Orchard Business Analysis How-to Guide

Standardised Chart of Accounts

AgFirst Consultants, July 2026

What is a Chart of Accounts?

A Chart of Accounts is the framework used to record financial transactions in a business. It groups income and expenditure into consistent categories so that growers can clearly see where money is coming from and where it is being spent. Clear coding of orchard revenue and expenditure helps growers calculate their cost of production, assess profitability, track costs over time and make more informed business decisions. At a glance it enables growers to see revenue streams (fruit sold by variety), alongside production expenses and identify where change may be needed.

The structure and definitions of the Chart of Accounts discussed in this document aligns with those used for APAL's Orchard Business Analysis (OBA) model. The OBA model is designed to provide industry with a benchmark of productive and economic performance in a given season. It outlines the expenditure incurred by an orchard business to grow, pack and prepare fruit for market. Using consistent cost categories allows growers to reliably benchmark their orchard business performance against OBA industry data. These performance comparisons can then inform budgets, strategic decision making, and conversations with banks, business partners and investors.

AgFirst suggests using the following Chart of Accounts structure when setting up or reviewing accounting codes. This can then be applied consistently when coding revenue and expenditure across the season. Where a business includes multiple crop types and/or postharvest facilities, AgFirst recommends coding each business unit's revenue and expenditure separately. This allows for clear analysis of expenditure and profit margins and helps avoid misleading benchmark comparisons.

Refer to AgFirst's series of Orchard Business Analysis How-to Guides for more information on capturing benchmark-ready orchard data.

Chart of Accounts – Revenue Categories

The OBA model calculates revenue by variety, by multiplying the volume of fruit sold in each packout category with the return achieved. Revenue is recorded at a point of sale, in market and net of commissions. The OBA model revenue is associated to the crop harvested in that year, with no deferred payments into the next year.

Table 1 shows the recommended categories that would be listed within the Chart of Accounts.

Table 1. Chart of Accounts – revenue categories

Chart of Accounts category	Data definition and notes
Total revenue by variety	Total revenue received by variety at point of sale, prior to postharvest charges but net of commissions.
Total orchard revenue	Sum of total revenue by variety, for each variety on orchard.

Table 2 outlines the drivers of revenue collected and represented through the OBA, alongside a brief data definition.

Table 2. Orchard revenue key metrics – collected by variety

Revenue driver	Data definition and notes
Planted area	Total planted area (regardless of age/productive status).
Gross production (kg)	Gross yield picked, calculated from gross bins picked.
Class 1 volume (kg)	Volume of fruit packed as Class 1 compared to the gross volume harvested.
Class 2 volume (kg)	Volume of fruit packed as Class 2 compared to the gross volume harvested.
Class 1 return $/kg	In-market return achieved per kg, wholesale, net of commissions.
Class 2 return $/kg	In-market return achieved per kg wholesale, net of commissions.
Process return $/kg	In-market return achieved per kg.

Chart of Accounts – Expenditure Categories

Table 3 outlines the Chart of Accounts expenditure categories, classified as per the OBA model, alongside a brief data definition summarising what is included within each category.

Table 3. Chart of Accounts – expenditure categories

	Chart of Accounts category	Data definition and notes
Postharvest expenses	Packing and packaging	Includes labour, running costs, materials and similar packing costs.
	Coolstorage	Storage costs including dipping and bin charges.
	Freight to point of sale	Cartage from orchard gate to packhouse and freight from packhouse to market.
	Other postharvest costs	Includes treatments such as SmartFresh and other postharvest services not captured elsewhere. Includes bin hireage charges.
	Total postharvest expenses	
OGR	**Orchard Gate Revenue**	**Orchard Revenue minus total postharvest expenses.** Revenue received by the grower after postharvest expenditure has been paid.

Labour expenses	Management wages	Orchard management salary/wages.
	Harvesting	Total harvest labour costs including tractor drivers and QCs.
	Pruning	Pruning and tree training labour.
	Thinning	Hand thinning labour.
	Other wages	Other labour, including moving hail net, reflective mulch, irrigation, tractor time (spraying, mowing), hand weeding, wages associated with R&M, administration wages, and similar labour costs.
	Employment levies	Superannuation, insurance, workers' compensation and related employment costs.
	Total labour expenses	
Other working expenses	Weed and pest control	All spray and chemical costs, including all crop protection products, pesticides, herbicides and plant growth regulators. Excludes fertiliser and labour.
	Pollination	Beehive costs.
	Fertiliser and lime	Fertiliser costs (bulk ground, fertigation and foliar).
	Electricity	Electricity costs, including pumps and offices. Packhouse/coolstorage electricity should be moved to the appropriate postharvest category.
	Vehicles	Refers to all orchard vehicles that have a motor. Includes vehicle-related motor costs, licensing and repairs and maintenance.
	Fuel	Petrol, diesel and oil related to apple/pear growing activities.
	Repairs and maintenance	Repairs and maintenance including tracks, buildings, irrigation, machinery, canopy structure, overhead net and similar infrastructure costs. Excludes vehicle repairs and maintenance.
	Sundry expenses	Other operating costs, including professional development, rubbish removal, protective clothing, staff supplies (eg tearoom), health and safety, cleaning, small tools and equipment, and security.
	Contract machine work	Hired equipment and contract work.
	Total other working expenses	
Overhead expenses	Rates	Council rates and water rates.
	General insurance	Building insurance, vehicle insurance and similar business insurance costs.
	Government levies	Includes water licensing, water purchases and fire levies.
	Communication	Postage, phones, internet, weather stations and computer programme licences.

	Accountancy	Book-keeping, accounting, audit fees and related costs.
	Legal and consultancy	Professional service fees.
	Levies and compliance	HIA, APAL or state levies, audit and compliance costs.
	Other administration	Stationery, local travel, HR expenses and related administration costs.
	Total overhead expenses	
COS	**Cash Operating Surplus**	Equivalent to EBITDA (earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation). Calculated as orchard revenue minus postharvest, labour, working and overhead expenses.
Depreciation	Depreciation	As per depreciation schedule.
EBIT	**EBIT**	Earnings before interest and tax.
Interest/ lease	Interest	Includes mortgage, overdraft or credit card interest. Make sure principal repayments are not included.
	Rent/lease costs	Hail net lease, land lease and hire/purchase costs.
NTP	**Net Trading Profit**	Equivalent to profit before tax.

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