Orchard Tech
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Fertigation and fertiliser mixing on an almond farm

What to expect before you start

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This sheet describes typical fertigation and fertiliser mixing work and conditions. Your actual duties depend on the farm and what you are trained and authorised to do. Reading this sheet does not authorise you to handle fertiliser or chemicals, drive a farm vehicle, operate machinery or repair equipment.

Who you work for

Orchard Tech is your employer. Your host farm (your host) directs your daily work. Both are responsible for your health and safety. Raise questions or safety concerns with your supervisor or Orchard Tech: Hari Yellina, 0439 32 32 32, or Soana Fanua, 0400 174 471.

Your working hours

Your confirmed roster sets your days, hours and breaks. Some shifts may be at night. Ask your supervisor if you are unsure.

The work you may do

Fertigation means applying fertiliser through the irrigation system. In this work you may help mix fertiliser and add it to the irrigation water, as your host directs.

This is specialist chemical work. Do it only if it is part of your confirmed job and your host has trained you and authorised you to do it. You also need any licence or qualification the work requires.

Use only what your host gives you. Use only the products, amounts, equipment and method in your host's instructions. Do not guess and do not change anything. Follow the label, the safety data sheet (SDS) and your host's instructions. The SDS is a document that explains a product's dangers and how to use it safely. If anything is unclear or missing, stop and ask your supervisor.

Checking and reporting. Watch for leaks, spills, and damaged containers, hoses or fittings. Report what you saw, where (block or site) and when. Fill in any records your host asks for.

This sheet covers fertigation and fertiliser mixing only. Spraying, spreading lime, changing irrigation schedules, repairs, driving, operating other machinery, electrical work and working at heights are separate tasks. They need their own instructions, training and authorisation. Never work on electrical equipment or enter confined spaces, dams, tanks or channels.

Handling fertiliser and chemicals

Fertiliser and chemicals can harm you if they get in your eyes or on your skin, or if you breathe them in or swallow them.

- **Before you start,** go through the label and SDS with your supervisor. Ask for language help if you need it. Make sure you know where the eyewash, washing water and first aid are.

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- **Wear the personal protective equipment (PPE) your host provides.** The label, the SDS and your host tell you what to wear. For chemical work this may include long chemical gloves, face and eye protection, a chemical suit and a chemical breathing mask.
- **Do not eat, drink or smoke** while you handle fertiliser or chemicals. Wash your hands and any exposed skin after handling, and before you eat, drink or smoke.
- **Splashes or other exposure:** if fertiliser or chemicals get in your eyes or on your skin, or you breathe them in or swallow them, stop and get first aid straight away. Follow the first-aid instructions from your induction, the label and the SDS. Tell your supervisor straight away, even if you feel well. Also tell your supervisor if you or a co-worker feel unwell after handling fertiliser or chemicals.
- **Spills and leaks:** if fertiliser or chemical spills or leaks, stop work, keep other people away and tell your supervisor. Clean up only as your host has trained you.
- **Storage:** keep fertiliser and chemicals only in the containers and places your host shows you.
- **Water under pressure:** never cut or disconnect a pipe or hose while water is running or the line is under pressure. An authorised person must first make the system safe using the host's procedure. Start only when your supervisor says it is safe. If a pipe or hose bursts, or a fitting leaks or comes off, stop and tell your supervisor. Do not force it.
- **At night,** follow your host's instructions for lighting. If you cannot see your work area or read a label clearly, stop work, move to a safe place and tell your supervisor.

Weather and the outdoors

Most work is outdoors in heat, cold, wind, rain and dust. Watch for holes, pipes, slippery ground and snakes. Work may change or stop in heat, storms or smoke: follow your host's instructions. Use sun protection all year (broad-brim hat, long sleeves, sunglasses, sunscreen), drink water often, take shade breaks and dress for the weather. Tell your supervisor straight away if you or a co-worker feel sick, dizzy or very hot.

- **Do not enter a block that is being sprayed or has a no-entry sign. Do not drink irrigation water:** it may contain fertiliser or chemicals.

Movement and lifting

You may need to walk on uneven ground, bend, and lift and carry fertiliser bags or containers. These can be heavy or awkward. If a lift feels unsafe, ask for help or use the equipment provided. Watch your footing where the ground is wet or slippery. Report pain or discomfort early.

Moving around the farm safely

Mule or similar farm vehicle

Some farms use a side-by-side vehicle, such as a Kawasaki MULE, to carry workers and materials.

- **Driving is not covered by this sheet.** If driving is part of your confirmed job, get the safe work instructions, training and authorisation for that vehicle first. A licence alone does not show you can drive it safely.

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- **Driver and passengers:** wear your seat belt every time, and the helmet and eye protection your host provides (your host will tell you what to wear). Keep doors or nets closed and arms and legs inside. Sit only in a seat with a seat belt. Never ride in the tray or bypass a safety device.

Farm traffic rules

- **Follow the farm traffic plan:** use set routes, obey signs and speed limits, and keep away from steep slopes, banks and water.
- **On foot:** use walking routes and keep clear of moving machinery. Never approach a working machine until the operator has stopped and clearly signalled you to come closer. Eye contact alone is not enough. Stop in a safe place before using a phone.

PPE and help on the farm

Your host will provide the personal protective equipment (PPE) for your tasks and show you how to wear, check and look after it. This may include safety boots, high-visibility clothing, gloves, eye or hearing protection, sun protection and a vehicle helmet. Report missing, damaged or poorly fitting PPE before you start. PPE does not replace training, instructions or other safety controls.

At induction, learn who your supervisor is, where water, toilets and first aid are, the emergency plan, how to get help where there is no phone coverage, and the check-in arrangements when you work alone.

- In a life-threatening emergency, call Triple Zero (000), then tell your supervisor. If you see a snake, keep clear and never try to catch or kill it. If a snake bites you, or you think you have been bitten, keep as still as possible and call 000 or ask someone to call.
- Report every injury, near miss or unsafe situation to your supervisor and Orchard Tech as soon as possible, even if it seems small.
- Ask for a demonstration, an explanation or language help whenever you do not understand.

Important note before starting any job

This sheet describes typical fertigation and fertiliser mixing work. Before you start, your host will give you the job description and safe work instructions for your actual duties, the PPE you need, a farm induction and training for your tasks. Follow those instructions. Do not do any work without the required PPE, training and authorisation. Complete the induction at every new farm, and get the instructions and training for every new task. **If anything is missing, unsafe or unclear, stop and ask your supervisor. You can also contact Orchard Tech.**