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NEWS/ MACHINERY

How Much Does It Cost to Run a High Horsepower Tractor?

A new study from The University of Illinois shows how much money a farmer can expect to spend while running their favorite brand-new farm tractor this fall. Prepare for sticker shock.



By **Matthew J. Grassi**
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Have you ever driven past a large tractor pulling a tillage tool and kicking up dust in a farm field and thought to yourself ‘I wonder how much money it’s costing that farmer in the driver’s seat to run that thing?’

If so, you might be a fellow machinery geek, and you also might want to check out The University of Illinois’ Farm Business Management “Machinery Costs Estimate: Tractors” report.

The study, published on Sept. 1, found that a high-horsepower, brand-new row crop tractor that puts out 640 hp costs a staggering \$350 per engine hour in 2025.

At 590 hp, the same tractor would cost about \$327 per engine hour. To get your hourly tractor spend down to a more reasonable level, under the \$200 mark, you would have to trade down to a 240 hp tractor or lower, according to the data.

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With its release at Farm Progress Show last week in Decatur, Ill., still fresh on the mind, it's hard not to wonder how much it costs [to run that new Case-IH Steiger 785 Quadtrac](#) with 853 hp under the hood?

And then if you're hauling a 12-row planter full of freshly treated, expensive treated seed as well, how much does that hourly rate go up?

The study considers several factors such as machine list price, labor and fuel costs, and "overhead" which includes asset depreciation, insurance, housing costs, interest and repair costs.

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While the \$350-per-hour figure sounds astronomical, it also makes sense, too. Literally everything seems like it costs more money these days – [eggs](#), car insurance, [a standard one-bedroom apartment in town](#) – so why wouldn't it cost more to run that shiny new tractor too?

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It's important we also keep in mind these figures from the University of Illinois are only estimated costs. The actual costs of running your farm equipment will depend on several factors that differ across the various ag production regions. The University of Illinois says the figures are “useful for determining machinery costs on farms, rental rates for machinery and custom rates for machinery operations.”

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Grains				Meats				Softs			
Corn				Live Cattle				Cotton #2			
Contract	Last	Change	Trade Time	Contract	Last	Change	Trade Time	Contract	Last	Change	Trade Time
Jul 25	422.0	+4.4	09:54	Jul 25	225.950	+1.200	09:52	Jul 25	67.525	+0.45	06/27/25
Sep 25	478.4	unch	09:54	Aug 25	212.275	-0.725	09:54	Oct 25	69.38	-0.62	08:07
Dec 25	437.0	unch	09:54	Oct 25	209.000	-0.775	09:54	Dec 25	68.74	-0.68	09:54
Mar 26	442.8	-0.4	09:54	Dec 25	208.425	-0.600	09:54	Mar 26	70.06	-0.54	09:54
May 26	434.6	-0.2	09:54	Feb 26	209.300	-0.800	09:54	May 26	71.08	-0.51	09:54
Soybean				Feeder Cattle				Sugar #11			
Contract	Last	Change	Trade Time	Contract	Last	Change	Trade Time	Contract	Last	Change	Trade Time
Jul 25	1017.4	+9.6	09:52	Aug 25	307.375	-0.525	09:54	Jul 25	36.55	-0.66	09:47
Aug 25	1042.2	+0.0	09:54	Sep 25	307.850	-0.350	09:54	Oct 25	36.30	-0.41	09:54
Mar 26	1029.0	+0.6	09:54	Oct 25	305.525	-0.200	09:54	Mar 26	37.02	-0.33	09:53
May 26	1037.0	+0.2	09:54	Nov 25	302.600	-0.425	09:54	May 26	36.60	-0.32	09:54
Jan 26	1062.0	+0.2	09:54	Jan 26	296.300	-0.200	09:37	Jul 26	36.60	-0.29	09:54
Soybean Meal				Lean Hogs				Coffee			
Contract	Last	Change	Trade Time	Contract	Last	Change	Trade Time	Contract	Last	Change	Trade Time
Jul 25	273.0	+3.9	09:51	Jul 25	10.575	-1.675	09:54	Jul 25	309.905	+0.40	06/27/25
Aug 25	277.4	+1.8	09:54	Aug 25	107.425	-0.250	09:54	Sep 25	302.05	-1.70	09:54
Sep 25	281.8	+1.9	09:54	Oct 25	92.475	-2.180	09:54	Dec 25	296.00	-1.40	09:54
Oct 25	284.8	+2.1	09:54	Dec 25	83.850	-0.850	09:54	Mar 26	290.00	-1.45	09:54
Nov 25	288.1	+1.8	09:54	Feb 26	82.225	-0.825	09:54	May 26	282.50	-1.00	09:54

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