

Title Quality and safety of fruits and vegetables in Cambodia: Challenges and opportunities
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Abstract

Agriculture in Cambodia contributes 32% to gross domestic product, with crops contributing 52% and rice as the dominant crop. Fruits and vegetables comprise only 16% of the total crop production; thus, the country relied heavily on imports (about 70%) from neighboring countries of Thailand and Vietnam. Imported produce is usually of better quality and lower price than local produce. Market supply and price of local produce are highly volatile, with very low price during peak months and very high price during lean months. Major locally produced fruits include banana, young coconut, mango, jackfruit, citrus and longan while for vegetables, tomato, Chinese kale, peppers, yardlong bean, eggplant, bitter melon, cucumber and mustards. Production factors associated quality and safety problems of fruits and vegetables included poor variety, unsuitability of growing areas, small and dispersed production areas, poor irrigation system including use of contaminated water, and improper use of agricultural inputs, particularly fertilizers and pesticides which are imported and lack labels in local languages. On the other hand, postharvest factors that affect produce quality and safety include poor harvesting and field handling practices, lack of postharvest techniques, poor packaging and transport practices, lack of packinghouse and storage facilities, and lack of processing techniques. Other factors included lack of market information and quality/safety standards, high transport costs, competition with imports, poor market integration of farmers. Opportunities for employing proper production and postharvest management included import substitution for increasing productivity, high demand for fruits and vegetables in domestic and high-end markets, proliferation of modern marketing chains with increasing quality and safety requirements including for fresh-cut produce, high potential for processing, availability of arable lands, and niche marketing of local produce with unique quality (e.g. 'Pursat' oranges, 'Takhmao' longan).