

## YUMA AREA AGRICULTURE

Yuma County is located in the southwestern portion of the State of Arizona along the Colorado and Gila Rivers. The nation of Mexico borders Yuma County on the south. California lies across the Colorado River to the west. Yuma County encompasses some 5,509 square miles and accounts for about 4.85% of the state's land mass. Within the county, about 8.5% of the land area is in private ownership.

Population of Yuma County totaled 160,026 people in the 2000 census. The U.S. Census noted that Yuma County, which grew by some 4.1% yearly between 1990 and 2000, was the third fastest growing metropolitan area in the United States.

Agriculture is an integral part of the history of Yuma County. Prior to European exploration, Native Americans raised melons, gourds and grains in the flood plains of the Colorado and Gila Rivers. Traditional farming has been in region since the 1860's, diverting water from both rivers. Today, there are approximately 200,000 acres of irrigated land around Yuma, most of it in seven irrigation districts, all of which rely on Colorado River water delivered through facilities developed by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation. Location of these irrigated areas is shown on the Yuma Area Projects Map. The districts are listed below, together with current O & M fees for irrigation water.

District Name	Size in Irrigable Acres	Operation & Maintenance Fees.
<i>Yuma Project</i>		
Valley Division	50,000	\$62.00, includes first 5 acre feet.
Reservation Division	15,000	\$45.50, includes first 5 acre feet
Unit 'B'	3,300	\$105.00, includes first 9 acre feet
<i>Gila Project</i>		
North Gila Valley	6,000	\$26.00, flat rate.
South Gila Valley	12,000	\$30, includes first first 5 acre feet
Wellton Mohawk	60,000	\$60.60, includes first four acre feet
Yuma Mesa	<u>25,000</u>	\$50., includes first 9 acre feet
<b>Total Acreage</b>	171,300	

Yuma County is generally ranked in the top 20 counties nationally in terms of gross agricultural income. Important winter vegetable crops include lettuce, cauliflower, broccoli, celery, carrots, peanuts and melons in the spring. Field crops include cotton, alfalfa, bermuda, wheat and other grains. Most of Arizona's citrus is produced in Yuma County.

The area has a 12-month growing season, adequate irrigation water at a reasonable cost, and good soils. There is a strong demand for farmland suitable for production of winter vegetables in the valleys, and for citrus, especially lemons on the Yuma Mesa.

Irrigated land prices and annual cash rentals in the valleys vary because of location and have shown a steady increase. The highest land values have been in the upper part of the Yuma Valley, the North and South Gila Valleys east of Yuma, the western part of the Wellton-Mohawk District known as the Dome Valley, and in the Bard Valley, across the river in California.

Production of winter produce is the major crop in all these areas. More than 80,000 acres of lettuce, cauliflower, broccoli and other winter vegetables were produced in 2000. About 6,200 acres of cantaloupe, watermelons and honey dews were planted that spring. During the peak of production in December, January and February most of the lettuce and some other winter vegetables in the United States are produced in Yuma County. In the past twelve months, four new vegetable coolers have been built in the area, ranging from 80,000 to 120,000 sq. ft. Package cost to develop such a facility is about \$70. to \$75. per square foot.

A specialty crop in the Bard, California area is Medjool dates. There are currently approximately 1,000 acres of these dates, most in production. This is the largest date producing acreage in the United States. Competition for farmland in the Bard area for winter produce, dates and citrus contributes to high land prices. Several hundred acres of Medjool dates have also been planted on the South Yuma Mesa outside irrigation project boundaries, irrigated from deep wells under drip irrigation. This acreage is now coming into production.

A major market for alfalfa and wheat is the McElhaney Cattle Company feedlot at Wellton, which can feed over 100,000 head of cattle at one time. Presently, some 500 head are being shipped each week to a new meat packing plant in Brawley, California, which the McElhaney Co. co-owns.

Gross income from agriculture in Yuma County is often the highest in Arizona, depending on prices received. In 2000 the gross income generated by field crops, vegetables and citrus totaled about \$610,000,000. Gross income from livestock in 1998 was around \$75,000,000.

<b>Location</b>	<b>Value Per Acre</b>	<b>Sale Price Activity / Trends</b>	<b>Annual Cash Rents</b>	<b>Rent Rates Activity / Trends</b>
North Yuma Valley	\$10,500 - \$15,000	Limited / Upward	\$500 - \$700	Active / Moderate increase
South Yuma Valley	\$9,000 - \$12,000	Limited / Upward	\$500 - \$600	Active / Moderate increase
North & South Gila Valleys	\$10,000 - \$15,000	Limited / Upward	\$500 - \$700	Active / Moderate increase
Yuma Mesa Districts	\$7,000 - \$9,000	Limited / Moderate	\$125 - \$175	Limited / Stable
Wellton-Mohawk Dome Valley	\$10,000 - \$12,000	Active / Upward	\$450 - \$600	Active / Moderate increase
Wellton, Tacna areas	\$5,500 - \$9,500	Active / Upward	\$250 - \$450	Active / Moderate increase
Bard Valley, CA. Irrigated Farmland	\$9,000 - \$12,000	Limited / Upward	\$500 - \$600	Active / Moderate increase
Medjool Dates	\$30,000 - \$35,000	Limited / Stable	\$4,000 - \$4,800	Active / Stable