

What is field packing?

Field packing is the first step after harvest. It's when you prepare your produce to be transported safely and presented well in the market.

Cleaning, curing, sorting, grading, sizing, and packaging are all part of packing.

The quality of your produce will never get better than when it first leaves the field; the best you can do is to **minimize quality loss**.

Field packing is a way for you to **control what happens to your produce** after it leaves the field. Good packing practices **protect** the quality of your produce so that it will **last longer** and look and taste better in the market.

With better quality produce, you will earn a **good reputation** with your buyers and will be able to demand a **higher price**.



Millennium Challenge Account
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Field Packing



Paúl, Santo Antão

Cabbage being harvested with clippers and field-packed into plastic crates.

ONE IN A SERIES OF 5

Postharvest

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Cleaning



Gentle brushing to remove excess dirt. Prevents disease.

Sorting



Removal of produce that is undersized, oversized, deformed, deteriorated, immature, over mature, decayed, bruised, etc.

Grading



Classification into different quality grades according to size, shape, color, ripeness, freedom from defects, etc.

Sizing



Classification on the basis of dimensions (such as diameter, width or length) or weight.

Packaging



Careful placement into containers that will protect the produce.

The containers may be used just for transport...



...or also in the market, to display your produce to consumers.



Plastic crates are recommended to reduce damage. They are easy to clean, reusable, and can be stacked without causing damage to the produce at the bottom of the stack.



Don't be overwhelmed! You don't have to do *all* of these practices. Even **just one** (especially proper packaging) will help you preserve the quality of your produce.

Packing in the field: why it's an advantage

Without good packing, produce is often sorted many times and moved from container to container. Each of these steps damages your produce.

Field packing allows your produce to be **handled just once**, right after it is harvested. At every step it can stay in its packaging because it is already cleaned, sorted, and well-protected. Less handling means less damage and **minimal loss of quality**.

Consumers will notice the difference. Once you have a **reputation for quality**, it will be easier to find buyers, because they will **prefer to buy from you**.

Field packing can be done either at the plant or along the edge of the field. The best packing setups provide:

- shade (to keep the produce cool and protect workers)
- a comfortable, clean work surface
- easy access to transport