

Overview of postharvest management of litchi

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Abstract

The perishability of the litchi fruit limits marketing, especially of exports to countries some distance from the main area of production. The skin of litchi turns brown soon after harvest or rots after a few days if the fruit are not handled correctly. The loss of attractive red colour reduces its market appeal. Although the initial pericarp browning is primarily a cosmetic problem, it reduces the commercial value of the fruit. Further browning is generally associated with the loss of eating quality. Postharvest research on litchi has been on-going since the 1940s, and there has been a significant escalation of research in the last 20 years. Much of the current international research has focused on aspects of SO₂-low-pH technology or pericarp physiology. Research is now being redirected from chemical based treatments, especially SO₂-related technologies, to more environmentally sustainable strategies. While it is difficult to overlook the possibility of future genetic manipulation of litchi postharvest characteristics, we believe that the short term currently anticipated successes from conventional strategies may be more significant. Research progress in postharvest physiology and the technology of storage of litchi fruit are briefly reviewed in this paper.