

Title Postharvest science as a tool for competitive advantage
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Abstract

Countries in South-East Asia have some natural ('comparative') advantages when it comes to developing high-value horticultural businesses: including an enormous number of consumers in the wider region, a wide biodiversity of horticultural products and access to water (which is much more limiting in Africa, for example). Nevertheless there are significant difficulties to overcome in running horticultural businesses in the tropics: such as pest and disease pressure, fresh products that are highly perishable and often chilling-sensitive, smallholder production systems, and sometimes less well developed infrastructure. When it is properly applied, postharvest science can be the key that offers competitive advantage to a horticultural business, regardless of their comparative advantages or disadvantages. Postharvest science allows growers, storage operators, transporters and marketers to optimise the fundamentals of their businesses, delivering high-quality products to consumers with sufficient residual life to remain attractive in the home. In addition, new knowledge and technologies are supporting interactions along the supply chain, ensuring appropriate flows of goods, money and information between the various agencies involved. Finally, postharvest science can be applied to understand the needs of your particular target consumers. This overview will focus on successful implementation of new postharvest developments in these three critical areas.