

Title Handling of horticultural perishables in developing vs developed countries
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Abstract

The basic requirements for maintaining quality and safety of horticultural perishables (fruits, vegetables, herbs, ornamentals) between harvest and consumption sites are the same in developing and developed countries. However, the extent of adoption of the necessary harvesting and postharvest handling technologies varies greatly among countries and within each country, depending on scale of operation, intended markets, and the return on investment (cost/benefit ratio) of each technology. Although labor cost is lower in developing countries, labor training, productivity, and management are generally better in developed countries. Availability and efficient use of the cold chain is much more evident in developed countries than in developing countries. Unreliability of the power supply, lack of proper maintenance, and inefficiency of utilization of cold storage and refrigerated transport facilities are among the reasons for failure of the cold chain in developing countries. Cost of providing the cold chain per ton of produce depends on energy costs plus utilization efficiency of the facilities throughout the year. There is great variation among and within countries in the extent of compliance with quality standards and food safety regulations, which is associated with the extent of participation in the global marketing of fresh produce. Successful exporters of fresh produce from developing countries must follow the required quality standards and safety regulations (avoiding microbial contamination traceability, etc) of the importing companies and/or countries. Strategies for improving handling of horticultural perishables in developing countries include: (1) Application of current knowledge to improve the handling systems of horticultural perishable and assure their quality and safety; (2) Removing the socioeconomic constraints, such as inadequacies of infrastructure, poor marketing systems, and weak research and development capacity; and (3) Overcoming the limitations of small-scale operations by encouraging consolidation and vertical integration among producers and marketers of each commodity or group of commodities.