

**Title** Postharvest quality management in chains of vegetables in Lao PDR

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**Keyword** postharvest quality; Lao PDR; vegetables

#### **Abstract**

Vegetables are the second most important crop after rice in Lao PDR with total production of 744,450 metric tons from 85,710 hectares. Leafy vegetables account for 48% while fruit vegetables, 46% of the total production. Postharvest management of vegetable quality is still very far from ideal due to lack of capacity, resources and infrastructure. In 2005, postharvest technology (PHT) initiatives of the AVRDC - The World Vegetable Center were instituted which is the first of its kind in the country. Supply chains of major leafy vegetables (cabbage, Chinese mustard and green mustard) and fruit vegetables (tomato, chili, cucumber, yardlong bean) were studied. Postharvest losses of fruit vegetables were found to range from 9-17% throughout the supply chain. Major causes of loss at the farm level were diseases, hot and wet weather, and physical damage while during distribution and marketing, poor packaging and transport, adverse storage condition, poor quality, and inability to sell all produce. For leafy vegetables, losses at the farm level of upland farmers ranged from 5-11% due to insect damage, limited storability and low price. PHT capacity building, research and development programs developing simple PHT for specific produce, and training activities for future trainers and supply chain actors were implemented. The impact of the training programs on the capacity of supply chain actors in managing vegetable quality after harvest and in improving rural livelihoods was evaluated. The outcomes of these programs will be described in this paper.