

Title Postharvest technology innovation and opportunities of extension for horticultural produce: Perspective and trends

Author Errol W. Hewett

Citation Book of abstracts, APS2010 & SEAsia2010 & GMS2010, August 2-4, 2010, Radisson Hotel, Bangkok, Thailand.

Keyword Postharvest; horticulture; technology

Abstract

The social and economic consequences of horticultural product food losses from farm to the consumer remain unacceptably high. In developing countries postharvest losses compromise food security, income generation and poverty alleviation for millions of families. In developed countries substantial product losses result in economic losses to supply chain participants and reduced supplies of healthy products into international markets. This situation results from many factors beyond the control of individual stakeholders in the supply chain, that may occur as a consequence of inadequate infrastructure [e.g. transport, energy supply] and social [e.g. economic, R&D, strategic policy, land tenure] systems that are generally do not receive enough private or public sector funding. Knowledge of the postharvest physiology of major fruit, vegetable and flower crops are generally well known, and postharvest technologies have been developed to cool, pack, transport and store products for increasingly longer times. The continuing challenge is how to channel such a large array of relevant information to provide commercially valuable postharvest and quality solutions to producers in such a way that they, and each supply chain participant, make a sustainable profit while still satisfying consumer demands. What avenues exist to ensure that growers are supplied with the information that enables them to optimize all the postharvest practices and processes required to profitably supply high value, nutritious safe products to consumers? This paper will discuss the importance of changing Government policies on funding of outreach and extension programmes with an increasing move from general State funding available for all growers, to commercial or private specialized consultancy services for individual producers on a user-pays basis. It will identify a number of models and techniques of demonstrated success at different levels and will emphasise the critical importance of information and communication technologies to make available both traditional and new innovative postharvest knowledge, techniques and marketing information. It will stress the importance of champions within any system in ensuring success, profit and satisfaction at all levels of the horticultural product supply chain.