



# Manual handling solutions for the vegetable industry No. 3



## Manual harvesting of vegetables

### What is the activity?

Manual harvesting of vegetables into bags, buckets, bins or onto conveyors.

### What are the risks?

Manual harvesting of vegetables into bags, buckets, bins or onto conveyors may involve repetitive bending to ground level; sustained bending, kneeling and crouching; and throwing or reaching to place product into bins or onto conveyors.

Risks associated with the use of knives or machetes can also be present.

The technique used to do the various tasks can have an impact on the manual handling risk. Working across the body and working away from the body can increase the risk.

Work can be repetitive and high-paced over a whole shift.

Injuries can occur suddenly if the produce is heavy and posture is awkward, or over a longer period of time through wear and tear.

Work can often be undertaken in cold or hot weather, on uneven ground and in wet and muddy conditions.

### What is the solution?

Automated harvesting where feasible, offers the only significant risk reduction.

The risk of musculoskeletal injuries associated with manual harvesting may be reduced by:

- Ensuring bins, crates and conveyors (where machinery is able to clear the crop) are forward of the picker to minimise twisting when the picker is placing produce
- Bins, crates and conveyors are positioned close to the picker to minimise the need to throw produce
- Provision of training in manual handling techniques that demonstrate the safest body position for picking. For example, workers should have vegetables being picked and the receptacle they are to be placed in, directly in front of them rather than behind them or to their side
- Developing safe and efficient work procedures for the manual tasks which can be used to train workers. Safe work methods can be documented using photographs and then used by supervisors to train new or inexperienced workers
- Considering a buddy system for new workers to demonstrate and monitor safe work methods
- Providing job rotation and rest breaks
- Maintaining sharp knives and machetes to reduce the physical load from the cutting tasks
- Allowing the workers to have some control over the pace of work



## Systems of work

Working directly in front of moving machinery should be avoided.

Additional space may be required between workers using knives to reduce the risk of contact.

When setting up a cutting crew, consideration should also be given to left hand as well as right hand cutters.

Knife sharpening and storage facilities should be provided.

## Environment

Ensure that workers wear clothing appropriate to the conditions in cold or hot weather.

Monitor and control noise when working around tractors.

Provide hearing protection if needed.

## The activity



## A solution

