

Title Trends that Impact on Horticultural Chains in the Asia-Pacific Region
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Abstract

The Asia Pacific Region accounts for approximately 53 % of the world's fruit and vegetable fruit production and 60 percent of world population. Horticultural crops make a substantial contribution to food and nutrition security, poverty alleviation as well as to enhancing farmer income in the Region.

Economic growth over the past two decades hassled to a change in the composition of the food basket of many countries across the region, with growth in the demand for fresh fruits and vegetables. Health conscious, high income consumers, particularly in urban centres of the region increasingly demand a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables of high quality, that are safe and in a convenient format, and are likely to purchase these items in supermarkets.

Rapid urbanization across the region is creating large domestic demand for fruits and vegetables, necessitating improvements in efficiency in production and delivery of these produce items to urban centres. At the same time, the number of supermarkets in the region continues to increase, owing to the liberalization of foreign direct investment in retail.

Large supermarkets generally source their fresh produce supplies from farms that have the capacity to consistently satisfy their requirements for volume, safety and quality at competitive prices. They are increasingly involved in the accreditation of fresh produce suppliers for Good Agricultural Practices and Good Manufacturing Practices. Many supermarkets also demand traceability systems from their fresh produce suppliers as a measure of assuring consumer confidence.

Many Asian countries have signed Bilateral Free Trade Agreements with the European Union, Japan, the United States of America and China. The specificity of these bilateral trade agreements includes precise definitions for produce quality, sanitary and phytosanitary controls, food safety measures and produce traceability and origin. All of these trade specifications force Asian trading nations to pay greater attention to supply chain approaches and indeed present new challenges for horticultural producers.

Successful operation of horticultural chains in the region, therefore, increasingly necessitates an understanding of market and consumer requirements, coherent supply chain management systems from producer to consumer, supported by the appropriate logistical infrastructure and the implementation of production and post-harvest handling technologies and practices that satisfy the specific needs of consumers for safety, quality, variety and convenience, while adhering to standards set by target markets. Proper use must be

made of information and communication technologies for marketing as well as for tracking and tracing produce as it moves through the horticultural supply chain. This paper will review the trends highlighted above and their implications for horticultural chain management in the region.