Pick pyrethrum at the correct stage

Kenya Agricultural Research Institute
PO. Box 57811-00200, NAIROBI.
Tel: 254-20-4183301-20, Fax: 254-20-4183344
Email: resource.centre@kari.org
Website: www.kari.org

Compiled by:
Ngugi, C.W, Ikahu, J.K, and Gathungu, G.K

For more information contact:
Centre Director,
KARI- Molo P.o. Box 100 Molo, 20106
Tel: (051) 21030/1
Fax: (051) 721031
Email: nprckarimolo@yahoo.co.uk

KARI information brochure series / 63 /2008
Ksh. 20
**Introduction**

Pyrethrum is an important cash crop grown by smallholders in Kenya. The flowers are harvested manually and stage of harvest is a key determinant of pyrethrin content.

**Pyrethrin content**

The pyrethrum flower contains about 92% pyrethrins. Pyrethrin content depends on pyrethrum make up, where grown and flower growth stage at harvest.

**Stages of flower development**

There are eight growth stages from bud stage to seed stage and pyrethrin content increases with growth stage.

**Picking Tips**

- Hold the flower between the first and second finger.
- Jerk the flower head with the thumb.
- Place into well ventilated baskets to reduce fermentation.

Do not pick flowers under rainy conditions to avoid fermentation that leads to low pyrethrin concentration.

*Pyrethrin content reaches a maximum when ray florets are horizontal and 3-4 disc florets are open.*

This is the correct stage to pick flowers.

*Presence of overblown flowers also affects initiation of new flowers.*

**Pyrethrum picking interval**

Correct picking interval is 2-3 weeks since most flowers will have reached maximum pyrethrin content.

*Young flowers contain low pyrethrin and should never be picked.*

*Large quantities of young flowers lower pyrethrin content and affects earnings.*

*More than 3 weeks picking interval increases number of overblown flowers and results to low pyrethrin content.*

**Bud stage – pyrethrins 0.5% w/w**

**Overblown flowers – Pyrethrins 1.1% w/w**

**Horizontal ray florets**

**Disk florets**