

Title Maximizing quality of fresh produce: A challenge for postharvest education programs
Author E.W. Hewett
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Abstract

Understanding the nature of horticultural products, knowing how they will perform during the postharvest and distribution environment, as well as appreciating the importance of modern supply chain management precepts in providing premium quality horticultural products in the market, are key factors in the success of any horticultural sector. Despite this axiom, there are few if any undergraduate education programs that provide opportunities for graduates destined for careers in horticultural supply chains to obtain the necessary educational packages that equip them with the combined and integrated information that encompasses these two themes of agribusiness and horticultural science. Strategies should be developed that create education programs that enable graduates of bachelors degrees in horticultural science and/or agribusiness to understand the key issues and concepts associated with pre- and postharvest factors that influence product perishability and quality, as well as knowing the significance of supply chain components, their interactions and how to manage the different links in the chain to optimize quality, consumer satisfaction and profitability. Advances in information technology, both hardware and software, together with the creativity of motivated educators, have created opportunities for variants of the educational process to be utilized both in developed and developing countries. The Global Horticulture Initiative aims to provide a coordinating and facilitating role in 'horticulture for development' using both traditional (training workshops for trainers and symposia on specific topics) and new processes, such as those including free access and open educational resources, used successfully by the Commonwealth of Learning (<http://www.col.org>). In working collaboratively with other international agencies, and using such techniques, GHI intends to utilize the broad based skills and expertise of the international horticultural science community to assist in meeting some aspects of the Millennium Goals in developing countries.