

# Custom rates rise

By JOHN VOGEL

FUEL costs are still putting a lever under fuel-intensive custom rates. But custom rate charges, as gathered from Pennsylvania custom operators and farmers by the state Ag Statistics Service office, are up an average of only 4%, after last year's 6% jump.

Pennsylvania is one of the few farming states that conducts an annual custom rate survey. It's the only one in the Northeast.

Ag Statistician Adam Pike, who coordinated the survey, adds this disclaimer: "Individual rates vary due to working conditions, services performed, demand and timeliness of the service, plus operator eagerness to do custom work."

### Key hikes

Here's a quick glance at some of the more significant changes in spring and summer tasks in the accompanying table. The percentage changes are compared to 2006 rates.

■ **Haying:** Unlike last year, most hay and haylage making tasks stayed close to the 4% average increase. Rates for self-propelled choppers actually declined slightly. But hay mowing posted a 9% gain over year-ago rates.

### Key Points

- Custom rate inflation will average close to 4% higher than in 2006.
- Post-hole digging took the biggest jump — 22% above last year.
- Rental rates for smaller tractors posted gains of 13% to 16%.

■ **Planting:** Corn planting rates generally posted gains of 6% to 10% over year-ago rates, while soybean planting rates were only slightly higher.

■ **Specialty tasks:** Bushhogging climbed another 6% after last year's 22% jump. Post-hole digging charges once again posted the biggest year-to-year gain — a 22% jump. Rates for bulldozing increased 10%.

■ **Tractor rentals:** Rental rates for all four horsepower categories rose, but the smaller tractors had the highest percentage gains. Tractors under 80 hp averaged 16% higher rates over year-ago rates. Rates for tractors between 80 to 120 hp rose 13%. Those between 120 to 160 hp averaged 7% higher.

The complete 2007 Pennsylvania Machinery Custom Rates, with breakouts for mountain and valley rates and a range of rates, is available on the Web at [www.AmericanAgriculturist.com](http://www.AmericanAgriculturist.com) or at [www.nass.usda.gov/pa](http://www.nass.usda.gov/pa).

## Take closer look at machine costs

IDEALLY, custom rates should cover all costs. But the "market rate" is usually somewhere between use-related costs and total costs, reports Bill Lazarus, University of Minnesota ag economist and a "guru" on machine operating costs.

In late 2005, Lazarus updated an extensive breakout of the capacity and costs of many implements. You can find it on the Web at [www.apec.umn.edu/faculty/wlazarus/mf2005late.pdf](http://www.apec.umn.edu/faculty/wlazarus/mf2005late.pdf).


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**AN EXPENSIVE TRIM:** Whether trimming pastures or cutting hay, the cost of custom mowing rose 9%, according to Pennsylvania's custom rate survey.

## 2007 custom rate guide

Pennsylvania spring and summer machine services  
 (Rates are per acre unless otherwise noted)

PA Rate			
<b>Spring tillage</b>			
Moldboard plowing			
stubble	\$16.40		
sod	17.70		
Deep plowing, 10 inches			
or more	19.30		
Chiseling	14.90		
Disk plowing	16.00		
Tandem disking	13.50		
with harrow or cultipacker	14.70		
Harrowing	12.30		
Cultivating	12.50		
<b>Planting and drilling</b>			
Planting corn with fertilizer			
conventional	16.70		
minimum till	17.20		
no-till	18.40		
Planting corn w/o fertilizer			
conventional	15.30		
minimum till	16.50		
no-till	17.30		
Planting soybeans			
conventional	15.00		
minimum till	16.20		
no-till	16.90		
drilling	16.10		
Drilling small grain w/o fertilizer			
conventional	14.30		
minimum till	16.00		
no-till	16.40		
Seeding alfalfa, clover, etc.	15.80		
Broadcast seeding			
on grain fields	9.80		
<b>Fertilizer spreading &amp; manure handling</b>			
Spreading bulk fertilizer			
dry	7.70		
liquid	9.00		
sidedressing	8.90		
lime, w/o lime	10.10		
Manure loading, per hour	39.40		
Manure pumping, per hour	28.30		
Manure spreading			
solid manure, per hour	44.20		
liquid manure, per hour	70.60		
<b>Hay making</b>			
Mowing hay	13.10		
Mow, condition hay	13.40		
Raking	7.80		
Baling, per bale			
small square bale	0.67		
large round bale	6.60		
large square bale	7.70		
Cut, rake, bale, and store			
per small square bale	1.60		
Wrapping bales, per bale	6.30		
<b>Silage making</b>			
Pull-type chopper			
plus tractor, per hour	78.70		
S-P chopper, per hour	195.00		
Under 365 hp per hour	160.00		
More than 365 hp per hour	223.00		
1 man, 2 wagons and			
1 tractor, per hour	50.10		
2 men, 2 wagons and			
2 tractors, per hour	87.40		
1 man, 1 truck	53.60		
Field chop, haul and			
fill silo, per ton	9.10		
Blower, per hour	12.60		
Bagging silage	4.70		
under 9-ft. wide, per foot	4.40		
more than 9-ft. wide, per foot	5.00		
<b>Grain harvesting</b>			
Combining small grains	26.90		
Grain hauling per bu.			
local	0.18		
long distance	0.32		
Grain storage			
per bu. per month	0.05		
<b>Spraying (ground equipment)</b>			
Weed control w/o material	8.80		
Corn borer control	9.80		
Alfalfa weevil/spittle bug	8.40		
<b>Miscellaneous</b>			
Bulldozing 106 hp per hour	73.00		
Grain cleaning			
w/o treatment per bu.	0.77		
w/ treatment per bu.	1.41		
Grinding feed, per cwt.			
corn, oats or barley	0.85		
corn and cobs	0.84		
extra for mixing	0.51		
Backhoe, per hour	54.80		
Bushhogging	21.20		
Chainsawing wood, per hour	21.20		
Post-hole digging, per hole	2.70		
<i>Source: Pennsylvania office of National Ag Statistics Service.</i>			
<b>Tractor rental rates</b>			
(Labor and fuel not included.)			
Per acre unless otherwise noted)			
			<b>PA</b>
Tractors			
160 hp and over, per hour	\$42.10		
120-160 hp, per hour	34.50		
80-120 hp, per hour	29.50		
80 hp or less, per hour	24.70		

**POSTMASTER:** Please send address corrections to *American Agriculturist*, 191 S. Gary Ave., Carol Stream IL 60188.