

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 fall 2025 through winter 2026. We asked farmers, agribusiness firms and land improvement contractors to provide the rates they were charging or paying in 2025 for custom services, excluding the cost of materials being applied. Thank you to those who provided information, even if it was for just one activity. In total, 953 individual responses were provided across all activities. Fewer people respond to this survey each time it is taken, which is every three years. There may be fewer farmers using custom operators or fewer businesses conducting custom activities. However, this remains a very popular MU Extension guide.

The number of responses to many questions was too low to have statistical confidence in the results. The results presented here have been compared to custom rates guides from surrounding states to examine the validity of the responses to this survey. 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 the details of the specific job to be performed with all parties involved.

Explanation of the rates in this guide

Rates in this guide reflect each respondent's judgment of a "normal" job. Larger jobs, defined by acres, tonnage or otherwise, will often cost less per unit than a similar small job. Likewise, jobs requiring less travel and

offering better efficiency through larger, more square fields may also have a lower cost per unit.

Custom rates aim to cover the cost of machinery, fuel, labor and, occasionally, a product such as lime or bale wrap. The U.S. Department of Agriculture reports that machinery values and labor costs have increased by about 5% and 6%, respectively, since our 2023 custom rates survey. Diesel prices have decreased by 4% in the past three years but are experiencing a sharp increase as this update occurs in March 2026. Increases in the cost of inputs suggest that custom rates should have generally increased over the past several years.

Interpreting the responses

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.

Some important activities did not receive sufficient responses to report the results with this level of detail. Table 9 reports the median value, as anecdotal information, about important or widely requested activities meeting this criteria. Less credibility should be given to these rates.

As in past years, this guide reports the average rate, and the low, mid and high rates reported in 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 reported average. The range of responses also gives the user an idea of how variable the rates charged for field activities might be. Possible explanations for the variation of these ranges are the type or size of equipment used, the mix of labor and equipment used, or the different business objectives of full-time custom operators compared to local farmers supplementing their income.

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Table 1. Full-service custom farming, dollars per acre.

Crop and farming method	Average rate	Median rate	Range of responses	Number reporting
Corn, conventional tillage	112.50	112.50	90.00–140.00	6
Corn, no-till	99.17	92.50	85.00–130.00	6
Soybean, conventional tillage	111.00	120.00	90.00–125.00	5
Soybean, no-till	96.00	95.00	80.00–110.00	5

Table 2. Tillage activities, dollars per acre.

Activity	Average rate	Median rate	Range of responses	Number reporting
Chisel plowing	25.44	25.00	22.00–30.00	9
Heavy or offset disking	25.60	25.00	21.00–30.00	5
Ripping or subsoiling	26.86	26.00	25.00–30.00	7
Disk ripping	27.60	28.00	25.00–30.00	5
Tandem disk	20.28	20.00	15.00–27.00	9
Vertical tillage	19.30	18.00	14.00–25.00	10
Vertical tillage with cover crop seeder	23.20	20.00	18.00–35.00	5
Soil finisher or do-all	21.57	20.00	18.00–25.00	7
Phillips harrow or chain disk	16.71	15.00	9.00–25.00	7
Field cultivator	15.63	15.00	11.00–23.00	8

Table 3. Planting activities, dollars per acre.

Activity	Average rate	Median rate	Range of responses	Number reporting
Conventional planting				
Corn or grain sorghum: <i>plant in 30-inch rows</i>	24.65	25.00	15.00–33.00	23
Corn or grain sorghum: <i>plant in 20-inch rows</i>	26.00	25.00	16.00–40.00	7
Soybean: <i>plant in 30-inch rows</i>	26.19	28.00	15.00–40.00	16
Soybean: <i>plant in 15-inch rows</i>	27.40	28.50	15.00–40.00	20
Soybean: <i>drill</i>	22.45	24.00	15.00–30.00	11
Small grains: <i>drill</i>	25.11	25.00	15.00–30.00	9
Forages and small seeds: <i>drill</i>	29.17	30.00	23.00–35.00	6
No-till planting				
Corn or grain sorghum: <i>plant in 30-inch rows</i>	26.65	26.00	15.00–35.00	23
Corn or grain sorghum: <i>plant in 20-inch rows</i>	29.00	30.00	20.00–40.00	5
Soybean: <i>plant in 30-inch rows</i>	29.17	30.00	20.00–35.00	12
Soybean: <i>plant in 15-inch rows</i>	28.85	29.00	15.00–40.00	20
Soybean: <i>drill</i>	27.56	25.00	22.00–40.00	9
Small grains: <i>drill</i>	23.82	25.00	15.00–35.00	11
Forages and small seeds: <i>drill</i>	24.60	25.00	15.00–35.00	5
Cover crops: <i>drill</i>	24.17	25.00	15.00–35.00	6
Additional charge for liquid fertilizer	7.31	8.00	4.50–10.00	20
Additional charge for variable rate	3.90	4.50	2.00–5.00	12

Table 4. Fertilizer and chemical application, dollars per acre unless otherwise noted.

Activity	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>	7.97	8.13	4.00–10.00	16
Dry fertilizer on cropland: <i>double spread</i>	11.94	12.00	10.00–15.00	9
Dry fertilizer on cropland: <i>variable rate</i>	10.30	10.00	6.00–17.00	11
Dry fertilizer on pasture (topdressing)	8.32	9.00	3.00–12.00	11
Dry fertilizer plus seed	8.93	9.00	6.00–12.00	7
Spray liquid fertilizer	10.69	11.50	8.00–12.00	8
Spray liquid fertilizer and other chemicals	12.29	10.00	8.00–30.00	9
Inject anhydrous ammonia	19.35	20.00	10.00–25.00	17
Inject anhydrous ammonia, variable rate application	23.40	24.00	21.00–25.00	5
Deliver and spread lime: <i>including lime, per ton</i>	30.58	32.50	20.00–40.00	6
Apply chemicals (not including the cost of chemicals)				
Spray with row crop sprayer	9.42	9.43	4.00–12.00	20
Spray with floater	10.25	11.00	7.00–12.00	6

Table 5. Harvesting and hauling activities, dollars per acre unless otherwise noted.

Activity	Average rate	Median rate	Range of responses	Number reporting
Combining, including grain cart				
Corn	47.95	50.00	35.00–60.00	22
Soybean	46.22	45.00	35.00–70.00	23
Grain sorghum	46.80	50.00	35.00–55.00	5
Small grains	45.17	46.00	35.00–55.00	12
Combining, without grain cart				
Corn	47.56	40.00	35.00–95.00	9
Soybean	42.33	40.00	35.00–60.00	9
Small grains	45.60	40.00	30.00–75.00	5
Grain cart, per acre	5.60	5.00	4.00–8.00	5
Grain cart, per hour	108.75	100.00	85.00–150.00	4

Table 6. Grain, hay and livestock transportation, dollars per unit.

Activity	Average rate	Median rate	Range of responses	Number reporting
Hauling grain or seed				
Field to farm storage with farm vehicle or wagon	0.17/bushel	0.15	0.10–0.30	18
Bin to market with large grain truck over 20 miles	0.26/bushel	0.28	0.18–0.30	6
	4.70/loaded mile	4.50	4.00–5.50	5
Hauling hay or livestock				
Hay, 20 or more miles	4.35/mile	4.50	3.00–6.33	8
Livestock with pickup and gooseneck trailer	3.30/mile	3.50	3.00–3.50	5
Livestock with semi and trailer	5.38/mile	5.25	5.00–6.00	4

Table 7. Haymaking and vegetation management, dollars per unit.

Activity	Average rate	Median rate	Range of responses	Number reporting
Mow with disc mower	17.60/acre	15.00	10.00–25.00	5
Mow with mower-conditioner	17.70/acre	18.00	10.00–27.00	10
Tedding hay	6.40/acre	5.00	3.00–12.00	5
Raking hay	10.00/acre	10.00	3.00–15.00	10
Small square baling	1.88/bale	1.75	1.00–3.25	6
Round bale with twine	17.20/bale	17.00	10.00–25.00	5
Round bale with net wrap, under 1,000 pound bales	15.00/bale	15.00	11.00–18.00	6
Round bale with net wrap, over 1,000 pound bales	18.87/bale	20.00	10.00–35.00	15
Cut, rake and bale small square bales	4.43/bale	4.00	2.00–10.00	7
Cut, rake and bale small square bales	58% of crop	60%	20%–75%	9
Cut, rake and round bale with twine Under 1,000 pound bales	28.31/bale	27.50	24.00–35.00	8
Cut, rake and round bale with twine Over 1,000 pound bales	26.40/bale	25.00	15.00–35.00	5
Cut, rake and round bale with net wrap Over 1,000 pound bales	31.11/bale	30.00	20.00–40.00	23
Cut, rake and round bale with net wrap	59% of crop	50%	50%–100%	17
Tube wrap round bales, including wrap	8.90/bale	8.00	6.00–12.50	5
Moving round bales on farm or locally	6.17/bale	5.00	5.00–10.00	6
Mow brush or overgrown pasture	125.71/hour	130.00	50.00–175.00	7
Mow pasture or Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)	107.22/hour	110.00	50.00–150.00	9
Mow pasture or Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)	17.40/acre	15.00	12.00–25.00	5

Table 8. Earth moving and heavy equipment jobs, dollars per unit.

Activity	Average rate	Median rate	Range of responses	Number reporting
By type of equipment used (including operator labor)				
Bulldozer: <i>over 150 hp</i>	198.89/hour	200.00	165.00–235.00	9
Track hoe/excavator: <i>mini (2–6 tons)</i>	110.00/hour	114.00	100.00–135.00	5
Track hoe/excavator: <i>medium and large</i>	198.33/hour	200.00	140.00–250.00	6
Farm tractor with front end loader	85.83/hour	82.50	75.00–100.00	6
Skid loader	120.50/hour	122.50	100.00–150.00	10
By job performed				
Land clearing	208.33/hour	200.00	120.00–300.00	6
Installing drainage tile	1.48/linear foot	1.50	1.30–1.75	5

Table 9. Anecdotal reporting on the medians of key categories with low response rates, dollars per unit.

Activity	Median rate ¹
Applying chemicals with selective targeting (Greeneye)	14.00/acre
Aerial spray application over cropland	13.00/acre
Aerial spray application over trees	22.00/acre
Aerial spreading over cropland	0.43/pound
Fence inspection and minor repairs	35.00/hour
Fence construction, barbed wire, labor only	1.88/foot
Fence construction, woven wire, labor only	2.38/foot
Fence removal	1.25/foot
Tractor rental ²	0.72/horsepower-hour
Grain vacuum rental	0.13/bushel
Grain bagger rental, no bags included	0.11/bushel
Grain bag unloader	0.12/bushel

1. Medians published in this table are based on a small number of responses and should be considered with utmost caution.
2. Calculate an approximate rental rate for a tractor in question by multiplying the engine horsepower of that tractor by 0.72 to produce the dollars-per-engine-hour charged in rent.