

## Cabbage

### Marketing and Market Outlook

Fresh market options for Kentucky cabbage producers include wholesale marketing through produce auctions and cooperatives, as well as restaurants and local retailers. Direct markets for fresh cabbage include farmers markets and roadside stands.

Fresh cabbage sales are heavily influenced by fresh-cut coleslaw consumption and the use of red cabbage in salad mixes. Access to fresh-cut processing will be critical for Kentucky producers seeking added profitability from cabbage.

### Production Considerations

#### *Site selection and planting*

Select a site that is well-drained. While poorly drained soils should be avoided, slightly rolling land is suitable. This crop will do well on ground that has been in tobacco. Fescue sod ground is also good if the sod is plowed under early in the fall and allowed to decompose.

The ground for spring cabbage should be plowed in the fall in order to have a crop ready for early market. Plants should be in the field by the middle of March for a spring crop. Cabbage also does well as a fall crop and should be transplanted by mid-August. Irrigation is often critical for establishing a fall crop.

A plant population of 14,000 plants per acre is desirable. Tobacco setters can be used for transplanting.



#### *Pest management*

Insects can be a major problem in cabbage production. Scouting to monitor populations can help growers determine when and how often pesticides should be applied. Bt is a microbial insecticide that can be used effectively against most types of cabbage pests. A number of Bt products can be used in organic production.

Several plant diseases, such as black rot, blackleg, and downy mildew, can also result in yield losses. A good crop rotation program and the use of disease-free resistant varieties will help in the prevention of many of these diseases. Fungicide/bactericide sprays may also be necessary.

#### *Harvest*

Fresh market cabbage should be harvested when the heads are firm and solid. Heads are cut low enough to leave two or three loose wrapper leaves. Cabbage is usually marketed in 50-pound boxes or bags with 16 to 18 heads per bag.

#### *Labor requirements*

Labor needs are approximately 15 hours per acre for production



and 106 hours per acre for harvesting and marketing.

### Economic Considerations

Initial investments include land preparation and the purchase of seed or production of transplants. An additional start-up cost can include the installation of an irrigation system. Production costs for fresh market green cabbage are estimated at \$800 per acre, with harvest and marketing costs at \$1,994 per acre. Total costs of approximately \$3,100 can be expected.

Since returns vary depending on actual yields and market prices, the following per acre returns to land and management are based on three different economic scenarios for irrigated, fresh market green cabbage. Conservative estimates represent the University of Kentucky's statewide average cost and return estimates for 2005.

<i>Pessimistic</i>	<i>Conservative</i>	<i>Optimistic</i>
\$(149) *	\$75	\$391

\* Parentheses indicate a negative number, i.e. a net loss

### Selected Resources

- Bt Basics for Vegetable Integrated Pest Management, ID-156 (University of Kentucky, 2005)  
<http://www.ca.uky.edu/agc/pubs/id/id156/id156.pdf>

- Cabbage Marketing Fact Sheet (University of Kentucky, 2005)  
<http://www.uky.edu/Ag/NewCrops/cabbage2005.pdf>
- Growers' Guide to Bt, ID-156A (University of Kentucky, 2005)  
<http://www.ca.uky.edu/agc/pubs/id/id156a/id156a.pdf>
- Integrated Crop Management for Kentucky Cabbage (University of Kentucky, 1997)  
<http://www.uky.edu/Ag/IPM/manuals/ipm11cab.pdf>
- Marketing Options for Commercial Vegetable Growers, ID-134 (University of Kentucky, 1999)  
<http://www.ca.uky.edu/agc/pubs/id/id134/id134.htm>
- Vegetable and Melon Budgets (University of Kentucky, 2008) *Interactive spreadsheets*  
<http://www.uky.edu/Ag/NewCrops/vegbudgets08.html>
- Vegetable Production Guide for Commercial Growers, ID-36 (University of Kentucky)  
<http://www.ca.uky.edu/agc/pubs/id/id36/id36.htm>
- Cole Crops - Broccoli, Cabbage, Cauliflower: Commercial Vegetable Production, MF-1108 (Kansas State University, 1998)  
<http://www.oznet.ksu.edu/library/hort2/samplers/MF1108.asp>
- Commercial Production and Management of Cabbage and Leafy Greens, B-1181 (University of Georgia, 2000)  
<http://pubs.caes.uga.edu/caespubs/pubs/pdf/B1181.pdf>

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*Cabbage field photo courtesy of Brent Rowell, University of Kentucky*  
*Cabbage head photo courtesy of John Strang, University of Kentucky*

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For additional information, contact, your local [County Extension](#) agent