



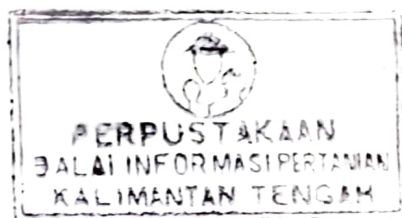
Postharvest Problems of Vegetables and Fruits in the Tropics and Subtropics

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M. S. Liu¹ and Paul C. Ma²

Postharvest losses are a problem for many food crops but are particularly severe for highly perishable vegetables and fruits (1,14). In the tropics, transportation delays can cause vegetable crop damage ranging from 22 to 78% (28). Included are losses associated with overripening, mechanical injury, weight reduction, trimming, sprouting, and discoloration (Table 1).

A 1976 survey of fruit and vegetable losses at the transport, wholesale, and retail levels in Taiwan (Table 2) (16) indicated that losses were most severe for Chinese cabbage, common cabbage, papaya, turnip, muskmelon, carambola, watermelon, cauliflower, and celery. Moderate losses were recorded for banana, citrus, tomato, eggplant, cucumber, and green peppers.

High temperature and humidity accelerate loss rates. Molds, insects, and rats multiply more rapidly under warm, moist conditions, and the rate of chemical and physiological damage in vegetables and fruits increases as temperatures rise (1).

Many losses can be substantially reduced by following recommended practices for handling, transport, and storage. In developed countries, improved packaging, refrigerated transport, and an awareness of the role of refrigeration in quality maintenance have made it possible to move farm produce to distant cities in field-fresh condition and provide consumers with a relatively constant year-round supply (13).

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