

Tree shaking on an almond farm

What to expect before you start

Version 1.0 | Date of review: 18 October 2026 | Date of next review: 18 October 2028

This sheet describes typical almond tree shaking 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 tree shaker 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. During harvest, some shifts may be at night. Ask your supervisor if you are unsure.

The work you may do

Tree shaking. At harvest, a tree shaker (shaker) shakes each almond tree so the nuts fall to the ground. The shaker is a harvest machine with an arm. The shaker head on the end of the arm holds the tree trunk while the tree is shaken. You may drive the shaker along the rows and shake the trees during the main harvest or a re-harvest, when the crew goes back through a block. Your host will tell you which shaker to use and which blocks and rows to shake.

Checks and routine care. You will check the shaker before each shift. Your host may also train you to care for the shaker head and to clean and refill the shaker at the end of the shift. Do this care only as your host trains you.

Only if you are trained, assessed and authorised. Operate a shaker only if your host has trained and assessed you on that machine and authorised you to operate it. You must also be trained in the farm's traffic management plan. Your host will confirm whether the work needs a licence. You must hold any licence the work requires, and give your host a copy if asked. A licence alone does not show you can operate the machine safely. After you are signed off, your trainer or supervisor will check your work from time to time.

This sheet covers operating the shaker and the routine care your host trains you in. Adjusting the shaker, repairs and maintenance, jump-starting a flat battery, blowing down machines with compressed air, operating other machines, using power tools, handling chemicals, electrical work, working at heights and entering confined spaces, dams, tanks or channels are separate tasks. They need their own instructions, training and authorisation.

Before you start

- **Pre-start checks:** before each shift, do the daily shaker checks your host trained you in, using your host's checklist. Keep the shaker shut down and isolated (made safe so it cannot start or move) while you do the checks. Check that the radio works on the channel your host gives you. Never use an unsafe machine.
- **Guards and faults:** never use the shaker if a guard is missing or damaged. Report any fault, damage or leak to your supervisor straight away. Do not touch a leaking hose. If a setting needs changing, tell your supervisor.
- **Flat battery:** if the shaker will not start, tell your supervisor. Jump-starting is a separate task. If you see a cracked or leaking battery, or notice an unusual smell near it, keep away and tell your supervisor.
- **Getting on and starting:** use three points of contact (two hands and one foot, or one hand and two feet). Never get on or off a moving machine. Adjust the seat and controls. Start the shaker only from the operator's seat. Start and warm it up only where and how your host shows you.

Shaking trees

When a tree is shaken, nuts, twigs, dust and branches can fall. A person near the tree can be badly hurt.

- **Look first:** before the day's work, ask your supervisor about any known obstacles in your blocks. Before you enter a row, look along it for people, machines, irrigation equipment and other structures. Before each shake, check that nobody is near the tree.
- **Shake only as you were trained:** approach each tree slowly and carefully. Your host will train you how to place the shaker head on the trunk and how to shake each tree. Your supervisor will check the quality of your shaking from time to time. Report any problem with the shaker head straight away.
- **Falling branches:** if a branch breaks or falls onto the shaker, or something does not look right, stop shaking and tell your supervisor.
- **Caring for the shaker head (only if trained, assessed and authorised):** your host may train you in pad care and greasing. Before this work, follow your host's instructions for that machine to make the shaker safe, including shutting it down and isolating it. Never put any part of your body under the shaker arm. Keep other workers clear. Other servicing and repairs are separate tasks.

People, other machines and power lines

- **People on foot:** other workers may be poling or doing other work in or near your block. Keep people away from the shaker and from trees being shaken. If someone comes close, stop shaking and moving, and wait until they are clear. Stop the shaker before you signal anyone to come closer.
- **Blind spots:** there are places around the shaker that you cannot see from the seat, especially near the arm. These are called blind spots. Look in all directions before you move. If you cannot see that the way is clear, stop and ask for help.
- **Other harvest machines:** sweepers, pick-up machines, tractors, trucks and other vehicles may work in the same block. Give way to all working machinery. Watch for machines on the headlands (the turning areas at the ends of the rows). Use the radio calls your host teaches you.

- **Power lines and structures:** the shaker and its arm can hit overhead power lines and other structures. Electricity can also jump to a machine that comes close to a line, even if it does not touch. Before you start, your host will show you where the power lines are and the areas where the shaker must not go. Look up for power lines whenever you move the shaker. If you are not sure, stop and ask your supervisor.
- **If the shaker touches a power line,** or you think electricity has jumped to it, stay on the machine unless there is a fire or another danger to your life. Warn others to keep away and not to touch the machine. Call 000. Wait until the power company says it is safe to leave. Your host will teach you the emergency procedure before you start.
- **When you are on foot:** wear the high-visibility clothing your host provides. Never approach a working machine until the operator has stopped and clearly signalled you to come closer. Eye contact alone is not enough.

Moving around the farm safely

- **Public roads:** never drive on or across a public road unless your host has confirmed that the machine, your licence and the route are approved.
- **Seat belt and roll-overs:** a shaker can tip or roll over, especially on slopes and banks, soft or uneven ground, wash outs and bog holes (soft, wet holes). Wear your seat belt at all times. If the shaker starts to tip, stay in the seat and hold on. Do not try to jump out.
- **Passengers:** carry a passenger only if your host allows it and the shaker has a passenger seat and seat belt approved by the maker. The passenger must wear the seat belt. Never let anyone ride on the arm or the outside of the shaker.
- **Travel:** follow the farm traffic plan. Use set routes, obey signs and speed limits, and travel at a safe speed for the ground and the people around you. Watch for uneven ground and irrigation equipment.
- **At night:** use the shaker's lights as your host trains you. Darkness makes people, machines, power lines and obstacles harder to see. If you cannot see clearly, stop in a safe place and tell your supervisor.
- **Leaving the machine:** your host will teach you how to stop and make the shaker safe before you get off. Follow that procedure every time. Tell nearby workers when you get off.
- **End of shift:** park where your host tells you. Clean leaves, nuts and dirt off the machine, refill the fuel and the lubricant tank, and check for leaks, as your host trains you. Report any problems. Isolate the shaker and return the key as your host shows you.

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.

Noise, dust and long shifts

You may sit for long periods, and the machine may jolt and shake you. Use your breaks. Tell your supervisor early if you feel pain or discomfort.

- **Fit to operate:** never operate the shaker under the influence of alcohol or drugs. If you feel too tired or unwell to operate it safely, or a medicine makes you sleepy, stop in a safe place and tell your supervisor.
- **Noise:** shakers can be loud. Wear the hearing protection your host provides, as you are instructed.
- **Dust:** shaking raises dust. Follow your host's instructions for dust. If dust makes it hard to breathe or to see clearly, stop the shaker in a safe place and tell your supervisor.
- **Oil, grease and hot parts:** wear gloves when you handle grease and oil. If oil, grease or lubricant gets on your skin, wash it off. Keep away from moving parts and hot engine parts.

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, long sleeves and long trousers, 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 almond tree shaking 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.**