



FOOD *for* THE CITIES

Fresh foods

Proper packing of fresh produce maintains quality throughout the chain from grower to urban consumer. Packages must protect produce from mechanical damage and adverse environmental conditions



FAO/S. Gallat

Challenges...

Growth of urban populations, changing consumer perceptions about food safety and quality, together with increases in urban income and purchasing power, have led to a shift away from consumption of staple carbohydrates and highly processed foods, towards a demand for higher value, fresh and minimally preserved foods (especially fruit and vegetables) which are perceived to be nutritionally superior. This provides opportunities for improving supply chains for fresh produce, ensuring higher quality and safety for consumers, and better returns for producers. Fresh foods consumed by urban consumers come mostly from rural areas, and as cities expand, so does the length of

the rural-urban supply chain. Owing to their high perishability, fresh foods must be handled with utmost care if their quality is to be maintained from producer to consumer. This poses a challenge to existing supply chains, where quality of produce reaching urban markets is generally inconsistent and frequently poses safety hazards due to use of polluted water, inappropriate storage conditions including lack of temperature control, and poor handling and transportation practices. Upgrading the quality of fresh produce requires improved infrastructure, including access to potable water, refrigeration facilities, new conservation technologies, appropriate packaging for storage and distribution, facilities for cleaning and waste disposal, and critically, efficient transportation.



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Appropriate technologies and good practices prevent deterioration and maintain the quality of fresh foods such as these apples in a supermarket in Zambia

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FAO's response...

For fresh foods, FAO applies quality management systems such as Good Agricultural Practice (GAP), Good Hygiene Practice (GHP), Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP) and Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP), thereby assuring that quality is maintained at each step of the supply chain. The Organization also works on enhancing value of produce through the application of cost-efficient and environmentally-sound technologies, particularly those which contribute to reducing losses, increase efficiency of the post-production system, and provide the quality and convenience demanded by consumers. At the institutional level, FAO engages with local authorities, regulatory bodies and policy makers to facilitate the provision of services and infrastructure required to maintain quality and safety of food throughout the food chain.

Packaging of fresh fruits and vegetables is an important step in the grower to urban consumer chain



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Fresh produce on a supermarket shelf in Lusaka, Zambia. Supermarkets are emerging as major food retail outlets in urban areas of developing countries. As farmers strive to meet the stringent quality requirements of these outlets, the quality and safety of food sold locally improves

FAO's action...

Post-harvest operations. In its liquid form water is used for washing, hydro-cooling and flume transportation of fresh fruits, vegetables, roots and tubers, while in the form of ice it is used for cooling to inhibit deterioration of fresh fruits and vegetables. In developing countries various challenges are faced in sourcing water of high quality to carry out these operations and there is usually a high risk of contamination of fresh produce by micro-organisms and pollutants contained in the water. FAO is currently working through its normative programme to prepare a practical manual that will provide specific guidelines on standards for potable water and best practices to be applied in the above-mentioned operations.

Packaging. Fresh foods supplied to urban areas must be packaged appropriately in order to maintain quality, shelf-life and safety. In addition, the packaging used should offer the convenience valued by urban consumers. In its normative programme, FAO is carrying out studies aimed at increasing the availability and affordability of packaging materials, and identifying low-cost, small-scale options for packaging systems which are appropriate for developing countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America.



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With higher disposable income, urban consumers have better access to convenient, easy-to-prepare meals

Technologies and good practices.

In field projects FAO is developing and disseminating technologies and good practices that are aimed at preventing the loss of millions of tonnes of fresh fruits, vegetables, roots and tubers in developing countries due to inadequate handling and storage, pest damage, and transport and marketing problems.

Traceability systems. Fresh foods consumed in urban areas in developing countries are increasingly procured in supermarkets that exert great influence over their suppliers in terms of traceability. FAO has ongoing activities aimed at developing traceability systems for the small-scale fresh fruit sector in Kenya and South Africa.

FAO created the Information Network for Post-harvest Operations (INPhO) with the support and collaboration of Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) and the Centre de coopération internationale en recherche agronomique pour le développement (CIRAD), to improve access to technical data and foster exchange of information among different actors, thereby fostering activities that are aimed at preventing these losses. www.fao.org/inpho



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The quality, safety and convenience offered by fresh, packaged foods appeal to consumers living a fast-paced urban life



Food for the Cities - Multidisciplinary Area
FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
www.fao.org/fcit/index.asp

For further information, contact:
FAO, Rural Infrastructure and Agro-Industries Division
Viale delle Terme di Caracalla, 00153 Rome, Italy
AGS-Registry@fao.org
www.fao.org/ag/ags/home/en/agst.html