Orchard Tech
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Orchard and foliar spraying on an almond farm

What to expect before you start

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This sheet describes typical orchard and foliar spraying 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 or spray 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

Orchard and foliar spraying. Orchard spraying means spraying the almond trees. Foliar spraying means spraying onto the leaves. You may help prepare sprays and apply them with a sprayer, for example one towed by a tractor. Your host decides what is sprayed, where and when.

This is specialist chemical work. Do it only if it is part of your confirmed job and your host has trained, assessed and authorised you for the work, the chemicals, the sprayer and the tractor. Get training for each new tractor and sprayer model. You also need any licence or qualification the work requires. A licence alone does not show you can work safely.

Use only what your host gives you: the products, amounts, equipment, settings and method in your host's spray instructions. Do not guess or change anything. If anything is unclear, stop and ask your supervisor.

This sheet covers orchard and foliar spraying only. Weed spraying, spot spraying with a hand wand, fertigation, hitching or unhitching the sprayer, other machinery, repairs, maintenance, jump-starting, electrical work, working at heights (such as climbing onto a tank), and entering confined spaces, dams, tanks or channels are separate tasks. They need their own instructions, training and authorisation.

Your host will train you in its own procedure. The work may include:

- **Filling and mixing:** filling the spray tank and adding chemicals only at the filling point and in the way your host shows you. Stay with the tank and watch it while it fills. If the emergency shower or hand-wash there is not working, do not start: tell your supervisor.
- **Spraying:** spraying only the blocks and rows your host tells you. Watch the hoses and connections for leaks or breaks. If you find one, stop spraying and tell your supervisor.

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- **End of shift:** emptying and flushing (rinsing out) the sprayer only as your host has trained you. Check the equipment and report any faults. Fill in any records your host asks for.

Handling chemicals

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, the safety data sheet (SDS) and your host's spray instructions with your supervisor. Follow them every time. The SDS explains a product's dangers and how to use it safely. Ask for language help if you need it. Know where the emergency shower, eyewash, washing water and first aid are.
- **Wear the personal protective equipment (PPE) your host provides,** as the label, the SDS and your host tell you. For spraying this may include long chemical gloves, face and eye protection, a chemical suit, a chemical breathing mask (respirator), boots, a hat and clothing that covers your arms and legs. Wear a respirator only after your host has shown you how to use, check and care for it. For a respirator that seals against your face, your host must arrange a fit test first. There must be no facial hair where it seals. Check the seal every time you put it on. Before each job, check your PPE. If it does not fit or seal well, or is damaged, stop and tell your supervisor.
- **Do not eat, drink or smoke** while you handle or spray chemicals. Wash your hands and any exposed skin after handling, and before you eat, drink or smoke. Take off, clean and store your PPE, and wash after spraying, as your induction and your host show you.
- **Splashes or other exposure:** if 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 working with chemicals.
- **Spills, leaks and storage:** if a chemical spills or leaks, stop work, keep other people away and tell your supervisor. Clean up only as your host has trained you. Keep chemicals only in the containers and places your host shows you.
- **Lifting:** chemical containers and hoses can be heavy or awkward. If a lift feels unsafe, ask for help or use the equipment provided.
- **At night,** follow your host's lighting instructions. If you cannot see your work area, people nearby or a label clearly, stop work, move to a safe place and tell your supervisor.

Spray drift, people and bees

Wind can carry spray away from the trees you are spraying, to people and places outside the area. This is called spray drift.

- **Weather:** before you start, talk with your supervisor about the weather now and the forecast. Spray only when your host says the weather is suitable, and keep watching it. If the wind or weather changes, or spray drifts away from the trees, stop spraying and tell your supervisor.
- **People and bee hives:** watch for other workers near the area you are spraying. If anyone comes close, stop spraying, wait until they are clear and tell your supervisor. Your host will tell you where bee hives are. Stay away from them at all times.

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- **No-entry signs and going back in:** your host will explain the re-entry period (the waiting time before people can go back into a sprayed block), any other entry rules, and how no-entry signs are used. Follow the label and your host's instructions. If you are not sure of the waiting time, ask your supervisor. Do not go back into a sprayed block, or past a no-entry sign, until the waiting time has passed and your host says it is safe.

Operating the tractor and sprayer

- **Public roads:** never drive on or across a public road unless your host has approved the tractor, the sprayer, your licence and the route.
- **Before driving:** do the pre-start checks you were taught on the tractor and sprayer, such as the roll-over frame, seat belt, brakes, lights, mirrors, guards, windows, steps, hoses, controls and radio. Check that the sprayer sprays properly, as your host shows you. Change sprayer settings only if you are trained and authorised. Report faults. If a fault could make the tractor or sprayer unsafe, do not use it: tag it out as your host shows you and tell your supervisor.
- **Getting on and off:** keep the steps free of mud and use three points of contact (two hands and one foot, or one hand and two feet). Never get on or off a moving tractor. Start it only from the driver's seat, as your host shows you. Never start it from the ground or bypass a safety switch.
- **Roll-overs:** tractors can roll over, especially on slopes, banks, rough or wet ground, near dams and channels, and with heavy or raised loads. Liquid can surge (move suddenly) inside the spray tank, especially when it is only partly full. This can make the tractor less stable. Drive smoothly, as you were trained. The roll-over frame (ROPS) protects you only if you wear your seat belt, because the belt keeps you inside the frame. A folded-down frame cannot protect you. Your host will show you when it may be folded down for work under trees. Put it back up as soon as there is enough room.
- **Driver and passengers:** wear your seat belt every time you operate the tractor. Keep the cab doors and windows shut while the tractor moves. Carry a passenger only if your host allows it and the tractor has a passenger seat and seat belt approved by the tractor manufacturer. The passenger must wear the seat belt. Never let anyone ride on the sprayer, the tank or any attachment.
- **Leaving the seat and parking:** your host will teach you the safe-stop procedure for each tractor and sprayer. It covers the handbrake, the PTO, turning off the engine and making raised parts safe. Follow it every time before you leave the seat. Tell nearby workers when you get off. When you finish, park on firm, level ground where your host shows you, remove the key and return it as your host requires.
- **Long hours in the seat:** you may sit for long periods and climb on and off the tractor many times. Use your breaks and report pain or discomfort early. If you feel too tired or unwell to operate safely, stop in a safe place and tell your supervisor.

Moving parts, people and power lines

- **PTO shafts:** some sprayers are driven by the PTO (power take-off). This is a shaft at the back of the tractor that turns to power the sprayer. A turning PTO shaft can catch clothing, hair or a hand and pull a person in. This can cause very serious injury or death. Check that the PTO guards are in place and in good order. Never use a PTO with a missing or damaged guard: report it. Do not wear loose clothing, cords or jewellery, and tie back long hair. Keep yourself and others clear while the PTO is turning.

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- **Blockages and loose guards:** if something blocks the sprayer or a guard comes loose, stop and tell your supervisor. Before anyone goes near, the tractor and sprayer must be shut down and made safe so they cannot start or move, using your host's procedure, and all moving parts must have stopped. Any pressure trapped in the hoses must also be made safe, using your host's procedure, before anyone opens a hose or nozzle. Clear a blockage only if you are trained and authorised. Never restart with a loose or missing guard.
- **Booms and turning:** if your sprayer has booms (spray arms) or other parts that stick out, learn how wide they are. When you turn, and when you enter or leave tree rows, check that they are clear of trees, posts and other equipment.
- **Before you move:** tell nearby workers and wait until they are clear. There are places around a tractor and sprayer that the driver cannot see (blind spots). Look in all directions and use your mirrors. If you cannot see that the way is clear, stop and ask for help. If someone comes close while you are moving, stop and wait until they are clear.
- **Traffic plan, headlands and radio:** at the pre-start meeting, learn who is working in which blocks. Use set routes, main tracks and headlands (the turning areas at the ends of the rows). Obey signs and speed limits. Slow down for turns, people, dust, poor visibility and rough ground. Keep away from steep slopes, banks and water. Your host will teach you the radio calls needed before you enter a headland. Do not enter until you get the reply your host's procedure requires.
- **Dust and seeing clearly:** dust, spray mist, low sun, dawn and dusk can make it hard to see. Keep the windows clean. If you cannot see that the way is clear, or dust makes it hard to breathe, stop in a safe place and tell your supervisor. Stop in a safe place before you use a phone.
- **Power lines:** look up for overhead power lines before you raise or fold booms or other parts, and when you move tall or wide equipment. Electricity can jump to a machine that comes close to a line, even if it does not touch it. Ask your host where the power lines are. If your tractor or sprayer touches a power line, or electricity jumps to it, stay in the tractor. Call 000 or ask someone to call, and warn others to keep away. Get out only if fire or another life-threatening danger forces you to. Your host will show you how to get out safely in an emergency.
- **When you are on foot:** wear the high-visibility clothing your host provides, 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.

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 drink irrigation water:** it may contain fertiliser or chemicals.
- **Noise:** wear the hearing protection your host provides, as you are instructed.

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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 chemical PPE. 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 orchard and foliar spraying 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.**