

**Title** Postharvest handling systems of major agricultural produce in Lao PDR  
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### **Abstract**

Rice and vegetables are the first and second leading agricultural crops in Lao PDR, respectively. Glutinous or 'sticky' rice is the staple food of the Lao people usually produced under rainfed conditions once a year. After harvest, rice paddy are left in the field to dry, threshed, and stored in a house-structure to provide food supply year-round especially in rural areas. Several problems resulting to losses of paddy have been identified, including improper drying conditions, inefficient threshing machines, and paddy deterioration and rat infestation during storage. Milling is usually small-scale with low grain recovery. On the other hand, vegetables are either produced after rice or in dedicated farms year-round. Harvesting is usually done manually and some concerns relate to maturity, loose handling (no container) of harvested produce, physical injuries, and exposure to heat the sun. The produce is either collected by or brought to the collector-wholesaler and may be packed in big bamboo baskets, plastic bags, or not packed at all for transport using large trucks, mini-truck, pickup, or for short distances, 'Tuk-tuk'. Problems associated with loose handling or use of big containers, poor stacking and overloading, hot and wet conditions during transport, and delays are often encountered. On arrival in markets, the produce is re-packed in plastic bags prior to retail or further distribution to secondary wholesalers and retailers. Some indigenous knowledge includes the use of plastic films as a form of modified atmosphere packaging and using crushed ice for cooling. During market display, the produce is sometimes sprinkled with water in order to look fresh and prevent fruit wrinkling or leaf wilting.