

Santa Cruz County Farm Bureau Ask Laura Newsletter Column
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Q: What cost and return studies do you have for Central Coast crops?

A: At UC Cooperative Extension in both our Santa Cruz County Watsonville office and our Monterey County Salinas office, we work on a number of different studies that estimate growing and harvest costs, along with potential returns, for area farmers. We recently completed a new study for fresh market raspberries, which can be viewed and downloaded at our local website: <http://cesantacruz.ucdavis.edu> or the Department of Agricultural and Resources Economics website at UC Davis: <http://coststudies.ucdavis.edu>. At these websites you will also find various other studies that are available for the Santa Cruz, Monterey, San Benito area, and for California agriculture. For our area, we have the following studies available:

Raspberries (2012) – fresh market, primocane bearing, with tunnels
Strawberries (2011) – second year production
Olive Oil (2011) – Central and North Coast – medium density for bottled olive oil
Strawberries (2010) – fresh market
Lettuce (2010) – wrapped head, 40-inch beds
Lettuce (2009) – organic leaf
Blackberries (2008) – fresh market

There are also archived—historical—studies available at both of the websites shown above. In addition, several current studies are available for the San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara area, which may be of interest to you:

Broccoli (2012) – fresh market
Avocados (2011) – conventional and organic
Strawberries (2011) – fresh market and freezer berries

All studies include one or more tables that estimate costs and material inputs on a per acre basis for land preparation, fertilization and pest management practices, harvest, business overhead, and in most cases investment costs. The studies can help you project your cash flow and manage your finances, determine when or if production loans may be necessary for your operation, and assist you in scheduling labor needs. For example, the monthly cash cost table shows the months in which significant field operations take place, and when you may need to consider adding employees to complete these activities in a timely manner. Most studies also have a ranging analysis, which shows potential net returns for a variety of different yields and prices—another important table to help you project and manage the finances and profitability of your operation.

If there are particular crop studies that you are interested in seeing for the future, we are glad to speak with you and welcome your suggestions.