

# Harvest Guidelines



Version 4, 2022

## Preparing for harvest

- Do not irrigate in the 48 hours prior to picking.
- Ensure that fruit complies with relevant spray withholding periods.
- Harvesting should be done at temperatures less than 30°C, and never above 35°C.

## Harvesting best practice:

- Do not harvest fruit that has fallen to the ground.
- Use specialised avocado clippers with rounded noses. Do not use extension pickers unless necessary.
- Cut all stalks to 5 mm or less.
- Pickers must keep fingernails short or wear cotton gloves.
- Minimise physical damage (cuts, scratches, abrasions) at all points.
- **Do not use dropped bags when picking from elevating work platforms.**
- Aim to place fruit in bags/bins/buckets rather than dropping. Do not drop avocados more than 25 cm into picking bags or when emptying from picking bags/buckets. Use the height-limiting draw cords.
- Do not overfill bags or bins.
- Place bins strategically so that pickers only walk a short distance with full bags/buckets.
- Always keep bins in the deepest shade possible whilst picking.
- Do not allow bins to stand in muddy areas or on loose metal – dirt or stone chip can be entrapped in wood runners and fall into other bins when stacked.
- Regularly check the condition of bins for sharp, potential fruit injury points.
- Remove all plant debris from picking bags and bins each time they are emptied.
- **Sterilise picking equipment: at every break (at least) for clippers, and bags/bins daily**, by dipping or spraying with products such as:
  - 10% Janola solution
- *It is recommended that exposed fruit at tops of trees be harvested first.*

## Picked Fruit

- Every effort must be made to deliver fruit to the Packer on the day of harvest. Harvested fruit must be delivered to the Packer within 24 hours of harvesting.
- Fruit held on orchard awaiting transportation must be held in the shade under cool conditions.
- Do not move field bins at speeds that will result in fruit being bounced around.
- Cover bins during transport.

## Can we pick in the rain?

Picking turgid fruit increases the risk of postharvest disorders.

- Do not pick in the rain (wait until fruit is dry to the touch or two hours after rain)
- Do not pick if more than 5 mm of rain has fallen in the last 24 hours.
- If there has been more than 50 mm of rainfall in the past 48 hours, determine whether the fruit and orchard floor is dry and conduct a roll test prior to harvesting the orchard.

## Picking methods

When you receive your bin allocation for your first pick, you have to decide which method best suits your orchard to match the allocation and leave an economic amount of fruit to pick later (generally no less than 30% across all trees).

### Size Picking

Determine the size you want to pick to (often dependant on the market you are picking for). Weigh fruit until you find one that is the smallest size you want to pick to. Ask pickers to put their thumb and forefinger around the fruit at the widest point and measure the gap using their other hand. Other methods use sizing rings, or picking “king fruit” (the largest fruit from bunches of fruit).

### Strip Picking

Stripping all fruit on a tree or branch. This may be done for reasons of; pruning on selected branches, recovering sick trees, removing fruit from exposed trees/blocks, or having only one pick on small orchards.

### Skim Picking

Picking the fruit on the outside of the tree without going into the tree. Generally used when exposed fruit is at risk from sun or wind. All remaining fruit should be covered by leaves and can continue sizing. Can be quicker than other methods.

### Exposed Fruit Picking

Picking the fruit that has no leaf cover—pick all the fruit off these branches back to the first leaves. Getting this fruit off early before the heat of summer and before it colours gives the grower a greater chance of being graded as export. If exposed fruit already has some colour, removing this fruit can still be beneficial to reduce further colour and allow the remaining fruit to size.