Abstract

Temperature management is critical to maintaining the quality of fruits and vegetables once they have been harvested. The longer the supply chain the more important it is to manage temperature, and the greater the number of points at which temperature management can break down. All participants in a supply chain must appreciate the necessity to manage temperature. It is imperative that growers and packers of perishable produce pre-cool the product, otherwise it remains at the wrong temperature throughout the entire supply chain. In addition, even if those at the start of the chain do the right thing, temperature management will not be properly maintained without the commitment of the downstream handlers of their product. To manage temperature, each leg in the supply chain must be equipped with an adequate understanding of the temperature, storage and handling requirements of the product, along with having the facilities and the desire to do the job properly.

Inadequate and inappropriate temperature management in the supply chain of peaches and nectarines in Australia has resulted in poor quality fruit being offered for sale to consumers. Market research has shown when a consumer has a bad eating experience with stone fruit they do not buy that fruit again for 6 or more weeks. In response to this issue in the Australian stone fruit industry, a project was carried out to lift awareness of the problem, demonstrate how it occurs in the supply chain and educate participants of the supply chain on how to improve the quality of the product being delivered to consumers. Specific information for each sector of the supply chain was produced and delivered via a combination of communication methods. The messages were reinforced by temperature monitoring and product assessment throughout Australia. As a result of the project, a number of changes in commercial stone fruit supply chains have been adopted, improving fruit quality.