

**Title** Can sequential harvesting help small holder organic farmers meet consumer expectations for organic potatoes?

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#### **Abstract**

The effectiveness of sequential harvesting in ensuring that potatoes produced by small-scale organic farmers in Embo, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, meet consumer quality expectations was investigated. A survey of organic and conventional potato consumers showed that absence of greening, sprouting and blemishes and a smooth skin texture were the criteria used by the consumers in selecting potatoes to purchase. Most consumers expected potatoes to store for three weeks post purchase. Based on consumer quality expectations, significantly higher quality losses were noted when potatoes were stored in a farmer's store compared to sequential harvesting. After six weeks from crop maturity, sequential harvesting significantly reduced potato post harvest dormancy period but did not negatively affect sensory acceptability. Sequentially harvested potatoes met consumer quality and storage expectations. The practice provides resource-poor small-scale organic farmers with an efficient storage option where other methods and technologies may be inappropriate, ineffective or unaffordable.