavy or offset disking	21.36 / acre	24.50	15.00 - 30.00	7
Tandem disk	23.81 / acre	24.75	10.00 - 40.00	8
Vertical tillage tool	19.75 / acre	19.00	11.00 - 30.00	10
Field cultivator	19.05 / acre	19.00	8.00 - 28.00	10
Cut brush (brush hog)	97.86 / hour	100.00	55.00 - 150.00	7
Mow pasture or CRP land	95.71 / hour	75.00	75.00 - 150.00	7

Table 2. Planting activities.

Activity	Average rate	Median rate	Range of responses	Number reporting
Conventional planting				
Corn or grain sorghum: <i>plant in 30-inch rows</i>	\$24.17 / acre	\$25.00	\$15.00 - \$40.00	15
Corn or grain sorghum: <i>plant in narrow rows</i>	28.50 / acre	28.00	15.00 - 45.00	9
Corn or grain sorghum: <i>plant and apply fertilizer or chemicals</i>	28.50 / acre	27.00	20.00 - 42.50	5
Soybean: <i>plant in 30-inch rows</i>	25.31 / acre	24.00	15.00 - 40.00	8
Soybean: <i>plant in 15-inch rows</i>	26.04 / acre	25.00	15.00 - 50.00	14
Soybean: <i>drill</i>	22.33 / acre	20.00	15.00 - 35.00	9
Small grains or forage crops: <i>drill</i>	24.77 / acre	25.00	15.00 - 35.00	13
No-till planting				
Corn or grain sorghum: <i>plant in 30-inch rows</i>	24.81 / acre	25.00	14.00 - 45.00	16
Corn or grain sorghum: <i>plant in narrow rows</i>	29.07 / acre	28.00	15.00 - 45.00	7
Soybean: <i>plant in 30-inch rows</i>	27.89 / acre	25.00	15.00 - 40.00	9
Soybean: <i>plant in 15-inch rows</i>	25.72 / acre	25.00	14.00 - 45.00	16
Small grains or forage crops: <i>drill</i>	21.00 / acre	20.00	12.00 - 35.00	11
Additional charge for variable rate	3.00 / acre	2.00	1.00 - 5.00	9

Table 3. Fertilizer and chemical application.

Application	Average rate	Median rate	Range of responses	Number reporting
Deliver and spread fertilizer (not including the cost of fertilizer)				
Dry fertilizer on cropland: <i>single spread</i>	\$7.02 / acre	\$7.00	\$4.25 - \$9.50	29
Dry fertilizer on cropland: <i>double spread</i>	10.06 / acre	10.00	5.50 - 14.00	18
Dry fertilizer on cropland: <i>variable rate</i>	9.93 / acre	10.00	7.00 - 14.00	21
Dry fertilizer on pasture (topdressing)	7.25 / acre	7.38	4.25 - 9.50	24
Dry fertilizer plus seed	7.81 / acre	7.38	5.00 - 12.50	20
Spray liquid fertilizer	7.84 / acre	7.50	6.50 - 10.00	11
Spray liquid fertilizer and other chemicals	7.90 / acre	7.50	6.50 - 10.50	12
Inject anhydrous ammonia	18.53 / acre	18.00	12.00 - 30.00	16
Lime				
Deliver and spread: <i>including lime</i>	27.50 / ton	27.00	22.00 - 35.00	10
Spread only	8.44 / acre	8.50	5.00 - 11.00	12
Apply chemicals (not including the cost of chemicals)				
Spray with self-propelled crop sprayer	7.71 / acre	7.50	5.00 - 10.00	28
Spray with floater	7.84 / acre	7.75	5.00 - 10.00	8
Spray with pull-type sprayer	6.75 / acre	7.25	5.00 - 7.50	4

Table 4. Harvesting and hauling activities.

Activity	Average rate	Median rate	Range of responses	Number reporting
Combining				
Corn	\$43.29 / acre	\$40.00	\$30.00 - \$60.00	17
Soybean	39.42 / acre	40.00	28.00 - 60.00	19
Small grains	41.13 / acre	40.00	35.00 - 50.00	8
Grain cart, in field	9.80 / acre	10.00	5.00 - 15.00	5
Hauling grain or seed				
Field to farm storage with farm vehicle or wagon	0.16 / bushel	0.15	0.05 - 0.26	13
Bin to market with large grain truck over 20 miles	0.29 / bushel	0.27	0.20 - 0.38	9
	4.07 / loaded mile	4.59	2.50 - 5.00	6

Table 5. Harvesting and hauling hay.

Activity	Average rate	Median rate	Range of responses	Number reporting
Cutting and conditioning	\$19.00 / acre	\$18.00	\$10.00 - \$30.00	7
Raking hay	9.25 / acre	8.50	5.00 - 20.00	8
Round bale only with net wrap	17.44 / bale	17.50	8.00 - 25.00	18
Cut, rake, and bale with net wrap	29.86 / bale	28.00	18.00 - 45.00	25
Cut, rake, and bale with net wrap	54% of crop	55%	33% - 66%	6
Tube wrap round bales, with wrap	10.00 / bale	10.00	5.00 - 12.00	7
Moving round bales on farm or locally	6.50 / bale	5.00	3.50 - 10.00	7

Table 6. Earth moving and heavy equipment jobs.

Activity	Average rate	Median rate	Range of responses	Number reporting
By type of equipment used (including operator labor)				
Bulldozer: <i>under 150 hp</i>	\$145.00 / hour	\$147.50	\$120.00 - 165.00	8
Bulldozer: <i>over 150 hp</i>	196.00 / hour	200.00	150.00 - 250.00	15
Scraper: <i>under 13 cubic yard capacity</i>	153.00 / hour	150.00	125.00 - 200.00	5
Scraper: <i>13+ cubic yard capacity</i>	213.89 / hour	200.00	170.00 - 300.00	9
Track-type loader	149.44 / hour	150.00	100.00 - 175.00	9
Track hoe/excavator: <i>mini (2–6 tons)</i>	112.50 / hour	115.00	100.00 - 125.00	6
Track hoe/excavator: <i>medium and large</i>	173.67 / hour	175.00	110.00 - 230.00	15
Back hoe	125.83 / hour	125.00	80.00 - 175.00	6
Tree shear	135.00 / hour	122.50	100.00 - 225.00	6
Skid loader	108.57 / hour	100.00	65.00 - 150.00	21
By job performed				
Pond and lake construction	235.00 / hour	200.00	150.00 - 400.00	10
Land leveling	211.50 / hour	200.00	150.00 - 400.00	10
Land clearing: <i>cut brush and trees; pile on site</i>	173.75 / hour	170.00	55.00 - 400.00	16
Land clearing: <i>remove brush, trees, stumps; pile on site</i>	197.50 / hour	180.00	100.00 - 500.00	16
Building terraces: <i>conventional gradient</i>	183.33 / hour	185.00	130.00 - 235.00	15
Building terraces: <i>parallel, cut and fill to grass outlets</i>	187.73 / hour	185.00	130.00 - 230.00	11
Building terraces: <i>parallel, with storage to tile outlets</i>	193.50 / hour	192.50	150.00 - 230.00	10
Building terraces: <i>diversion</i>	197.27 / hour	200.00	150.00 - 235.00	11
Grade and shape grass waterways	191.67 / hour	192.50	130.00 - 235.00	12
Ditch construction	184.17 / hour	192.50	75.00 - 235.00	12