

**Title** Quality and safety of fruits and vegetables in Lao PDR: Challenges and opportunities  
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### **Abstract**

Lao PDR, a landlocked country at the heart of the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS), depends largely on agriculture which accounts for about 56% of gross domestic product and employs about 80% of the labor force. Vegetables rank next to rice in economic importance while the fruit industry is not developed. Major vegetables included chili pepper, tomato, cucumber, yardlong bean, cabbage, mustards, Chinese cabbage, onion, garlic and cauliflower while for major fruits, citrus, banana, mango and pineapple. Production constraints contributing to poor quality and safety of produce included poor cultural management practices, unfavorable weather conditions especially during winter, lack of improved varieties, misuse and abuse of chemical pesticides, use of river water for irrigation with no control of water quality, and poor sanitation in the farm. Postharvest factors responsible for quality and safety problems included lack of awareness of produce characteristics, use of improper methods of harvesting, handling and storage, lack of product cooling after harvest, poor transportation of produce, lack of grading and storage systems, and lack of packing and washing/cleaning systems, lack of packinghouse and storage facilities, and poor hygiene in packing areas and markets.