Orchard Tech
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Harvest pickup on an almond farm

What to expect before you start

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This sheet describes typical harvest pickup 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 operate a tractor, a pickup or any other machine, or to 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. Ask your supervisor if you are unsure. Harvest pickup work may include night shifts.

The work you may do

What a pickup does. At harvest, nuts on the ground are swept into windrows (long lines of nuts along the tree row). A pickup is a harvest machine towed and powered by a tractor. It picks up the nuts from the windrow and carries them into a trailer (the pickup trailer). Your host will tell you which machines to use and which rows to pick up.

Operating the tractor and pickup is the job, but only when you are authorised. Do it only after your host has trained, assessed and authorised you on that tractor, pickup and trailer. Get training for each new model. A licence alone does not show you can operate them safely. Your host will train you in its own procedure. The work may include:

- **Before you start:** asking your supervisor about known obstacles in your work area, such as holes, boggy or uneven ground and irrigation equipment, and reporting new ones.
- **Picking up:** lining up the pickup with the windrow and picking up the nuts along the row, as you were trained. From the driver's seat, watch the drives, belts and chains, and check that nuts keep coming into the trailer. Before you check machinery on foot, follow your host's safe-stop and isolation procedure. Report faults to your supervisor.
- **Checking for missed nuts:** stopping from time to time to check the sand row for nuts. Your host will show you where to check. If you see nuts in it, stop and tell your supervisor. Only maintenance staff may grease, adjust, maintain or repair the pickup.
- **Filling the trailer:** as the trailer fills, moving the nuts towards the back of it with the trailer controls, as your host shows you.
- **Turning:** lifting the pickup head and keeping the pickup's moving parts stopped while you turn at the end of a row.

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- **End of shift:** removing nuts and sticks from the pickup and trailer, as you were trained. Do this only after the tractor, pickup and trailer have been shut down and made safe using your host's procedure. Report anything that may affect the next shift.

This sheet covers operating a tractor, pickup and pickup trailer. Emptying the pickup trailer into the bankout (another machine that collects the nuts from your trailer) is a separate task. So are greasing, adjustments and repairs, cleaning with compressed air, jump-starting a flat battery, electrical work, working at heights, and entering confined spaces, dams, tanks or channels. Each needs its own instructions, training and authorisation.

Pickup dangers to watch for

- **Moving parts:** the pickup head, the elevator (the conveyor that lifts the nuts), belts, chains, the trailer's moving parts and the PTO (power take-off) shaft that drives the pickup from the tractor can catch clothing, hair or a hand and pull a person in. This can cause very serious injury or death. Never use the pickup 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 anything is moving.
- **Sticks and blockages:** sticks can get caught in the front of the pickup. If something blocks the pickup, or a guard comes loose, stop. Before anyone goes near, the tractor, pickup and trailer must be shut down and made safe so they cannot start or move, using your host's procedure. Wait until all moving parts have stopped. Remove sticks or clear a blockage only if you are trained and authorised, and wear gloves. If not, tell your supervisor. Never restart with a loose or missing guard.
- **Hitching:** hitching means connecting the pickup and trailer to the tractor. If it is part of your job, your host will show you how. Make sure everyone is clear before you reverse to hitch. Never let anyone stand between the machines unless the tractor is stopped, the handbrake is on and the engine is off. Wear gloves, and ask for help with heavy parts.

Driving the tractor safely

- **Public roads:** never drive on or across a public road unless your host has confirmed that the tractor, pickup and trailer, your licence and the route are approved.
- **Before driving:** do the pre-start checks you were taught on the tractor, pickup and trailer, with the machines shut down. Checks may include the roll-over frame, seat belt, brakes, lights, mirrors, guards, windows, steps, controls and radio. Report faults. If a fault could make a machine 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. 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 the tractor 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 and banks, on rough or wet ground, near dams and channels, and with heavy or raised loads. The roll-over frame (ROPS) protects you only if you wear your seat belt, because the belt keeps you inside the frame. Some frames fold down for work under trees. A folded frame cannot protect you in a roll-over. Your host will show you when it may be folded down. Put it back up as soon as there is enough room, as you were trained.

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- **Loads and equipment:** use only a pickup, trailer and loads that suit the tractor, correctly fitted and secure, as your host shows you. Keep within the load limits your host gives you.
- **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 pickup or trailer.
- **Leaving the seat and parking:** your host will teach you the safe-stop procedure for the tractor and pickup. It covers the handbrake, stopping the pickup, the trailer's moving parts and the PTO, turning off the engine and making raised attachments safe. Follow it every time before you leave the seat. Make a radio call before you get off, using your host's procedure. When you finish, park on firm, level ground where your host shows you, and return the key as your host requires.

People, other machines and power lines

- **Before you move:** tell nearby workers you are about to move, and wait until they are clear. There are places around a tractor that the driver cannot see, especially with a pickup and trailer fitted. These are called blind spots. Look in all directions and use your mirrors. Before you reverse, make sure no one is near the pickup or trailer. If someone comes close, stop until they are clear.
- **Follow the farm traffic plan:** 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, and give way to working machines. Keep away from steep slopes, banks and water.
- **Headlands, rows and radio:** stop at each headland and check for other machines, trucks and people before you go on. Your host will teach you the radio calls and replies needed before you enter a headland. Do not enter until you get the reply your host's procedure requires.
- **Power lines:** look up for overhead power lines before you raise an attachment, 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, pickup or trailer 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. Use walking routes and keep clear of moving machinery. If another machine comes into your work area, stop work, keep clear and tell your supervisor. 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.

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- **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.

Noise, dust, night work and long hours in the seat

You may sit for long periods. Report pain or discomfort early. If you feel too tired or unwell to operate the tractor safely, stop in a safe place and tell your supervisor.

- **Noise:** tractors and harvest machines can be loud. Wear the hearing protection your host provides, as you are instructed.
- **Dust:** pickup work can be dusty. Wear the sealed safety glasses (glasses that seal around your eyes) and the dust mask your host provides. If dust makes it hard to breathe or to see clearly, stop the tractor in a safe place and tell your supervisor.
- **Seeing clearly and night work:** keep the windows clean. Dust, low sun, dawn, dusk and darkness make it harder to see people, machines and obstacles. Slow down when it is hard to see. At night, use the lights as your host shows you. If you cannot see that the way is clear, stop in a safe place. Stop in a safe place before you use 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 dust mask. 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 harvest pickup 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.**