

## Farm machinery on the central highlands

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Farm machinery operating and overhead costs are the largest single cost factor for Central Queensland farmers. Calculation of machinery costs had been based on survey data from South Queensland. Machinery costs for Central Queensland may be higher due to the relatively new cultivation and the large areas of continuing development.

Local extension staff interviewed a random selection of graingrowers in 1985- 86. Responses from twenty-six farmers were recorded, corresponding to 10% of rural establishments producing grain on the Central Highlands.

The average total property area for those surveyed was about 4000 ha of which approximately half was devoted to cultivation. Much of this cultivation has been brought into production since 1980. Sorghum, sunflower and wheat are the main crops grown and the average yields for these crops harvested in 1984 were 2.1 t/ha, 0.8 t/ha and 0.5 t/ha respectively.

On average, farmers owned 1 kW of engine power (four wheel drive) for each 5.5 ha of cultivation. The range was from 2.2 ha/kW to 9.0 ha/kW. At planting, growers were able to plant an average of 38% of their cultivation area in 75 hrs (5 days @ 15 hrs/day). In the years 1974-1983 the area planted to sorghum averaged 38% of cultivation area, sunflower 35% and wheat 14%.

Tractor operation costs together with implement operation costs appear in Table 1. Fuel is the major cost component in each tillage operation. Tyre costs are the next highest component.

**Table 1: Land preparation costs.**

	Chisel	Blade	Scarifier	Cultivator
Work Rate ha/hr	10.1	9.1	6.9	13.8
<b>Tractor Costs</b>				
Fuel \$/ha	1.62	1.59	--	1.04
Lubrication \$/ha	0.13	0.15	0.19	0.09
R & M \$/ha	0.10	0.11	0.15	0.08
Tyres \$/ha	0.52	0.58	0.77	0.38
<b>Implement Costs</b>				
R & M \$/ha	0.15	0.27	0.32	0.69
Points \$/ha	0.28	0.28	0.27	0.11
<b>TOTAL \$/ha</b>	<b>2.80</b>	<b>2.98</b>		<b>2.39</b>

Repairs and maintenance costs for tractors in the survey were considerably lower than reported previously (1). This was probably due to low tractor hours. The average tractor surveyed had been used for 2406 hours. High repair and maintenance costs occurred only in tractors with more than 2400 hours. Lower fuel cost represented the other major difference. Farmers on the Central Highlands could buy fuel for about \$0.30/litre in 1986.

1. Blomfield, J.G. 1982. Qld. Dept. Prim. Ind. Bulletin, Q.B. 82003.