
Citrus Harvesting

3 Picking Practices

Learner Guide



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P.O. Box 461, Hillcrest, 3650
(031) 765-3410



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Audio-visual production:

Media World

Narrator:

Mariëtta Kruger

Scripting and learning material adaptation:

Mooipraatjies (Barry de Klerk)

Compilation and editing:

Citrus Academy (Jacomien de Klerk)

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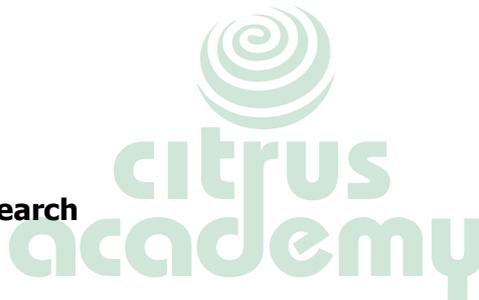
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Introduction

Citrus fruit is picked for export from March to October, depending on what type of citrus it is.

On most citrus farms, seasonal workers are used to pick the fruit, and it is very important that these pickers must know what to do and what not to do while picking the fruit.

When you are picking citrus, you must remember that you are working with a **perishable** product. This means that it is a fresh fruit that can be injured or damaged easily.

The most injuries and damage to citrus fruit happens during picking. Once fruit is injured or damaged, it cannot be exported and the farm will get a lot less money for the fruit. Remember that you are picking your wages off the tree.

definition

Perishable

The word perishable is used to describe something that can rot or spoil easily.

Citrus Picking Methods

While you are picking, there will be a supervisor or team leader that is in control of your picking team. This supervisor will first of all tell you what sort of picking you will be doing. Sometimes you will be picking export fruit, which is when you will follow all the instructions given to you in this module.

You may also be told to only pick fruit that has a certain colour, or that look a certain way, and leave the rest of the fruit on the tree. You must listen carefully to these instructions, and follow them. The other kind of picking that can happen is when the export fruit is already off the trees, and the fruit that is left is going to the juice factory. In that case, you may be told not to use clippers, but just to pick the fruit with your hand. This is called snap picking.

Remember that export fruit is NEVER snap picked. In this video, we will look at how export citrus fruit must be picked. You must follow all these steps very carefully to protect the fruit, and to make sure that the fruit arrive at the packhouse in a good condition.

Personal Hygiene

Before you start picking, you need to make sure that your hands are clean and your nails are short, because long nails can injure the fruit.

You should also not be handling the fruit if you have any open injuries or sores. They must be covered with plaster before you begin.

Picking Equipment

Gloves

For some types of citrus, you will receive one glove that must always be on the hand that touches the fruit. So if you are right-handed, the glove will be on your left hand, and your right hand will hold the clippers. Make sure that the glove does not have any holes or tears.

information

Picking Gloves

Although it was for a time considered best practice to use gloves while picking, it has now been found that it can have a negative impact on hygiene, due to their propensity to become damp and collect pathogens and other dirt. It is therefore now considered best practice to pick with bare hands that are washed regularly, and a soft touch.

Clippers

You will be issued with a pair of clippers that you will use while picking the fruit. Clippers are made from a steel alloy and the tips of the blades are round so that it will not damage the fruit. The spring keeps the clippers open, and the finger loop helps you to control the clippers while picking.

The blades of the clippers should not overlap. If they do, they may tear the stem, and a long stem will damage other fruit.

Picking Bags

You will also receive a picking bag, to put the fruit in as you pick them. The picking bag is always slung over the shoulder opposite to the hand holding the clippers. This means that the bag should hang next to the hand wearing the glove.

There are two types of picking bags commonly in use, a bag that can open at the bottom with quick release clips, and a bag that is only open on top.

Make sure that the bag does not have any holes or tears in it, and that it is clean, dry and completely empty before you start. If the bag is torn or ripped, repair it using **thread** and not wire.

Ladders

When picking tall trees you will also use a ladder to get to the fruit high up in the tree. Ladders can be made from aluminium or wood, and must be strong and sturdy. Ladders can have two legs or three legs. Check that your ladder does not have any splinters or loose metal pieces that can injure you, the tree or the fruit.

Picking Practices

Now we get to how the fruit must be picked.

Clipping

Let the fruit rest in your gloved hand, place the blades of the clipper on the fruit, and cut the stem as close as possible to the fruit – only a short piece of stem must be left on the fruit. Always cut the fruit stem at a right angle to the fruit. If you cut the stem skew it may leave a sharp point that can damage other fruit.

Place the fruit in the bag using your gloved hand – don't throw or drop it in. If the stem of the fruit is too long, clip it off before putting the fruit in the picking bag. Remember that any long stem will injure the other fruit in the bag.

Never run with a picking bag that has fruit in it. This will make the fruit bounce against each other, and cause injuries.

Using Ladders

If the tree is too tall to reach the fruit at the top, all the fruit that can be reached from the ground must first be picked before using a ladder, so that the ladder will not press against and injure fruit that is still on the tree.

If you are using a ladder with two legs, lean it against the tree. Make sure that it is sturdy and secure before climbing it.

If the tree has three legs, the third leg is placed under the canopy of the tree to prop up the ladder, so that it does not have to lean against the tree.

Be careful not to bump your picking bag against the ladder if the bag already has fruit in it.

Soiled Fruit

If you drop any fruit on the ground **do not pick it up**, ever. Any fruit that is dropped onto the ground must stay there.

You must also not pick any fruit that hangs low on the tree. If the fruit is touching the soil, leave them alone. Even fruit that is hanging low enough so that water might have splashed up onto it, or fruit that has soil on it, must be left on the tree.

This fruit must not be picked and put with the other fruit, because they are infected.

You must also make sure that your glove does not become dirty or wet. If this happens, tell the supervisor and get a clean, dry glove.

Emptying Picking Bags

Once your picking bag is full of fruit, you will take it to the picking trailer or bin to empty it. Remember **not to run** to the bin or trailer.

When using a bag that opens at the bottom, place the bottom of the bag either on the fruit already in the bin or onto the floor of the bin and release the quick release catches. Lift the bag and let the fruit gently roll out.

If using a bag that is open on top lay the bag down on the fruit in the bin or on the floor of the bin and gently lift the bag to let the fruit roll out.

Do not throw the fruit into the bin, or drop it onto the other fruit, because this will damage the fruit. Once you have emptied the bag of fruit, shake out all the leaves and stems that may still be in the bag, before putting fruit into it again.

skills

Please see the skills sheet on **Picking Export Fruit**.

Preparing for Tomorrow

After you finish picking for the day, it is important that you must check your equipment.

Make sure that there are no tears or holes in your glove or in your picking bag and that your picking bag is clean. Clean your clippers and oil them, as instructed by the supervisor.

If anything should go wrong with any of your equipment during picking, tell the supervisor or team leader immediately. Make sure that all your equipment is stored in a safe place, ready for the next day.

active learning

Watch the DVD clips, read through the learning material and do workplace research to gather the knowledge and information to complete the assignments below.

Activity 1 – Keynote List

Make a list of all the different equipment that is used while picking export citrus. Now write down keynotes next to each piece of equipment on your list on the correct and safe way to use it, clean it and store it.

Activity 2 – True or False

Tick true or false next to each statement and motivate your answer:

Statement	True	False	Motivation
Personal hygiene is not that important during fruit harvesting, because the work is very physical and you are just going to get hot, sweaty and dirty in anyway.			
It is important to wash your hands frequently and to wear a clean glove on the picking hand when harvesting certain types of citrus.			
To maintain good productivity, during harvesting one should pick as fast as you can, throw the fruit into the picking bag, run to the bin, and empty it as fast as possible.			
When you use a ladder while picking citrus, you must be very careful and make sure that you and the fruit are safe.			
For some types of citrus, you can just climb in the tree, pick as many fruit as fast as you can, drop them onto the ground below the tree, where one of the other harvest workers can then pick them up and fill their picking bag extra fast.			

Activity 3 – Workplace Research

Walk around the farm and packhouse with your group, and look for safety signs and hazard notices. Draw them in your workbook and write keynotes next to each picture explaining its meaning.

Activity 4 – Practical

Ask your supervisor or team leader to observe you during the harvest, while using your glove, clippers, ladder and picking bag. Make sure that you use, clean and store is safely and correctly, and that you do it according to your company's standard operating procedures.



Activity 2 – True or False

Tick true or false next to each statement and motivate your answer:

<i>Statement</i>	<i>True</i>	<i>False</i>	<i>Motivation</i>
Personal hygiene is not that important during fruit harvesting, because the work is very physical and you are just going to get hot, sweaty and dirty in anyway.			
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Picking Export Fruit

PICKING DON'TS

- **DO NOT** leave a long stem on fruit that can injure other fruit
- **DO NOT** cut stem skew so that it makes a sharp point
- **DO NOT** pick up any fallen fruit – fruit on the ground, stays on the ground
- **DO NOT** pick low-hanging fruit
- **DO NOT** throw fruit into picking bag or into trailer or bin
- **DO NOT** run with a picking bag that has fruit in it or bump it against ladder
- **DO NOT** continue to use glove or picking bag that is wet, dirty or torn

Requirements

- Glove
- Clippers
- Picking bag
- Ladder

Method

1. Put glove on hand that touches fruit (left hand for people that are right-handed), use clippers with right hand
2. Let fruit rest in gloved hand
3. Place blades of clipper on fruit around stem and clip stem close to fruit
4. PLACE fruit in picking bag with gloved hand

Tall Trees

5. Make sure that all fruit that can be reached from ground has been picked
6. If ladder has two legs, lean it against the tree
7. If ladder has three legs, place third leg under canopy of tree to prop it up
8. Make sure ladder is sturdy and secure before climbing it
9. When picking bag is full, walk to bin or trailer
10. Lay bag on bottom of empty bin or trailer or on top of other fruit
11. Pull picking bag away, allowing fruit to roll out
12. Shake out all the leaves and stems from empty bag