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Monthly Safety Blast

January 2014

*Produced by the Southwest Center for
Agricultural Health, Injury Prevention and Education*

Work Doesn't Have to Hurt

Although the agriculture, forestry, and fishing (AFF) industries have become more mechanized over the last century, there are still many regional tasks that are done by hand—a person's hand. Picking crops, weeding fields, planting trees, thinning brush and checking crawfish traps are just a few examples of activities performed by people without sophisticated machinery. Many jobs require stooping, bending, lifting, twisting, kneeling, forceful gripping and carrying that can all lead to musculoskeletal injuries. Musculoskeletal injuries from agricultural work can result in pain in the back, neck and shoulders, as well as other areas of the body.

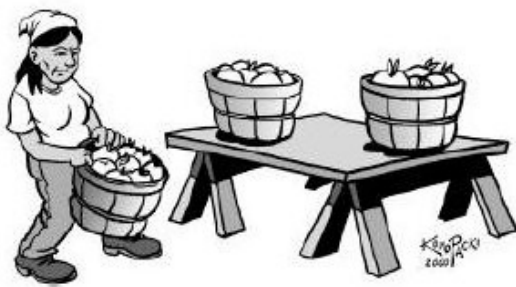
The study of ergonomics has been applied to AFF work in order to maximize productivity and minimize worker fatigue and discomfort. A wide range of [ergonomically designed tools](#) are available to make agricultural work more comfortable, including lifting tools, weeding stands and harvest carts. Some ergonomic solutions simply call for smaller or differently shaped carrying containers. A well-organized and ergonomically designed work station or tool can improve the health and well-being of workers. Performing brief strengthening and stretching exercises can also help prevent injuries. The following lifting guidelines from [Simple Solutions: Ergonomics for Farm Workers](#) can help create a more comfortable and productive agricultural work environment.

Guidelines for Lifting

- Keep lifts between hand level and shoulder level.
- Avoid lifts from the floor or over shoulder level.
- Lift with your legs, not your back.
- Put handles on containers.
- Redesign loads so they can be lifted close to the body.
- Use dollies, pallet trucks, or utility carts for objects that have to be carried more than a few feet.
- Use roller conveyors for bags or boxes of vegetables or chemicals that are handled often.
- Keep bag or box weight below 50 lbs.



Lifting from a good height, between waist and shoulder level.



Poorly-designed load: No handles, and load must be carried too far from the body.



Better-designed load: Handles are provided and the load is closer to the body.

Resources:

- Simple Solutions for Farm Workers: <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2001-111/>
- Agricultural Ergonomics Research Center: <http://ag-ergo.ucdavis.edu/>
- National Center for Farmworker Health Online Resource Library-Ergonomics Results: http://www.ncfh.org/?plugin=ecomm&content=search-results&searchType=basic&formPage=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.ncfh.org%2F%3Fpid%3D32&search_words=ergonomics
- What to look for when selecting or modifying hand tools to provide a better fit with the user: <http://fyi.uwex.edu/agrability/files/2010/02/handtools.pdf>

Sharing is caring!



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