

Postharvest Technology in the Developing World

Proper postharvest technologies (i.e., how products are treated during and after harvest) increase food supplies, empower smallholders and create employment in an environmentally sustainable manner.

The Problem

- Postharvest losses from field to fork are estimated to often be as much as 40% in many developing countries.
- Since 25 liters of water are necessary to grow one potato and a single apple requires 70 liters of water, 40% postharvest losses translate into large amounts of wasted water
- Poor postharvest practices mean unsafe food and lost incomes.

The Opportunities

Improved postharvest technologies

- increase food safety and boost the availability of nutritious foods
- save valuable water resources
- increase food supply by reducing losses
- protect the environment by reducing pressure on farm land, and
- allow developing countries to meet food safety and quality control standards and so improve potential for success in export markets.

“GDP growth originating in agriculture is about four times more effective in raising incomes of extremely poor people than GDP growth originating outside the sector.” (The World Development Report 2008)

Smallholders and landless farmers are often the poorest people and they rely on off-farm employment to survive. Postharvest value addition creates rural agribusiness and employment opportunities for these vulnerable populations.

The Way Forward

Postharvest development is achieved by:

- promoting cultivars that have longer postharvest lives
- extending IPM systems that increase produce quality
- disseminating postharvest handling techniques (See information sheet: Postharvest principles)
- spreading the adoption of market-driven postharvest technologies that increase horticultural profitability
- organizing farmers into marketing cooperatives that pool resources for adopting improved postharvest technologies
- boosting women’s control over postharvest processing and thereby directing a greater percentage of the profits to the family unit

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Postharvest processing of orange-fleshed sweetpotatoes adds value and provides employment in Ghana



Postharvest technologies boost the availability of nutritious foods