

**Title** Postharvest science and value chain management: using the virtuous value cycle to define common ground

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### **Abstract**

In agrifood supply chains there is competitive tension between suppliers seeking to sell at higher prices and customers seeking to buy at lower prices. Self-optimising behaviours can mitigate against the supply chain's ability to produce system level outcomes such as product quality, food safety, traceability and sustainability, which cannot be delivered by single firms within a chain. How individual firms can prosper as members of supply chains focused on achieving system level objectives is a question that remains only partially resolved in theory and practice. Most argue that the answer lies in a chain's ability to create, deliver and sustain value to the consumer. Chains that focus on delivering value to the consumer while also satisfying individual chain members are referred to as value chains and their success relies on collaborative behaviours that support both the system and its members. Many firms find this change difficult or impossible to make. The virtuous value cycle (VVC) is a concept that allows individual firms to identify their potential as value chain partners, or groups of collaborating firms to evaluate their performance as a value chain. The VVC also provides a framework for defining postharvest science and technology from the perspective of consumer value. Adopting a consumer value perspective would enable postharvest researchers to sell their ideas to funders and commercial stakeholders more effectively; it may lead to different ways of defining problems in the first place; and it could give rise to different research approaches. Postharvest researchers who think and act in this way can benefit from occupying common ground with value chain management researchers and practitioners.