

Title Postharvest technology: why, what and who for?
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Abstract

Postharvest technology only became a recognised science discipline during the last 50 years. The focus in the early years was to directly assist growers to maintain quality while accessing markets over a greater distance and extended time period. The available tools were limited to temperature, humidity and atmosphere control and improved packaging but then with the gradual availability of chemical control agents. Success is attested by the substantial growth in international trade in horticultural produce and the out-of-season availability of many produce.

While support for producers remains central to postharvest technology efforts, there has been an increase in the number of stakeholders whose needs must also be considered. The internationalisation of food trade, the growing militancy of consumers, the involvement of governments in a regulatory and policy capacity, and emergence of the environmental concerns, coupled with funding challenges for universities and public organisations are some of the parties who have created a more complex research scenario for postharvest scientists.

It is timely then to speculate on a future for postharvest technology by considering:

- What has been achieved by postharvest research,
- How can the competing interests of stakeholders be satisfied,
- Are funding pressures stifling creativity,
- What will be the future growth technologies,
- What should be the balance between pure and applied research,
- What should be research objectives for the future