

Custom Work Charges in Maryland and Delaware

By Shannon Dill, and Nate Bruce

Introduction

Financial and economic considerations such as limited capital, untimely cash flow, insufficient labor, small acreage or other reasons require farmers to hire custom service for field operations. Custom work charges are determined by demand and supply and are negotiated between farmers and custom operators. The purpose of this publication is to provide information on custom work charges in Maryland and to provide data to assist in decision making regarding purchasing equipment.

Using Custom Rate Information

- ▶ Custom operators use custom rates to compare rates with competitors.
- ▶ Farmers use custom rates as a guide for machinery, budgeting and financial planning.
- ▶ Lenders, educators and government agencies use custom rates for budgeting, advising and analysis.

Rates that are quoted in this publication are expressed in different ways depending on the specific job (per acre, hour, ton, mile, bale, etc.). The rates provided are to help custom operators and farmers make decisions about rate charges. The prices reported are not official or established rates but an average of responses from the survey.

Reported rates include charges for machines, power, fuel, lube and the labor/operator. These rates do not include the costs of chemicals, seeds, and other materials with the exception of hay baling materials and where noted (i.e. spreading lime).

Custom rates in this publication may not suit all custom operators and those hiring custom work. It is important that operators calculate their own custom costs. It is also important that farmers create their



own budgets which include their variable costs and fixed costs and do not rely only on custom rates to determine their cost of production.

Custom Work Charges for 2025

A mail and online survey was conducted in the fall of 2024 to determine custom works charges in Maryland and Delaware. Rates were collected from 61 custom operators and farmers, and summarized for the region. Participants indicated the rates they charge for various field operations. The charges reported in this publication may serve as a guide in determining an acceptable rate for a particular job when other information is unavailable.

The charges can also be compared with costs and returns and may be used as a basis for working out more equitable charges for both the custom operator and customer.

Table 1 summarizes the custom work charges for the various field operations. It shows the range (low and high), average (mean) as well as the median charge. The median refers to the middle of the range. Half of the responses are below and half are above. The

median is less sensitive to extreme responses and can be a better measure than the average.

Table 2 summarizes the last five surveys comparing rates reported for practices in 2025, 2023, 2021, 2019, and 2017.

2025 Survey special notes – These responses were removed due to no response: sprigging, manure spreading – liquid injection, 1,000 gal water wagon rental, bed forming, plastic laying and vegetable transplanter.

Variations in operation charges can be significant due to several factors. These may include differences in location, topography, field size and shape, crop yields, soil and weather conditions, work quality, and the type and size of equipment used. Additionally, discrepancies may arise from a lack of awareness about standard rates, the timeliness of services, and the balance between available jobs and the number of custom operators. For more crop budgeting information visit: www.go.umd.edu/grainmarketing

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Table 1. 2025 Custom Rates

OPERATION	MIN	MAX	MEDIAN	AVERAGE '25
Stalk Cutting/Chopping (Rate/Acre)	\$15.00	\$60.00	\$20.00	\$27.84
Plowing - Chisel (Rate/Acre)	\$17.50	\$60.00	\$23.55	\$25.55
Plowing - Moldboard (Rate/Acre)	\$20.00	\$60.00	\$26.50	\$32.17
Disking - Heavy (Rate/Acre)	\$18.15	\$60.00	\$22.50	\$26.64
Disking With Cultipacker or Rolling Baskets (Rate/Acre)	\$18.00	\$60.00	\$22.00	\$25.56
Cultivating (Rate/Acre)	\$12.00	\$18.00	\$15.00	\$14.75
Cultipacking (Rate/Acre)	\$5.00	\$15.00	\$6.00	\$8.67
Sub-soiling (Ripping) (Rate/Acre)	\$20.00	\$50.00	\$26.50	\$30.30
Soil Finishing (Field Cultivator) (Rate/Acre)	\$16.00	\$65.00	\$20.00	\$25.67
Vertical Tillage (Rate/Acre)	\$12.00	\$28.00	\$19.00	\$19.50
Strip Till (Rate/Acre)	\$20.00	\$45.00	\$20.00	\$27.83
Corn Planting - Conventional w/ Fertilizer (Rate/Acre)	\$20.00	\$75.00	\$25.00	\$29.38
Corn Planting - Conventional w/o Fertilizer (Rate/Acre)	\$18.00	\$75.00	\$22.00	\$27.23
Corn Planting - No-Till w/ Fertilizer (Rate/Acre)	\$16.00	\$75.00	\$24.00	\$27.76
Corn Planting - No-Till w/o Fertilizer (Rate/Acre)	\$15.00	\$75.00	\$22.50	\$27.57
Soybean Planting - Conventional (Rate/Acre)	\$17.50	\$75.00	\$23.50	\$29.13
Soybean Planting - No-Till (Rate/Acre)	\$16.00	\$75.00	\$25.00	\$27.10
Drilling - Small Grain (Rate/Acre)	\$11.00	\$75.00	\$24.00	\$26.05
Seeding - Grass Drilling/No-Till (Rate/Acre)	\$15.00	\$50.00	\$26.15	\$31.85
Seeding - Grass Broadcast (Rate/Acre)	\$12.00	\$55.00	\$20.00	\$24.19
Seeding - Small Grain Broadcast (Rate/Acre)	\$8.00	\$20.00	\$12.00	\$12.60
Seeding - Aerial (Rate/Acre)	\$12.00	\$28.00	\$15.00	\$17.11
Fertilizer Application - Dry (Rate/Acre)	\$8.50	\$20.00	\$11.00	\$11.72
Fertilizer Application - Liquid (Rate/Acre)	\$7.50	\$19.00	\$12.00	\$13.21
Fertilizer Application - Side Dress (Rate/Acre)	\$10.00	\$20.00	\$13.00	\$13.78
Lime - Includes Lime and Application (Rate/Ton)	\$8.50	\$75.00	\$48.70	\$43.41
Manure Loading (Rate/Ton)	\$2.00	\$20.00	\$4.00	\$6.58
Manure Spreading - Liquid (Rate/Gal)	\$0.05	\$0.06	\$0.06	\$0.06
Manure Spreading - Solid (Rate/Ton)	\$5.50	\$25.00	\$15.00	\$14.10
Manure Spreading - Litter (Rate/Ton)	\$2.50	\$25.00	\$11.50	\$12.49
Manure Hauling (Rate/Ton)	\$4.00	\$18.80	\$7.00	\$8.85
Spraying - Pesticide Ground (Rate/Acre)	\$7.00	\$50.00	\$12.00	\$14.01
Spraying - Pesticide Aerial (Rate/Acre)	\$10.00	\$28.00	\$12.50	\$14.36
Mowing Hay (Rate/Acre)	\$5.00	\$28.00	\$16.00	\$15.98
Mowing and Conditioning Hay (Rate/Acre)	\$5.00	\$35.00	\$23.00	\$21.00
Raking Hay (Rate/Acre)	\$5.00	\$20.00	\$12.00	\$12.20
Baling - Small Squares (Rate/Bale)	\$1.00	\$5.00	\$1.35	\$1.70
Baling - Large Square Bales (Rate/Bale)	\$5.00	\$20.00	\$10.00	\$12.21
Baling - Large Round (Rate/Bale)	\$5.00	\$25.00	\$15.00	\$15.01
Mow, Rake, Bale Hay - No Haul (Rate/Bale)	\$5.00	\$37.00	\$20.00	\$19.66
Round Bale Wrapping (Rate/Bale)	\$10.00	\$18.00	\$12.00	\$13.00

Table 1. 2025 Custom Rates continued from page i

OPERATION	MIN	MAX	MEDIAN	AVERAGE '25
Field Chop, Haul and Fill Silo (Rate/Ton)	\$10.00	\$10.00	\$10.00	\$10.00
Combining - Corn (Rate/Acre)	\$30.00	\$52.00	\$40.00	\$40.03
Combining - Soybeans (Rate/Acre)	\$30.00	\$55.00	\$40.00	\$39.63
Combining - Small Grains (Rate/Acre)	\$30.00	\$50.00	\$40.00	\$39.55
Custom Farming - Corn (Rate/Acre)	\$170.00	\$170.00	\$170.00	\$170.00
Custom Farming - Soybean (Rate/Acre)	\$100.00	\$100.00	\$100.00	\$100.00
Custom Farming - Small Grains (Rate/Acre)	\$125.00	\$125.00	\$125.00	\$125.00
Hauling Grain - Local (Rate/Bu.)	\$0.10	\$0.35	\$0.20	\$0.19
Hauling Grain - Long Distance (Rate/Bu.)	\$0.18	\$0.60	\$0.40	\$0.39
Storing Grains (Bu./Month)	\$0.03	\$0.12	\$0.08	\$0.07
Drying Grains (Rate/Point)	\$0.03	\$0.12	\$0.07	\$0.07
Grinding Feed (Rate/Cwt.)	\$0.40	\$1.50	\$0.95	\$0.95
Mixing Feed (Rate/Cwt.)	\$2.00	\$2.00	\$2.00	\$2.00
Grinding and Mixing Feed (Rate/Cwt.)	\$0.75	\$3.50	\$2.13	\$2.13
Soil Testing (Rate/Sample)	\$8.00	\$40.00	\$15.00	\$19.25
Nutrient Management Planning (Rate/Acre)	\$2.00	\$30.00	\$3.00	\$8.10
General Farm Labor (Rate/Hour)	\$15.00	\$40.00	\$20.00	\$20.37
Skilled Farm Labor (Rate/Hour)	\$15.00	\$90.00	\$25.00	\$30.73
Machinery Repair (Rate/Hour)	\$49.40	\$200.00	\$100.00	\$103.34
Machinery Operation (Rate/Hour)	\$25.00	\$75.00	\$30.00	\$34.73
Backhoe Rental (Rate/Hour)	\$75.00	\$150.00	\$125.00	\$118.75
Bobcat Rental (Rate/Hour)	\$44.59	\$150.00	\$87.50	\$95.57
Bulldozer Rental (Rate/Hour)	\$100.00	\$160.00	\$100.00	\$120.00
Bush Hogging (Rate/Hour)	\$17.50	\$150.00	\$60.00	\$84.30
Excavator Rental (Rate/Hour)	\$50.00	\$160.00	\$100.00	\$100.22
Tractor Rental - <80 HP (Rate/Hour)	\$23.00	\$65.00	\$32.40	\$40.13
Tractor Rental - 80-120 HP (Rate/Hour)	\$34.00	\$75.00	\$54.50	\$54.50
Tractor Rental 120-160 HP (Rate/Hour)	\$45.00	\$80.00	\$47.90	\$57.63
Tractor Rental >160 HP (Rate/Hour)	\$57.00	\$100.00	\$69.65	\$74.08
Posthole Digging (Rate/Hole)	\$4.00	\$5.00	\$5.00	\$4.67
Post Driving (Rate/Hole)	\$2.50	\$12.00	\$7.25	\$7.25
Snow Removal (Rate/Hour)	\$50.00	\$250.00	\$125.00	\$138.72
Trenching (Rate/Foot)	\$4.00	\$5.00	\$4.00	\$4.25
Clearing Land (Rate/Hour)	\$150.00	\$250.00	\$175.00	\$187.50
Mowing CRP Acres (Rate/Acre)	\$13.50	\$50.00	\$25.00	\$26.42
Mowing (Rate/Acre)	\$13.50	\$200.00	\$27.50	\$45.65
Tree Planting (Rate/Plant)	\$3.00	\$92.00	\$47.50	\$47.50
Vegetative Buffer Planting (Rate/Acre)	\$35.00	\$100.00	\$67.50	\$67.50
Livestock Hauling w/ Trailer (Rate/Loaded Mile)	\$2.60	\$4.00	\$3.50	\$3.37
Honey Bee Hive Rental (Rate/Hive)	\$60.00	\$100.00	\$80.00	\$80.00
Bed Form and Plastic Laying	\$46.00	\$46.00	\$46.00	\$46.00

Table 2. Custom Rate Comparisons

OPERATION	UNIT	AVERAGE '25	AVERAGE '23	AVERAGE '21	AVERAGE '19	AVERAGE '17
Stalk Cutting	Acre	\$27.84	\$20.25	\$17.77	\$17.48	\$17.04
Plowing - Chisel	Acre	\$25.55	\$20.79	\$21.33	\$21.60	\$20.90
Plowing - Moldboard	Acre	\$32.17	\$25.78	\$24.00	\$28.00	\$30.50
Disking - Heavy	Acre	\$26.64	\$21.97	\$19.00	\$25.20	\$23.75
Disking with Cultipacker or Harrow	Acre	\$25.56	\$25.39	\$22.46	\$22.36	\$21.13
Cultivating	Acre	\$14.75	\$13.83	\$12.00	\$12.00	\$23.50
Cultipacking	Acre	\$8.67	\$12.20	\$12.20	\$11.58	\$19.25
Sub - soiling	Acre	\$30.30	\$24.18	\$23.22	\$22.63	\$24.33
Soil Finishing	Acre	\$25.67	\$18.47	\$19.00	\$24.00	\$19.00
Vertical Tillage	Acre	\$19.50	\$19.47	\$18.80	\$18.35	\$18.05
Corn Planting – Conventional w/Fertilizer	Acre	\$29.38	\$25.90	\$17.92	\$23.75	\$21.17
Corn Planting - Conventional w/o Fertilizer	Acre	\$27.23	\$22.44	\$16.63	\$19.97	\$19.92
Corn Planting - No-Till w/ Fertilizer	Acre	\$27.76	\$25.76	\$21.54	\$21.33	\$23.25
Corn Planting - No-Till w/o Fertilizer	Acre	\$27.57	\$23.81	\$20.75	\$21.07	\$22.83
Soybean Planting - Conventional	Acre	\$29.13	\$24.18	\$20.04	\$20.90	\$19.10
Soybean Planting - No-Till	Acre	\$27.10	\$23.43	\$20.33	\$20.88	\$22.33
Drilling - Small Grain	Acre	\$26.05	\$23.43	\$21.32	\$21.16	\$20.33
Seeding - Grass Drilling/No-Till	Acre	\$31.85	\$23.54	\$20.38	\$23.66	\$26.31
Seeding - Grass Broadcast	Acre	\$24.19	\$19.15	\$12.78	\$18.13	\$18.00
Seeding - Small Grain Broadcast	Acre	\$12.60	\$11.20	\$9.77	\$11.79	\$8.91
Seeding - Aerial	Acre	\$17.11	\$17.75	\$20.00	\$21.60	\$21.50
Fertilizer Application - Dry	Acre	\$11.72	\$9.55	\$8.57	\$8.59	\$9.22
Fertilizer Application - Liquid	Acre	\$13.21	\$10.21	\$9.08	\$10.59	\$9.32
Fertilizer Application - Side Dress	Acre	\$13.78	\$11.61	\$10.07	\$10.30	\$10.59
Lime (includes Lime and Application)	Ton	\$43.41	\$48.96	\$30.36	\$37.10	\$45.71
Manure Loading	Ton	\$6.58	\$4.15	\$4.10	\$7.25	\$6.70
Manure Spreading - Solid	Ton	\$14.10	\$18.50	\$9.68	\$7.50	\$14.85
Manure Spreading - Litter	Ton	\$12.49	\$11.47	\$7.05	\$8.87	\$8.98
Manure Hauling	Ton	\$8.85	\$8.47	\$8.60	\$8.83	\$12.63
Spraying - Pesticide Ground	Acre	\$14.01	\$10.50	\$9.42	\$10.23	\$9.86
Spraying - Pesticide Aerial	Acre	\$14.36	\$13.50	\$11.30	\$10.40	\$10.75
Mowing Hay	Acre	\$15.98	\$22.23	\$19.00	\$23.46	\$31.63
Mowing and Conditioning Hay	Acre	\$21.00	\$24.08	\$20.18	\$31.13	\$26.06
Raking Hay	Acre	\$12.20	\$14.46	\$11.00	\$18.00	\$15.21
Baling - Small Squares	Bale	\$1.70	\$5.00	\$1.35	\$1.70	\$1.13
Baling - Large Round Bales	Bale	\$15.01	\$13.14	\$13.46	\$10.47	\$9.69
Baling - Large Square Bales	Bale	\$12.21	\$15.25	\$9.83	\$16.13	\$11.48
Mow, Rake, Bale Hay - No Haul	Bale	\$19.66	\$21.06	\$19.24	\$17.88	\$8.50
Round Bale Wrapping	Bale	\$13.00	\$10.00	\$8.63	\$8.50	\$7.75

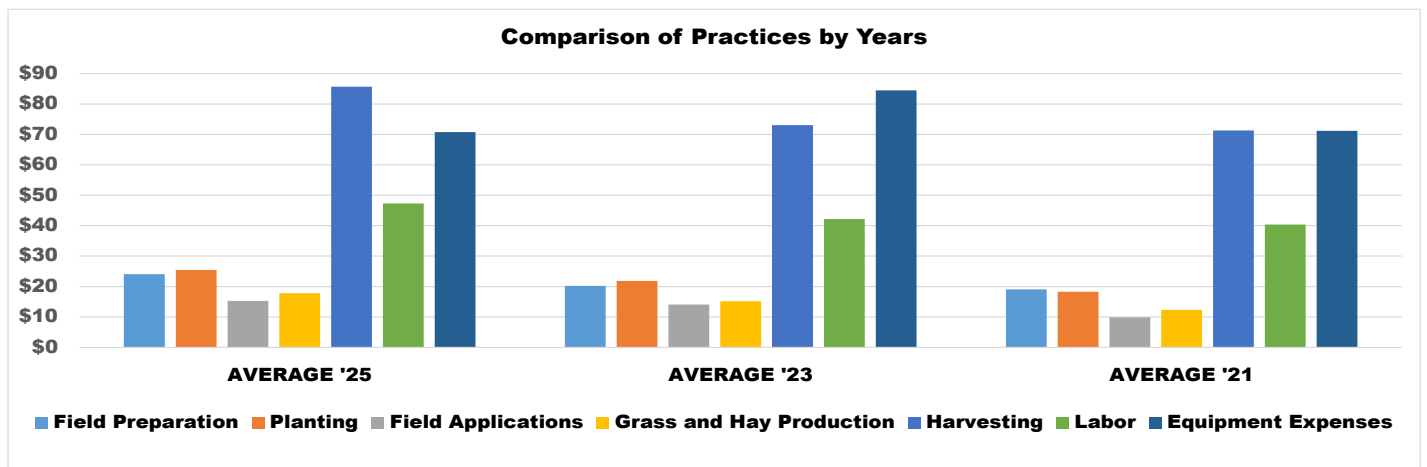
Table 2. Custom Rate Comparisons continued from page iii

OPERATION	UNIT	AVERAGE '25	AVERAGE '23	AVERAGE '21	AVERAGE '19	AVERAGE '17
Combining - Corn	Acre	\$40.03	\$37.57	\$34.19	\$34.85	\$33.89
Combining - Soybeans	Acre	\$39.63	\$37.48	\$34.94	\$34.94	\$33.89
Combining - Small Grains	Acre	\$39.55	\$37.81	\$34.88	\$41.21	\$34.13
Hauling Grain - Local	Bu.	\$0.19	\$0.20	\$0.19	\$0.19	\$0.21
Hauling Grain - Long Distance	Bu.	\$0.39	\$0.37	\$0.32	\$0.34	\$0.33
Storing Grains	Bu./Mo	\$0.07	\$0.08	\$0.11	\$0.05	\$0.22
Drying Grains	Point	\$0.07	\$0.12	\$0.16	\$0.30	\$0.32
Grinding Feed	Cwt.	\$0.95	\$0.98	\$0.30	\$0.38	\$0.35
Grinding and Mixing Feed	Cwt.	\$2.13	\$1.24	\$0.30	\$0.50	\$0.40
Soil Testing	Sample	\$19.25	\$13.28	\$14.53	\$11.50	\$11.91
Nutrient Management Plan Writing	Acre	\$8.10	\$2.93	\$1.83	\$5.97	\$2.75
General Farm Labor	Hour	\$20.37	\$16.62	\$16.68	\$15.27	\$12.53
Skilled Farm Labor	Hour	\$30.73	\$27.91	\$21.43	\$23.25	\$20.18
Machinery Repair	Hour	\$103.34	\$84.90	\$82.33	\$60.77	\$55.41
Machinery Operation	Hour	\$34.73	\$39.33	\$41.07	\$30.06	\$32.81
Backhoe Rental	Hour	\$118.75	\$135.00	\$97.92	\$77.50	\$90.71
Bobcat Rental	Hour	\$95.57	\$111.25	\$83.22	\$65.83	\$85.00
Bulldozer Rental	Hour	\$120.00	\$146.67	\$119.00	\$116.67	\$112.33
Bush Hogging	Hour	\$84.30	\$94.77	\$83.61	\$66.50	\$71.11
Excavator Rental	Hour	\$100.22	\$150.20	\$112.92	\$108.33	\$131.67
Tractor Rental - <80 HP	Hour	\$40.13	\$73.12	\$72.00	\$54.00	\$56.00
Tractor Rental - 80-120 HP	Hour	\$54.50	\$87.20	\$84.33	\$65.40	\$80.83
Tractor Rental - 120-160 HP	Hour	\$57.63	\$118.16	\$62.00	\$57.83	\$75.50
Tractor Rental - >160 HP	Hour	\$74.08	\$148.00	\$66.80	\$60.80	\$56.20
Posthole Digging	Hole	\$4.67	\$11.93	\$19.25	\$30.00	\$31.67
Post Driving	Hole	\$7.25	\$10.07	\$22.38	\$106.50	\$25.00
Snow Removal	Hour	\$138.72	\$110.99	\$113.75	\$9.00	\$102.29
Trenching	Foot	\$4.25	\$4.00	\$3.50	\$3.33	\$6.00
Clearing Land	Hour	\$187.50	\$183.33	\$250.00	\$33.00	\$300.00
Mowing CRP Acres	Acre	\$26.42	\$49.66	\$39.37	\$22.72	\$34.73
Mowing	Acre	\$45.65	\$39.06	\$44.50	\$43.50	\$42.28
Livestock Hauling w/ Trailer Loaded	Mile	\$3.37	\$2.21	\$2.55	\$2.35	\$2.14

SUMMARY FROM PAST YEARS

OPERATION	AVERAGE '25	AVERAGE '23	AVERAGE '21	AVERAGE '19	AVERAGE '17	AVERAGE '15
Field Preparation	\$24.04	\$20.21	\$19.07	\$20.29	\$21.74	\$19.45
Planting	\$25.45	\$21.87	\$18.31	\$20.38	\$20.33	\$18.84
Field Applications	\$15.25	\$14.09	\$9.84	\$10.88	\$11.41	\$10.04
Grass and Hay Production	\$17.79	\$15.17	\$12.32	\$15.88	\$13.11	\$13.84
Harvesting	\$85.70	\$73.07	\$71.30	\$72.70	\$76.99	\$55.88
Labor	\$47.29	\$42.19	\$40.38	\$32.34	\$30.23	\$21.66
Equipment Expenses	\$70.81	\$84.50	\$71.23	\$62.78	\$74.36	\$62.12

OPERATION	AVERAGE '25	AVERAGE '21	PERCENT CHANGE
Field Preparation	\$24.04	\$20.21	16%
Planting	\$25.45	\$21.87	14%
Field Applications	\$15.25	\$14.09	8%
Grass and Hay Production	\$17.79	\$15.17	15%
Harvesting	\$85.70	\$73.07	15%
Labor	\$47.29	\$42.19	11%
Equipment Expenses	\$70.81	\$84.50	-19%
Average Total Change	\$47.50	\$38.73	5%



The accuracy of this survey depends on the number of realistic responses. If you would like to be added to the custom applicator list for future surveys list send your name and mailing address to sdill@umd.edu c/o MD Custom Rates.