

Title Improving knowledge and practices in fresh produce chains
Authors S.N. Ledger, T.P. Campbell, R.J. Holmes, J.A. Campbell and L.R. Barker
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Abstract

A successful supply chain must delivery the right product, value and satisfaction to the end customer, and profitability for its participants. Critical to getting the product right is the practices used to produce and maintain product quality through the supply chain from production to sale to the end customer. This paper describes the approach used by a R&D team to add value to supply chains through improving knowledge and practices. The desired outcome is better produce quality for consumers and more control and less wastage for chain participants. The team worked with specific supply chains to identify areas for improvement and to develop, test and implement improved practices. The knowledge gained was communicated to the industry to gain wider adoption of results. Three conditions were identified as critical for practice change – motivation, knowledge, and capacity for change. For improvement in practices to occur, a business must be motivated and have the knowledge and capacity to improve. Two case studies of working with Australian supply chains (mango and melons) are presented to illustrate our participatory methodology. A key activity is monitoring produce quality and handling practices and conditions to demonstrate to participants the points where quality deterioration occurs in the supply chain. This participatory approach is successful because working with supply chain participants generates knowledge and solutions to real problems. It enables the participants to observe the effect of handling practices and conditions on produce quality, gain knowledge and assess the benefits of improvements. Where existing knowledge is not present, research is conducted to fill the knowledge gaps.