Module 7
Packhouse Planning

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Introduction

Packhouses need to do careful planning during the off-season to maximise productivity and output during the packing season. Planning must be done for:

- Equipment maintenance
- Packing material
- Chemical usage
- Labour requirements

The ability to predict volumes and target markets is therefore of cardinal importance to the packhouse manager. For a packhouse to function well, it is crucial that there are close cooperation and good communication between the producer, export agent, packhouse, input suppliers, and logistics service providers.

Equipment Maintenance

Packhouse planning starts with equipment maintenance. Throughout the year, records are kept of where breakages and wear and tear occur most often. When the season stops, work starts with the maintenance of these parts.

In addition to maintenance, planning starts based on volumes to be received in the next season, for packing material, chemicals and labour.

Packing Materials

The formula we use is based on estimates from producers, based on history and the fruit load of trees during the year. From this we estimate fruit volumes in terms of cartons equivalents.

A decision is also made on the target markets for the coming year, and carton requirements are calculated on this basis.
An order can now be sent to the carton manufacturer specifying the number of cartons needed per week per market.

A plan is then developed with the manufacturer, of which the details are sent through by the coordinator on a daily basis once packing starts.

### Chemicals

The same principle is used for calculating the chemical requirements, for the drench and the fungicide bath.

The calculation is based on tonnage put through the packhouse. It is monitored on a daily basis, comparing actual chemical usage during packing with the predicted usage, and adapting the projections if necessary.

### Labour

As for labour, skeleton staff starts when we start packing the smaller cultivars. The total workforce is employed when the main packing starts.

The number of workers is based on the previous year’s figures. If the packhouse has been expanded, requiring more staff, workers are trained to perform and supervise those new tasks.

### Conclusion

Fruit volumes for the packing season are estimated based on yield and fruit size estimates done by growers. Once the target markets for the fruit have been chosen, estimates can be made of how much packing material (including cartons, carton labels, fruit labels, wrappers, pallets, strapping, and so on), chemicals and other consumables will be needed.

This information is communicated to input suppliers. Using the estimated volumes, the packhouse manager can also predict the number of workers that he will require for each job in the packhouse, and the training needs for the workers.

Training should take place before the season, in order to have a fully trained and motivated workforce in place when packing starts.
active learning

Watch the DVD clips, read through the learning material and do workplace research to gather the knowledge and information to complete the assignment(s) below.

Activity 7.1 – Workplace Research

Conduct research in your workplace or the packhouse where you are doing your practical training to determine the following:

✓ What volume of citrus was packed in the packhouse during the previous season in ton?
✓ What is the maximum volume of fruit that your packhouse handles in a day?
✓ How much fungicides were used in the packhouse during the previous season?
✓ How many cartons were used during the previous season of the carton type that is used most in your packhouse?
✓ How many temporary and how many permanent workers were employed by the packhouse during the previous season?

Activity 7.2 – Workplace Interview

Interview your packhouse manager or supervisor and find out whether the fungicide usage, carton requirements and worker numbers are expected to change in the next season. If so, find out the reasons for these changes.
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**Details of interviewee**

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<th>Name and surname:</th>
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<td>Date of interview:</td>
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<td>Signature of interviewee:</td>
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