

Cotton

IN THE

Salt River Valley of Arizona



Total value of all crops in the Salt River Valley for 1928 was \$37,111,225.



Short staple cotton was valued at \$8,020,000; Long staple cotton was valued at \$6,150,000.



Approximately 7,750 car loads of cotton, in bales, most of which was compressed, was shipped out. A large percentage of the cotton is shipped via the Panama Canal and the Pacific Ports. Some of it is shipped to Eastern Markets through the Port of Galveston.



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Cotton as a commercial crop was first introduced in the Salt River Valley in 1912. The United States Government early in the present century began experiments at the Government Experiment Station near Yuma with seeds of varieties of cotton brought from the Nile Valley of Egypt. After several years of experimental work a variety which seemed to be well adapted to southwestern irrigation conditions was distributed among several farmers in the Salt River Valley. Later on from an experiment conducted from the Government Experiment Station at Sacaton, about 50 miles south of Phoenix, a distinctive type of plant was found which was superior to the first variety, and as seed of this became available it gradually supplanted the original variety. This new cotton was named "Pima" in honor of the Pima Indians who were our earliest agriculturists. This cotton has a staple length of one and nine-sixteenths of an inch, and is in some respects considerably superior to the best Egyptian cotton. It is used for the manufacture of highly finished cloth such as Broadcloth, Mercerized goods, manufacturing sewing threads, fine dress goods, higher grades of automobile tires and other similar goods which require long fibres of great strength.

The short staple cotton was introduced here in 1914, but was not planted extensively until 1922 and 1923. Acala is the principal variety and this has a staple length of one and one-sixteenth to one and one-eighth of an inch. This is used largely in the making of cloth, thread, and automobile tire fabrics and is mixed with wool textiles.

Where the land is suitable by reason of location, type of soil, or other general characteristics, the Pima cotton seems to be most desirable. Where land is not in the most desirable condition the Upland or Acala cotton probably makes larger net returns per acre. On the newer projects the Upland variety seems to prevail, while in the Salt River Project, which is the oldest irrigation project in the valley, the Pima seems to be preferable.

The average gross returns per acre for Pima cotton, covering the entire period since we have been producing cotton, is \$94.79. The average gross returns from the Upland cotton, covering the period since we have been growing this cotton is \$67.38.

It costs a little more to harvest the Pima variety, and the ginning charges are a bit higher. The total would probably amount to \$15.00 an acre, making the Pima variety average about \$12.00 gross to the acre more than the short staple or Upland.

There were about 140,000 acres of cotton in the Salt River Valley in 1928. Estimates of the cotton acreage this year indicate the acreage will be about the same.

The Pima variety of cotton should be planted as early in the spring as weather conditions will permit. It is desirable that the seed germinate promptly, therefore planting begins as soon as the nights are sufficiently warm to insure prompt germination.

The Acala or Upland requires less time to mature, and is frequently planted until the latter part of May.

The more experienced cotton growers find that a rotation of cotton with alfalfa insures a larger yield. On good land that has previously been in alfalfa, Pima cotton can be profitably grown four or five years in succession. Some farmers use sout clover, seeding this broadcast in the cotton in August. This makes a growth which when plowed under in the spring, just previous to planting, helps to maintain the humus and nitrogen, making it possible to grow cotton continuously on the same land for a longer period.

Pima cotton growers have succeeded in segregating many fields of cotton, making it possible to maintain absolutely pure seed. These selected fields from selected seed are gone over carefully and undesirable plants destroyed so that this seed is being maintained in its purity. It is estimated that 90

per cent of the Pima cotton is planted with pure seed.

A beginning has been made in seed growing with Acala cotton along similar lines.

Cotton requires considerable water after the bolls begin to form. Too much water produces too much foliage, but too little results in poorer quality of cotton, and also a smaller yield.

Cultivation should be frequent to keep down all weeds and to insure aeration.

A large percentage of cotton is sold cooperatively through the Arizona Pima Cotton Growers Association, which handles both long and short staple cotton.

Arizona and the Salt River Valley are particularly fortunate in that the destructive insect pests which are so prevalent in many cotton growing sections are not found here, consequently there is no loss from this source. There is also slight danger of loss from storms.

The average yield for the past few years for Pima Cotton is about 275 pounds of lint to the acre, and of the Upland cotton about 330 pounds.

The price of Pima Cotton was 41 cents for 1925
31 cents for 1926
38 cents for 1927
38.5 cents for 1928

The price of Upland Cotton was 22 cents for 1925
14 cents for 1926
20 cents for 1927
20 cents for 1928

The cost of labor including men and teams or tractors is estimated at about \$18.00 an acre. Strictly hand work such as thinning, hoeing, and picking will amount to about \$30.00 an acre. Water cost is estimated at \$4.50 per acre. Seed cotton as it is picked in the field is about 27 per cent lint. The cost of ginning is about 90 cents a hundred for the seed cotton, and the cost of picking about 2½ cents a pound for seed cotton or \$9.05 for 100 pounds of lint.