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Abstract

Changes in postharvest handling technology, its application and management are being driven by the supply chains desire to reduce costs and shrinkage and consumer desires for quality produce. The crucial element in postharvest handling is the need to boost and maintain quality and thereby assure maximum storage and shipping life. The definition of quality is also expanding as consumer concerns include nutritional value and wholesomeness. Frequently, technological changes in the handling of fresh commodities are slow to be accepted by shippers, wholesalers and retailers. Part of the hesitancy lies in determining the economic advantage and the capital tied up in the current handling system and equipment. The lack of information as the reason for losses and relative importance of the causes (mechanical, physiological, pathological) contributes to the problem. The decision to implement a new technology needs to be based upon available evident and common sense rather than strict logic. Researchers need to develop data that involves simulated shipping tests and commercial trials. In some cases, this will not allow for the different constraints experienced by different growers and shippers. Supply chain logistics, postharvest technology management and diverse sourcing of fruits and vegetables have brought enhanced concern for food safety, another area of technology change that has become a crucial component of quality. All innovations and application of technology needed to ensure market access for growers and shippers should be integrated and optimized into the handling system.