

SIZE MATTERS! 2022 PLUM SEASON

A return to normality after years of drought and extreme temperatures resulted in a significant increase in stone fruit production in the 2020/21 season. After a good winter and a mild to cool fruit set period, the plum industry is anticipating similar export volumes in the 2021/22 season.

At this stage, the industry is expecting fruit packed for the export market to range between 15 - 16 million cartons (5.25 kg equivalents). This relates to a similar sized export crop as in 2020/21 with an 8% increase on the upper end, depending on how the season plays out. The potential increase is primarily driven by new orchards coming into production. We would like to sensitize growers to the need for timely and proper thinning to ensure good fruit size, as the market for smaller fruit is limited.

Stone fruit technical expert Charl Stander of Freshness First shares the following notes on plum fruit thinning.

Objective of fruit thinning:

- To ensure regular yields of high quality fruit striking a balance between the optimal number and size of fruit to ensure the best possible returns.

Optimal timing of fruit thinning:

- As early as possible within the range of 30 to 36 days after full bloom
- When fruit are about 8 to 10 mm in diameter
- Access to sufficient labour is essential
- Thinning should preferably be done before pith hardening which, depending on the area, climate and cultivar, takes place about 45 to 55 days after full bloom.
- Cosmetic fruit thinning can be done at a later stage.

FRESH NOTES

A TECHNICAL UPDATE PUBLISHED BY HORTGRO SCIENCE

Determine the optimal fruit load per tree to obtain the desired yield and fruit size:

- Average fruit mass (g) x number of fruit per tree x number of trees per ha / 1,000,000 = ton per ha.
- Example: 92 g x 200 fruit per tree x 1907 trees per ha / 1,000,000 = 35 tons/ha

Thinning method:

- Count the number of fruit per tree
- Thin to a single fruit per cluster if enough fruit have set
- Keep the biggest fruit in a cluster
- The position of the fruit should be considered – fruit rubbing against spurs/leaves/branches will decrease the pack out percentage
- Space the fruit according to cultivar and the set obtained – allow enough space for fruit growth
- Remove blemished fruit
- Cosmetic thinning can be done at a later stage

2022 Pruimseisoen—grootte maak saak!

Na 'n aantal jare van droogte en ekstreme temperature, het die 2020/21 seisoen 'n aansienlike toename in steenvrugproduksie gesien. Vanweë die afgelope goeie winter en matige tot koel temperature gedurende vrugset, verwag die pruimbedryf soortgelyke uitvoervolumes in 2021/22.

FRESH NOTES

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Op hierdie stadium verwag die pruimbedryf dat tussen 15 en 16 miljoen kartonne (2.5 kg ekwivalente) vir die uitvoermark gepak gaan word. Dit is 'n soortgelyke tot 8% groter uitvoeroes, aan die bokant van die skatting, as in 2020/21 afhangende van hoe die

seisoen verloop. Die potensiële toename word hoofsaaklik gedryf deur nuwe boorde wat in drag kom. Ons wil produsente attent maak op die noodsaak van tydige en toepaslike vruguitdunning ten einde goeie vruggrootte te verseker. Die mark is vir klein vrugte is beperk.

Steenvrug tegniese ekspert Charl Stander van Freshness First deel die volgende wenke vir pruimuitdunning.

Die doel van vruguitdunning:

Om 'n gereelde oes van hoë kwaliteit vrugte te verkry met 'n balans tussen optimum produksie en vruggrootte ten einde die beste moontlike inkomste te behaal.

Die optimale tyd vir vruguitdunning

- So vroeg moontlik in die orde van 30 – 36 dae na volblom
- Wanneer die vruggies ongeveer 8– 10 mm in deursnee is
- Genoegsame arbeid is noodsaaklik
- Uitdunning moet verkieslik afgehandel wees voor pitverharding intree. Afhangende van die streek, klimaat en kultivar, geskied pitverharding omtrent 45 tot 55 dae na volblom.
- Kosmetiese vruguitdunning kan op 'n latere stadium gedoen word.

Bepaling van die optimale vruglading per boom om die verkose produksie en vruggrootte te verkry:

- Gemiddelde vrugmassa (g) x aantal vrugte per boom x aantal bome per hektaar / 1,000,000 = ton per hektaar

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- As voorbeeld: 92 g x 200 vrugte per boom x 1907 bome per hektaar / 1,000,000 = 35 ton/ha

Uitdunningsmetode

- Tel die aantal vrugte per boom
- Laat 'n enkel vrug per tros indien genoeg vruggies geset het
- Behou die grootste vrug in 'n tros.
- Die posisie van die vrug is baie belangrik – vrugte wat teen spore/blare/takke skaaf, gaan die uitpakpersentasie verlaag
- Spasieer die vrugte na gelang van set en kultivar – laat genoeg ruimte toe vir vruggroei
- Verwyder vrugte met letsels
- Doen kosmetiese uitdun op 'n latere stadium