



Agriculture & Horticulture  
DEVELOPMENT BOARD



# New Project

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TF 205

Stone fruit thinning; a desk study of recent developments overseas

**Project Number:** TF 205

**Project Title:** Stone fruit thinning; a desk study of recent developments overseas

**Project Leader:** Chris Nicholson

**Contractor:** ADAS UK Ltd

**Industry Representative:** Nigel Kitney

**Start Date:** 1<sup>st</sup> March 2012

**End Date:** 1<sup>st</sup> September 2012

**Project Cost:** £3,500.00

*SUBJECT TO CONTRACT*

**Project Summary:**

This desk study will investigate recent developments in stone fruit thinning techniques overseas, particularly in Europe and North America. A particular focus will be on the Darwin String Thinner but Bonner machines, Drum thinners, hand held thinners, and chemical thinning techniques will also be covered. The simplicity of the systems and their costs and likelihood of adoption will also be considered. Information will be sought from scientific papers, journals and from commercial product literature.

**Aims & Objectives:**

(i) Project aim(s): To conduct a literature review to critically evaluate approaches and techniques that can be used for thinning selected UK stone fruit crops for increased yields.

(ii) Project objective(s):

- To review the practicality and costs of currently available stone fruit thinning techniques (bud, blossom or flower removal) systems for a UK orchard situation.
- To carry out a literature review of current research, the outputs of which can be potentially harnessed to develop and improve techniques for thinning stone fruit crops.

To evaluate the potential benefits of developing thinning techniques to improve the production efficiency of stone fruit crops.

**Benefits to industry**

Stone fruit yields in the UK are very variable, particularly in the case of plums. In overset years the costs of hand thinning are considerable. Effective new thinning techniques being developed overseas could reduce the need for hand thinning and consequently reduce the production cost. A benefit of effective crop load management could be larger and more uniform fruit, less waste fruit, lower production costs and more regular consistent cropping. Growers could justify investing in new orchards if cropping was more predictable which could lead to an increase in the area of stone fruit in the UK with the potential for import substitution and a bigger market.

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