

## Custom Work Charges in Maryland and Delaware 2023

---

### 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 2023**

A mail and online survey was conducted in the fall of 2022 to determine custom works charges in Maryland and Delaware. Rates were collected from 67 custom operators and farmers, and summarized for the state.

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 operations for the State of Maryland. 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 is a better measure than the average.

Table 2 summarizes the last five surveys comparing rates reported for practices in 2023, 2021, 2019, 2017, and 2015.

2022 Survey special notes – The planting practice, sprigging was added this again year but did not receive any responses. These responses were removed due to no response: manure spreading – liquid injection, 1,000 gal water wagon rental, bed forming and plastic laying.

There are wide ranges with some operation charges. Variations may be due to the lack of knowledge about charges and difference in location, topography, field size and shape, crop yields, soil conditions, weather conditions, work quality, equipment type and size, timeliness or the ratio of available jobs to custom operators.

**For more crop budgeting information visit: [www.go.umd.edu/grainmarketing](http://www.go.umd.edu/grainmarketing)**

## **Custom Work Charges in Maryland 2023**

### **Author:**

Shannon Dill, Extension Educator, Agriculture and Food Systems, University of Maryland Extension  
Nate Bruce, Farm Business Management Specialist, University of Delaware Cooperative Extension

### **Acknowledgements:**

Revised fact sheet by Dale Johnson, 2002. Appreciation is extended to Jennifer Gannon for assistance in conducting the survey and Jim Lewis, Dale Johnson, and Ben Beale for reviewing the fact sheet.

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, University of Maryland, College Park, and local governments. Craig Beyrouthy, Director of University of Maryland Extension.

---

The University of Maryland is equal opportunity. The University's policies, programs, and activities are in conformance with pertinent Federal and State laws and regulations on nondiscrimination regarding race, color, religion, age, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, marital or parental status, or disability. Inquiries regarding compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended; Title IX of the Educational Amendments; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; and the Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990; or related legal requirements should be directed to the Director of Human Resources Management, Office of the Dean, College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Symons Hall, College Park, MD 20742.

**P2002/R2008/R2010/R2012/R2014/R2016/R2018/R2020/R2022**

**TABLE 1. 2023 Custom Rates**

<b>OPERATION</b>	<b>MIN</b>	<b>MAX</b>	<b>MEDIAN</b>	<b>AVERAGE 23</b>
Stalk Cutting/Chopping (Rate/Acre)	\$12.00	\$40.00	\$17.50	\$20.25
Plowing- Chisel (Rate/Acre)	\$10.00	\$30.00	\$22.38	\$20.79
Plowing- Moldboard (Rate/Acre)	\$20.00	\$30.00	\$27.35	\$25.78
Disking- Heavy (Rate/Acre)	\$17.00	\$25.00	\$22.85	\$21.97
Disking With Cultipacker or Rolling Baskets (Rate/Acre)	\$15.00	\$48.00	\$24.75	\$25.39
Cultivating (Rate/Acre)	\$12.00	\$15.00	\$14.50	\$13.83
Cultipacking (Rate/Acre)	\$4.00	\$18.00	\$14.60	\$12.20
Sub-soiling (Ripping) (Rate/Acre)	\$18.00	\$35.00	\$23.00	\$24.18
Soil Finishing (Field Cultivator) (Rate/Acre)	\$15.00	\$23.35	\$18.00	\$18.47
Vertical Tillage (Rate/Acre)	\$12.00	\$30.00	\$18.00	\$19.47
Strip Till (Rate/Acre) - Rate	\$18.00	\$22.00	\$20.00	\$20.00
Corn Planting- Conventional w/ Fertilizer (Rate/Acre)	\$18.00	\$40.00	\$22.10	\$25.90
Corn Planting- Conventional w/o Fertilizer (Rate/Acre)	\$16.00	\$32.00	\$21.10	\$22.44
Corn Planting- No-Till w/ Fertilizer (Rate/Acre)	\$18.00	\$40.00	\$25.00	\$25.76
Corn Planting- No-Till w/o Fertilizer (Rate/Acre)	\$16.00	\$32.00	\$22.55	\$23.81
Soybean Planting- Conventional (Rate/Acre)	\$12.00	\$35.00	\$23.40	\$24.18
Soybean Planting- No-Till (Rate/Acre)	\$16.00	\$36.00	\$22.00	\$23.43
Drilling- Small Grain (Rate/Acre)	\$16.00	\$35.00	\$23.00	\$23.43
Seeding- Grass Drilling/No-Till (Rate/Acre)	\$10.00	\$40.00	\$22.50	\$23.54
Seeding- Grass Broadcast (Rate/Acre)	\$12.00	\$35.00	\$14.80	\$19.15
Seeding- Small Grain Broadcast (Rate/Acre)	\$8.50	\$15.10	\$10.00	\$11.20
Seeding- Aerial (Rate/Acre)	\$13.00	\$20.00	\$19.00	\$17.75
Fertilizer Application- Dry (Rate/Acre)	\$7.50	\$15.20	\$9.00	\$9.55
Fertilizer Application- Liquid (Rate/Acre)	\$8.00	\$12.50	\$10.00	\$10.21
Fertilizer Application- Side Dress (Rate/Acre)	\$8.50	\$20.00	\$10.00	\$11.61
Lime- Includes Lime and Application (Rate/Ton)	\$15.00	\$65.00	\$51.00	\$48.96
Manure Loading (Rate/Ton)	\$1.50	\$6.80	\$4.15	\$4.15
Manure Spreading- Liquid (Rate/Gal)	\$0.02	\$0.02	\$0.02	\$0.02
Manure Spreading- Solid (Rate/Ton)	\$12.00	\$25.00	\$18.50	\$18.50
Manure Spreading- Litter (Rate/Ton)	\$6.00	\$20.00	\$11.00	\$11.47
Manure Hauling (Rate/Ton)	\$6.50	\$22.90	\$20.00	\$16.47
Spraying- Pesticide Ground (Rate/Acre)	\$7.00	\$17.00	\$10.00	\$10.50
Spraying- Pesticide Aerial (Rate/Acre)	\$8.00	\$24.00	\$12.25	\$13.50
Mowing Hay (Rate/Acre)	\$12.00	\$35.00	\$20.95	\$22.23
Mowing and Conditioning Hay (Rate/Acre)	\$10.00	\$50.00	\$22.00	\$24.08
Raking Hay (Rate/Acre)	\$7.50	\$35.00	\$12.00	\$14.46
Baling- Small Squares (Rate/Bale)	\$0.75	\$2.60	\$1.10	\$1.35
Baling- Large Square Bales (Rate/Bale)	\$8.00	\$23.50	\$15.00	\$15.25
Baling- Large Round (Rate/Bale)	\$10.00	\$20.00	\$12.00	\$13.14
Mow, Rake, Bale Hay- No Haul (Rate/Bale)	\$4.00	\$42.30	\$25.00	\$21.06

<b>OPERATION</b>	<b>MIN</b>	<b>MAX</b>	<b>MEDIAN</b>	<b>AVERAGE 23</b>
Round Bale Wrapping (Rate/Bale)	\$5.00	\$14.00	\$11.00	\$10.00
Field Chop, Haul, and Fill Silo (Rate/Ton)	\$15.00	\$15.00	\$15.00	\$15.00
Combining- Corn (Rate/Acre)	\$30.00	\$55.00	\$35.50	\$37.57
Combining- Soybeans (Rate/Acre)	\$12.00	\$55.00	\$36.50	\$37.48
Combining- Small Grains (Rate/Acre)	\$30.00	\$50.00	\$36.50	\$37.81
Hauling Grain- Local (Rate/Bu.)	\$0.10	\$0.35	\$0.20	\$0.20
Hauling Grain- Long Distance (Rate/Bu.)	\$0.15	\$0.55	\$0.39	\$0.37
Storing Grains (Bu./Month)	\$0.03	\$0.15	\$0.07	\$0.08
Drying Grains (Rate/Point)	\$0.02	\$0.30	\$0.09	\$0.12
Grinding Feed (Rate/Cwt.)	\$0.45	\$1.50	\$0.98	\$0.98
Mixing Feed (Rate/Cwt.)	\$0.75	\$0.75	\$0.75	\$0.75
Grinding and Mixing Feed (Rate/Cwt.)	\$0.45	\$2.50	\$1.00	\$1.24
Soil Testing (Rate/Sample)	\$10.00	\$20.00	\$12.00	\$13.28
Nutrient Management Planning (Rate/Acre)	\$1.10	\$5.70	\$2.50	\$2.93
General Farm Labor (Rate/Hour)	\$10.00	\$25.00	\$15.00	\$16.62
Skilled Farm Labor (Rate/Hour)	\$15.00	\$85.00	\$25.00	\$27.91
Machinery Repair (Rate/Hour)	\$35.00	\$140.00	\$97.45	\$84.90
Machinery Operation (Rate/Hour)	\$15.00	\$85.00	\$20.50	\$39.33
Backhoe Rental (Rate/Hour)	\$75.00	\$175.00	\$145.00	\$135.00
Bobcat Rental (Rate/Hour)	\$65.00	\$175.00	\$102.50	\$111.25
Bulldozer Rental (Rate/Hour)	\$100.00	\$200.00	\$140.00	\$146.67
Bush Hogging (Rate/Hour)	\$17.50	\$250.00	\$85.00	\$94.77
Excavator Rental (Rate/Hour)	\$41.00	\$225.00	\$160.00	\$150.20
Tractor Rental- <80 HP (Rate/Hour)	\$22.40	\$150.00	\$75.00	\$73.12
Tractor Rental- 80-120 HP (Rate/Hour)	\$33.60	\$175.00	\$87.30	\$87.20
Tractor Rental 120-160 HP (Rate/Hour)	\$44.80	\$200.00	\$101.00	\$118.16
Tractor Rental >160 HP (Rate/Hour)	\$55.00	\$250.00	\$116.50	\$148.00
Posthole Digging (Rate/Hole)	\$5.00	\$22.80	\$8.00	\$11.93
Post Driving (Rate/Hole)	\$2.00	\$20.20	\$8.00	\$10.07
Snow Removal (Rate/Hour)	\$35.00	\$250.00	\$125.00	\$110.99
Trenching (Rate/Foot)	\$4.00	\$40.00	\$22.00	\$22.00
Clearing Land (Rate/Hour)	\$100.00	\$300.00	\$150.00	\$183.33
Mowing CRP Acres (Rate/Acre)	\$20.00	\$125.00	\$30.00	\$49.66
Mowing (Rate/Acre)	\$10.00	\$125.00	\$31.50	\$39.06
Tree Planting (Rate/Plant)	\$2.00	\$2.00	\$2.00	\$2.00
Vegetative Buffer Planting (Rate/Acre)	\$30.00	\$61.00	\$45.50	\$45.50
Livestock Hauling w/ Trailer (Rate/Loaded Mile)	\$1.00	\$3.35	\$2.25	\$2.21
Honey Bee Hive Rental (Rate/Hive)	\$60.00	\$60.00	\$60.00	\$60.00

**TABLE 2: Custom Rate Comparisons**

Operation	Unit	Average '23	Average '21	Average '19	Average '17	Average '15
Stalk Cutting	Acre	\$20.25	\$17.77	\$17.48	\$17.04	\$17.38
Plowing - Chisel	Acre	\$20.79	\$21.33	\$21.60	\$20.90	\$19.36
Plowing - Moldboard	Acre	\$25.78	\$24.00	\$28.00	\$30.50	\$24.67
Disking - Heavy	Acre	\$21.97	\$19.00	\$25.20	\$23.75	\$22.61
Disking with Cultipacker or Harrow	Acre	\$25.39	\$22.46	\$22.36	\$21.13	\$18.70
Cultivating	Acre	\$13.83	\$12.00	\$12.00	\$23.50	\$17.70
Cultipacking	Acre	\$12.20	\$12.20	\$11.58	\$19.25	\$11.08
Sub - soiling	Acre	\$24.18	\$23.22	\$22.63	\$24.33	\$25.06
Soil Finishing	Acre	\$18.47	\$19.00	\$24.00	\$19.00	\$19.42
Vertical Tillage	Acre	\$19.47	\$18.80	\$18.35	\$18.05	\$18.55
Corn Planting – Conventional w/Fertilizer	Acre	\$25.90	\$17.92	\$23.75	\$21.17	\$18.40
Corn Planting - Conventional w/o Fertilizer	Acre	\$22.44	\$16.63	\$19.97	\$19.92	\$17.35
Corn Planting - No-Till w/ Fertilizer	Acre	\$25.76	\$21.54	\$21.33	\$23.25	\$19.44
Corn Planting - No-Till w/o Fertilizer	Acre	\$23.81	\$20.75	\$21.07	\$22.83	\$19.30
Soybean Planting - Conventional	Acre	\$24.18	\$20.04	\$20.90	\$19.10	\$16.96
Soybean Planting - No-Till	Acre	\$23.43	\$20.33	\$20.88	\$22.33	\$19.38
Drilling - Small Grain	Acre	\$23.43	\$21.32	\$21.16	\$20.33	\$19.92
Seeding - Grass Drilling/No-Till	Acre	\$23.54	\$20.38	\$23.66	\$26.31	\$24.48
Seeding - Grass Broadcast	Acre	\$19.15	\$12.78	\$18.13	\$18.00	\$16.31
Seeding - Small Grain Broadcast	Acre	\$11.20	\$9.77	\$11.79	\$8.91	\$9.83
Seeding - Aerial	Acre	\$17.75	\$20.00	\$21.60	\$21.50	\$25.89
Fertilizer Application - Dry	Acre	\$9.55	\$8.57	\$8.59	\$9.22	\$8.28
Fertilizer Application - Liquid	Acre	\$10.21	\$9.08	\$10.59	\$9.32	\$9.01
Fertilizer Application - Side Dress	Acre	\$11.61	\$10.07	\$10.30	\$10.59	\$10.63
Lime (includes Lime and Application)	Ton	\$48.96	\$30.36	\$37.10	\$45.71	\$44.86
Manure Loading	Ton	\$4.15	\$4.10	\$7.25	\$6.70	\$9.00
Manure Spreading - Solid	Ton	\$18.50	\$9.68	\$7.50	\$14.85	\$8.92
Manure Spreading - Litter	Ton	\$11.47	\$7.05	\$8.87	\$8.98	\$7.82
Manure Hauling	Ton	\$16.47	\$8.60	\$8.83	\$12.63	\$8.69
Spraying - Pesticide Ground	Acre	\$10.50	\$9.42	\$10.23	\$9.86	\$9.07
Spraying - Pesticide Aerial	Acre	\$13.50	\$11.30	\$10.40	\$10.75	\$15.71
Mowing Hay	Acre	\$22.23	\$19.00	\$23.46	\$31.63	\$26.69
Mowing and Conditioning Hay	Acre	\$24.08	\$20.18	\$31.13	\$26.06	\$24.93
Raking Hay	Acre	\$14.46	\$11.00	\$18.00	\$15.21	\$16.83
Baling - Small Squares	Bale	\$1.35	\$1.57	\$1.51	\$1.13	\$1.10
Baling - Large Round Bales	Bale	\$13.14	\$13.46	\$10.47	\$9.69	\$10.55
Baling - Large Square Bales	Bale	\$15.25	\$9.83	\$16.13	\$11.48	\$7.07
Mow, Rake, Bale Hay - No Haul	Bale	\$21.06	\$19.24	\$17.88	\$8.50	\$15.56

Operation	Unit	Average '23	Average '21	Average '19	Average '17	Average '15
Round Bale Wrapping	Bale	\$10.00	\$8.63	\$8.50	\$7.75	\$8.00
Combining - Corn	Acre	\$37.57	\$34.19	\$34.85	\$33.89	\$30.91
Combining - Soybeans	Acre	\$37.48	\$34.94	\$34.94	\$33.89	\$31.02
Combining - Small Grains	Acre	\$37.81	\$34.88	\$41.21	\$34.13	\$31.08
Hauling Grain - Local	Bu.	\$0.20	\$0.19	\$0.19	\$0.21	\$0.19
Hauling Grain - Long Distance	Bu.	\$0.37	\$0.32	\$0.34	\$0.33	\$0.27
Storing Grains	Bu./Mo	\$0.08	\$0.11	\$0.05	\$0.22	\$0.05
Drying Grains	Point	\$0.12	\$0.16	\$0.30	\$0.32	\$0.75
Grinding Feed	Cwt.	\$0.98	\$0.30	\$0.38	\$0.35	\$0.40
Grinding and Mixing Feed	Cwt.	\$1.24	\$0.30	\$0.50	\$0.40	\$14.04
Soil Testing	Sample	\$13.28	\$14.53	\$11.50	\$11.91	\$20.33
Nutrient Management Plan Writing	Acre	\$2.93	\$1.83	\$5.97	\$2.75	\$12.30
General Farm Labor	Hour	\$16.62	\$16.68	\$15.27	\$12.53	\$18.78
Skilled Farm Labor	Hour	\$27.91	\$21.43	\$23.25	\$20.18	\$23.11
Machinery Repair	Hour	\$84.90	\$82.33	\$60.77	\$55.41	-
Machinery Operation	Hour	\$39.33	\$41.07	\$30.06	\$32.81	\$23.11
Backhoe Rental	Hour	\$135.00	\$97.92	\$77.50	\$90.71	\$82.13
Bobcat Rental	Hour	\$111.25	\$83.22	\$65.83	\$85.00	\$74.53
Bulldozer Rental	Hour	\$146.67	\$119.00	\$116.67	\$112.33	\$110.71
Bush Hogging	Hour	\$94.77	\$83.61	\$66.50	\$71.11	\$71.20
Excavator Rental	Hour	\$150.20	\$112.92	\$108.33	\$131.67	\$117.22
Tractor Rental - <80 HP	Hour	\$73.12	\$72.00	\$54.00	\$56.00	\$40.00
Tractor Rental - 80-120 HP	Hour	\$87.20	\$84.33	\$65.40	\$80.83	\$62.00
Tractor Rental - 120-160 HP	Hour	\$118.16	\$62.00	\$57.83	\$75.50	\$78.33
Tractor Rental - >160 HP	Hour	\$148.00	\$66.80	\$60.80	\$56.20	\$87.86
1,000 gal Water Wagon Rental	Hour	-	-	\$22.75	\$35.00	-
Posthole Digging	Hole	\$11.93	\$19.25	\$30.00	\$31.67	\$9.50
Post Driving	Hole	\$10.07	\$22.38	\$106.50	\$25.00	\$25.33
Snow Removal	Hour	\$110.99	\$113.75	\$9.00	\$102.29	\$102.71
Trenching	Foot	\$22.00	\$3.50	\$193.33	\$6.00	\$2.61
Clearing Land	Hour	\$183.33	\$250.00	\$33.00	\$300.00	\$177.14
Mowing CRP Acres	Acre	\$49.66	\$39.37	\$22.72	\$34.73	\$32.77
Mowing	Acre	\$39.06	\$44.50	\$43.50	\$42.28	\$31.96
Livestock Hauling w/ Trailer	Loaded Mile	\$2.21	\$2.55	\$2.35	\$2.14	\$2.14

\*Indicates no previous year's data.

Operation	AVERAGE '23	AVERAGE '21	AVERAGE '19	AVERAGE '17	AVERAGE '15	AVERAGE '13	AVERAGE '11
Field Preparation	\$20.21	\$19.07	\$20.29	\$21.74	\$19.45	\$19.67	\$16.89
Planting	\$21.87	\$18.31	\$20.38	\$20.33	\$18.84	\$21.97	\$18.25
Field Applications	\$14.09	\$9.84	\$10.88	\$11.41	\$10.04	\$13.87	\$11.84
Forage Production	\$15.17	\$12.32	\$15.88	\$13.11	\$13.84	\$12.23	\$11.68
Harvesting	\$73.07	\$71.30	\$72.70	\$76.99	\$55.88	\$56.42	\$62.54
Labor	\$42.19	\$40.38	\$32.34	\$30.23	\$21.66	\$18.82	\$22.16
Equipment Expenses	\$85.50	\$71.23	\$62.78	\$74.36	\$62.12	\$59.19	\$54.20

Operation	AVERAGE '23	AVERAGE '21	Percent Change
Field Preparation	\$20.21	\$19.07	6%
Planting	\$21.87	\$18.31	19%
Field Applications	\$14.09	\$9.84	43%
Forage Production	\$15.17	\$12.32	23%
Harvesting	\$73.07	\$71.30	2%
Labor	\$42.19	\$40.38	4%
Equipment Expenses	\$85.50	\$71.23	20%
<b>Average Total Change</b>	<b>\$38.87</b>	<b>\$34.64</b>	<b>12%</b>

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](mailto:sdill@umd.edu) c/o MD Custom Rates.