

# Harvest

## HARVEST GUIDELINES

### 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 specialized 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.
- Minimize 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/buckets 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.

### 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 (Appendix 3) prior to harvesting the orchard.

### Managing Picking Teams

- Be present for the duration of picking.
- Tell the picking team your requirements (including size).
- Keep all instructions clear and concise.
- Keep bins close to where the pickers are working (to reduce time and costs).
- Communicate with the team leader or representative if you have any concerns.
- Regularly check fruit in the bins for size, long stalks, clipper cuts and handling damage.

## PICKING STRATEGIES

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). Removing at least 60% of the total crop prior to the end of December is beneficial for the return crop (Zhang et al, 2020).

### SIZE PICKING

Determine the size you want to pick to (often dependent on the market you are picking for). Weigh fruit until you find one that is at 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 that pickers can wear on a string around their necks or picking the largest fruit from bunches of fruit. Occasionally, check the pickers' fruit size as they empty the fruit into bins to make sure they are picking to the agreed size.

### STRIP PICKING – TREE OR SELECTED BRANCH

Strip picking is the stripping of all the fruit on a tree or branch regardless of size. This may be done for reasons of; removing trees from the orchard, pruning on selected branches, recovering sick trees, removing fruit from exposed trees/blocks, or having only one pick on small orchards. If stripping branches for pruning, mark branches to be stripped with spray paint or tape.

### 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 it 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.

### COLOURED FRUIT PICKING

Coloured fruit is usually found where there is little or no leaf cover or on the northern side of a tree which is exposed to more sun. Removing this fruit early will help the remaining fruit size as the colouring will never grow out. Colours will range from yellow through to red and black.

### Weight bands for size counts

<b>14*</b>	368+ g	<b>25</b>	208 – 228 g
<b>16</b>	325 – 367 g	<b>28</b>	184 - 207 g
<b>18</b>	290 – 324 g	<b>30*</b>	162 – 207 g
<b>20</b>	257 – 289 g	<b>32</b>	162 – 183 g
<b>23</b>	229 – 256 g	<b>36</b>	142 – 161 g
<b>24*</b>	208 – 256 g	<b>42*</b>	123 – 141 g

*\*non standard count*



Figure 23: Exposed fruit