

New Project

TF 197a

Continuation of previous work (TF 197) to determine the cost benefit of a range of thinning strategies for apple

Project Number:	TF 197a
Project Title:	Continuation of previous work (TF 197) to determine the cost benefit of a range of thinning strategies for apple
Project Leader:	Gary Saunders
Contractor:	East Malling Research
Industry Representative:	Giles Cannon, GSR Fruits Ltd
Start Date:	01 April 2012
End Date:	31 March 2013
Project Cost:	£9,320

Project Summary:

Reducing the cost of hand thinning is a high priority to UK fruit growers. The aims of this project are to evaluate five differing thinning strategies compared to an untreated control in Gala apple. The number of initial flower clusters will be recorded and fruit number will be determined after set and June drop and at harvest. At harvest fruit will be graded into commercial size categories and fruit number and weight will be determined for each of these size grades. The cost of the various thinning strategies, associated harvest, the effects on yield and quality and hence return will be determined. A cost benefit analysis will be provided for each treatment.

Aims & Objectives:

(i) Project aim:

To determine the effectiveness and cost benefit of a range of thinning strategies for Gala apple.

(ii) Project objective(s):

1. To apply five treatments including an un-thinned control
2. To determine the time taken and cost for each treatment method
3. To determine yield in each size category at harvest for each treatment
4. To determine the cost benefit of each treatment

Benefits to industry

Effective methods are required to reduce the cost of the hand-thinning operation and harvest as these represent major costs to growers. The most cost effective thinning strategy will be identified, which should lead to industry savings, and potentially more consistent subsequent cropping levels.

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