

Bed width and centre channel

- With a standard bed width of 134 cm, use a centre channel of 5 cm wide on each bed
- If the bed width is greater than 134 cm, install a central channel where the reach distance seen from both side boards remains a maximum of 65 cm
- If possible, leave a larger space between the beds



What to do in case of deviations from the 'average' business?

The above measures to reduce the physical strain on manual harvest employees are based on the 'average' business. If your business deviates from the 'average' business, describe the deviation in the risk assessment and the measure you take in the action plan. Deviations from the average business are, for example, a larger bed width (140 cm), the use of a lorry driven by (hand) winch, the use of a lorry with height adjustment by means of suspension of the work platform with hooks.

Example: Your bed width is 140 cm. This is a deviation from the 'average business'. In your risk assessment, you describe this deviation and in your action plan, you describe that you are installing a central channel of 11 cm.

This guide was discussed, coordinated and approved by the Inspectorate SZW on 18 May 2021. Growers of hand-harvested mushrooms for the fresh market are strongly advised to implement the recommended measures.

Guide

Reducing physical strain when picking mushrooms

During inspections in 2018, the Inspectorate SZW found that mushroom pickers are exposed to (excessively) high physical strain when picking. This can lead to health issues. Employers have a legal and important responsibility to ensure a healthy and safe work environment.

The Mushroom Cultivation department of LTO Nederland (the Netherlands Agricultural and Horticultural Association) and the Inspectorate SZW have made agreements about how to reduce physical strain. This guide, which has been coordinated and approved by the Inspectorate SZW, offers specific measures to reduce the physical strain when picking mushrooms. Employers are urgently advised to implement the measures. In the coming years, the Inspectorate SZW will check the extent to which the measures have been complied with.



Initial situation 'average' business

The proposed measures are based on the following 'average' business situation:

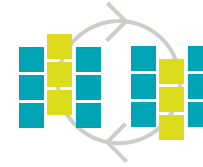
- Mushroom cultivation business with manual harvest for the fresh market.
- An average of 5 to 6 beds per cell with a bed width of 134 cm and a space between the beds (top side board - bottom of bed) of 60 cm (a small number of businesses use a bed width of 140 cm).
- The manual harvest is done by manual harvest employees; harvest controlled by a picking manager.
- In addition to picking, the manual harvest employees also perform other tasks that interrupt the picking process (*picking up/dropping off a foot bag, moving/cleaning the lorry, picking up/dropping off full/empty containers to the work aisle, packing/transferring empty boxes into crates, etc.*).
- In the case of manual harvest, the employees use electric or hydraulic lorries to adjust the correct working height for the beds.
- The manual harvest employees sit on the lorry or another seating facility when picking the lower beds and stand on the lorry when picking the beds above it.

Reduction of task duration

- Introduce an adjustment to the picking method. Each manual harvest employee goes back and forth (*and picks continuously for a maximum of 45 minutes; shorter time is more favourable*) with the picking lorry and unloads the lorry when it is back at the starting point (even if the empty crate is not yet full!):
 - *The manual harvest employee unloads the full crates from the picking lorry, registers the full crates and puts the full crates away in the designated place;*
 - *The manual harvest employee then takes the necessary empty crates and places them on the lorry;*
 - *The manual harvest employee empties the foot bag/bin;*
 - *The manual harvest employee empties the crate with industrial mushrooms;*

OR:

- After every 90 minutes of continuous picking, make sure the employees take a short break for 7,5 consecutive minutes (a minimum of 7,5 minutes after every 90 minutes)
- Within the 90-minute picking block, make sure that other tasks are completed at least after 30 minutes and at most after 45 minutes:
 - *Other tasks include taking away full crates, collecting empty crates, emptying foot bags, emptying crates with industrial mushrooms and moving lorries.*



Task rotation and/or other activities

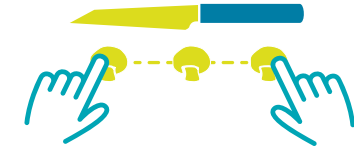
- Don't use runners anymore
- If possible, also give manual harvest employees other activities that are not linked to picking, such as cleaning, packing and unpacking or administrative jobs



Setting picking trolley and posture when picking

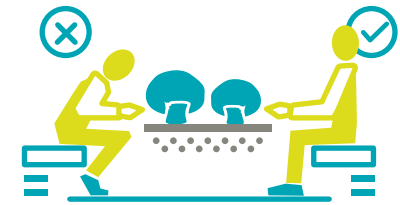
Setting picking trolley:

- Instruct new manual harvest employees on the correct setting of the picking trolley each day for two weeks after they start and then each month
- Instruct and remind experienced manual harvest employees on the correct setting of the picking trolley every three months
- Post the instructions on how to properly set up the picking trolley in the canteen and at the entrance to the cultivation cells
- Make sure the picking managers ensure that the employees adjust the height of the lorry as best as possible for the correct posture when picking mushrooms



Picking and tools

- Alternate picking sitting and standing regularly
- Make sure you have a sharp knife
- Make sure you have a good seat (*correct height, which can be adjusted if necessary*) for picking on the lower bed



Picking posture:

- To prevent neck, arm, back, shoulder and wrist complaints, instruct new manual harvest employees about the correct picking posture each day for two weeks after they start and then each month
- To prevent neck, arm, back, shoulder and wrist complaints, talk to experienced manual harvest employees about the correct picking posture every three months
- At the business premises, use visuals about the correct picking posture
- Make sure the picking managers ensure that the employees adjust the height of the lorry as best as possible for the correct posture when picking mushrooms