



How much per acre is spent on fertilizer and irrigation each growing season for a corn farmer?

For a typical Iowa corn farmer in 2025, the combined costs per acre during each growing season are approximately **\$150–\$250 for fertilizer** and **\$50–\$150 for irrigation** if supplemental water is used. These estimates can vary based on practices, input prices, and local conditions.

Fertilizer Costs

- The average expense for fertilizer alone is currently in the **\$160–\$220 per acre** range, according to 2025 industry and university sources.^{[1] [2] [3]}
- Total input costs across all crop nutrients (N, P, K) may reach **\$250–\$400 per acre** if high fertilizer rates or premium products are used.^[4]
- Fertilizer is now the single largest operating cost input on most Midwestern corn farms.^[1]

Irrigation Costs

- Supplemental irrigation is needed only on some acres in Iowa; where used, a typical season costs **\$50–\$150 per acre**, covering energy, maintenance, and water fees.^{[5] [6] [4]}
- Irrigation costs can be lower in wet years or on deep soils, but rise in drought or where energy/water prices spike.^{[5] [4]}
- Major infrastructure costs (pivot/drip installation) are not included in annualized operating totals above.

Cost Table

Category	Typical Cost per Acre (2025)	Notes
Fertilizer	\$160–\$220	Standard rates, all nutrients ^{[2] [1] [3]}
	Up to \$250–\$400	High-input/variable rate ^[4]
Irrigation	\$50–\$150	Annual supplemental, if required ^{[4] [6] [5]}

Farmers can expect to spend a **combined \$210–\$370 per acre** for fertilizer and irrigation in a typical year, with high-tech or high-input systems sometimes running higher.^{[6] [4] [1] [5]}



1. <https://m.farms.com/news/fertilizer-prices-put-economic-squeeze-on-farmers-235057.aspx>
2. <https://www.morningagclips.com/what-is-driving-high-production-costs-in-corn/>

3. <https://ncga.com/stay-informed/media/the-corn-economy/article/2025/08/high-production-cost-series-part-3>
4. <https://farmonaut.com/usa/average-cost-to-clear-land-plant-corn-farm-insurance>
5. <https://natsci.msu.edu/news/2023-08-irrigating-more-us-crops-by-mid-century-will-be-worth-the-investment.aspx>
6. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2666154324004101>
7. <https://www.agweb.com/markets/pro-farmer-analysis/u-s-fertilizer-prices-have-leveled-iowa-and-illinois-according-usda>
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12. <https://upterra.co/blog/farm-irrigation-technologies/>
13. <https://www.terrainag.com/insights/higher-input-costs-likely-to-stick-around-for-2026-crop-year/>
14. <https://hprcc.unl.edu/agroclimate/iic.php>
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19. <https://www.iasoybeans.com/newsroom/article/will-fall-dry-fertilizer-provide-a-return>
20. <https://hpj.com/2025/10/17/input-costs-putting-a-big-bite-on-farmers-bottom-line/>