

**Harvesting should be done according to the following guidelines using the proper tools:**

- Step 1.** Identify ripe bunches ready for harvesting based on the loose fruits that are lying in the weeded circle around the palm trunk or are stuck behind frond butts on the trunk. **Just looking at the colour of the bunches is not a good way to harvest tall palms because the bunch may look red but they could still be unripe.**
- A bunch should only be harvested if there is at least one loose fruit on the ground or stuck behind the frond butts on the trunk (minimum ripeness standard) for mature palms.
- If the bunch looks ripe but there are no loose fruits, shake it with the harvesting pole (without damaging it) to check if any loose fruits fall out.
- When there are one or several loose fruits, it is certain that the bunch is ripe enough for harvesting. Using the 'minimum ripeness standard' of one or two loose fruit will help prevent deductions at the mill for unripe or underripe bunches.
- Note:** When harvesting only twice per month, the minimum ripeness standard will result in many overripe bunches. In this case it is better to harvest based on bunch colour!
- Step 2.** Harvest the bunch by first cutting a frond according to the following rule of thumb:
- Palms more than six years after planting: Cut a frond below the bunch so that the bunch becomes visible and easy to harvest;
  - Palms less than six years after planting: **Do not** cut fronds but 'steal' the bunch with a narrow chisel.
- Step 3.** Chop the frond into two pieces. Place the spiny, thick bottom part behind the palm, on the frond stack between the rows, and place the thin bottom part between the palm and its neighbour to the right or left
- Step 4.** Cut the bunch stalk so that the bunch falls to the ground. Cut the bunch stalk as shortly as possible (maximum 2 cm).
- Step 5.** Collect the harvested bunches with a wheelbarrow after one or two rows of palms have been harvested. Ensure all loose fruits are collected, including the loose fruits that are stuck behind the frond butts and those that are lying outside the weeded circle. Remember:
- Loose fruits contain **40 percent oil**.
  - The fruits are what earn the money in oil palm plantations: not collecting them is like leaving money lying around!
  - Also, uncollected fruits will grow into weeds, which need to be removed later.
- Step 6.** Move collected fresh fruit bunches and loose fruit to the collection area at the roadside.
- Step 7.** Stack the fresh fruit bunches into rows. The stack should have only one layer so the bunches can be counted and sorted immediately.
- Step 8.** Collect loose fruit separately and place beside the fruit bunches.
- Step 9.** **Tentative:** Label fresh fruit bunches on the cut edge of the stalk with carpenter's pencils or crayons to indicate their origin. It is best to use a different one-letter code for each field. Every bunch should be marked, and also the fertiliser bags with loose fruit.



*Figure 1: Loose fruits that were left behind have grown into weeds.*



*Figure 2: Correct bunch stacking at the roadside.*



*Figure 3: Loose fruit collection in an empty fertiliser bag.*