Land grading in South West irrigation areas, 1966-67

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LAND GRADING IN SOUTH WEST IRRIGATION AREAS, 1966-67

Land grading in the South West Irrigation Areas with modern earth moving equipment first commenced in 1949. The Government, through the P.W.D., made available machines for which farmers paid an hourly hire charge. The scheme was designed to cover operational costs only.

Gradually private contractors moved into the field and by the end of last season were doing most of the work. It was decided that for the 1966-67 season the work should be left to private enterprise. This proved satisfactory.

Land grading is supervised by officers of the Department of Agriculture’s Irrigation Branch.

The advantages of land grading are well recognised by farmers and this season grading operations were carried out on 208 farms.

A total of 2,178 acres has been graded inside the irrigation districts and 855 acres outside the area, making at total of 3,033 acres—an all-time record—the previous record was 1,937 acres inside the irrigation districts in 1963-64.

Over the past 18 years 29,555 acres have been graded within the irrigation areas. This figure includes land that has been graded more than once. After grading practically all of the graded land goes immediately into production. This is shown in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Utilization of land immediately after grading</th>
<th>Land graded inside Irrigation Area</th>
<th>Land graded outside Irrigation Area</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Permanent pasture</td>
<td>791 acres</td>
<td>47 acres</td>
<td>838</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual pasture</td>
<td>774 acres</td>
<td>764 acres</td>
<td>1,538</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fodder crops</td>
<td>531 acres</td>
<td>30 acres</td>
<td>561</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fallow and miscellaneous</td>
<td>15 acres</td>
<td>14 acres</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetables</td>
<td>58 acres</td>
<td></td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orchards</td>
<td>9 acres</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2,178 acres</td>
<td>855 acres</td>
<td>3,033</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is no tendency for the demand for grading to slacken. One interesting feature of the year’s operations is the increased amount of grading done outside the irrigation areas. Most of this increase is in the preparation of land for winter pasture. Grading improves the drainage of this land and makes it more suitable for cultural operations.

From figures supplied by one of the larger operators, the cost of grading varied from $3.33 to $91.42 per acre, with an overall average cost of $22.42 per acre.

The hire rate charged by this contractor was $14 per hour for a Caterpillar 14 and $10 per hour for a Caterpillar 12. Apart from land grading the machines are used to excavate drains and channels.
Joe really should have been in Sir Edmund Hillary's team
The only way he ever wanted to go was UP.
Which could have made him a great mountain climber, but didn't
help him much on a tractor.
Faced with the need to turn on a bank or slope, guess which way
Joe would instinctively turn.
Correct. Up.
And in which direction would this impel the tractor?
Right again. Down.
And not on its wheels, either.
After a lucky escape, Joe gave up trying to repeal the law of
gravity.
Take his tip.
It's not worth trying.