Gulf Coast Off-Bottom Oyster Farming Gear Types

Bottom Cages

Bottom cages measure 48” X 36” X 16” and are held off the substrate by two heavy gauge vinyl-coated wire mesh legs spanning the cage’s width. Each cage has two 5” deep levels made of vinyl-coated wire mesh with a frame affixed to the top edge (like a picture frame). The frame supports a flat piece of mesh which serves as the top level’s lid. Cages are tethered to a long-line and their position marked with a small marker buoy. LowPro™ is a popular manufacturer of bottom cages.

Cages can be made of various mesh sizes. Some growers opt to own several cages with gradually bigger mesh; others will use a 2”X2” mesh cage as a housing for smaller mesh until oysters reach grow-out size.

Because these cages rest on the bottom, the oysters are close to bottom-dwelling predators (i.e. oyster drills). Mechanized lifting equipment (i.e. a davit) is needed to lift the cage off the bottom. Fouling can be controlled on these cages by pressure washing.
# Bottom Cages

## Sample Budget & Income for Bottom Cage Oyster Farm

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ONE RUN</th>
<th>YR 1</th>
<th>YR 2</th>
<th>YR 3</th>
<th>YR 4</th>
<th>YR 5</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amortized Gear Cost</td>
<td>$1,385</td>
<td>$1,385</td>
<td>$1,385</td>
<td>$1,385</td>
<td>$1,385</td>
<td>$6,924</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># Oysters Stocked</td>
<td>24,000</td>
<td>24,000</td>
<td>24,000</td>
<td>24,000</td>
<td>24,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># To Market</td>
<td>12,000</td>
<td>12,000</td>
<td>12,000</td>
<td>12,000</td>
<td>12,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sale Price (per oyster)</td>
<td>$0.35</td>
<td>$0.35</td>
<td>$0.35</td>
<td>$0.35</td>
<td>$0.35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor Cost</td>
<td>$1,300</td>
<td>$1,300</td>
<td>$1,300</td>
<td>$1,300</td>
<td>$1,300</td>
<td>$6,500</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seed Cost</td>
<td>$960</td>
<td>$960</td>
<td>$960</td>
<td>$960</td>
<td>$960</td>
<td>$4,800</td>
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<tr>
<td>Harvest Tag Cost</td>
<td>$27</td>
<td>$27</td>
<td>$27</td>
<td>$27</td>
<td>$27</td>
<td>$135</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maintenance Equipment Cost</td>
<td>$295</td>
<td>$295</td>
<td>$295</td>
<td>$295</td>
<td>$295</td>
<td>$1,475</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## GROSS per run
- $4,200
- $4,200
- $4,200
- $4,200
- $4,200
- $21,000

## NET per run
- $278
- $278
- $278
- $278
- $278
- $1,388

## Gross Margin (%)
- 5.88
- 5.88
- 5.88
- 5.88
- 5.88

## Production Cost (per oyster)
- $0.33
- $0.33
- $0.33
- $0.33
- $0.33

## 1-ACRE FARM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of runs (per acre)</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>8</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total expense (per acre)</td>
<td>$29,574</td>
<td>$29,574</td>
<td>$29,574</td>
<td>$29,574</td>
<td>$29,574</td>
<td>$147,870</td>
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<tr>
<td>Potential Annual Net Income (per acre)</td>
<td>$2,221</td>
<td>$2,221</td>
<td>$2,221</td>
<td>$2,221</td>
<td>$2,221</td>
<td>$11,105</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Pros
- On-bottom cage concept (i.e. crab pot) familiar to local residents
- Only a small marker buoy on the water’s surface

## Cons
- Davit necessary for lifting cages out of the water
- No frequent air-drying method
- Pressure washing of cage is the only way to control fouling
- Cages close to bottom-dwelling predators (i.e. oyster drills)

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To get started, you'll need to be able to pay:
- All permit fees
- 100% of gear cost and installation
- First two crops of seed
- Labor for maintenance
- Maintenance equipment costs (i.e. pressure washer, raft)

Budget does not include:
- Permit fees
- Transportation (boat)
- Management costs (i.e. salary)
- Gear installation

Budget assumptions are approximate, subject to change, and will vary depending on site conditions.

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