

Regional Postharvest Training Program

Postharvest Physiology and Technology of Horticultural Crops

Venue: Lusaka, Zambia

Date: 8 – 10 November 2011

Approximately one third of the food produced worldwide is lost or wasted, equating to around 1.3 billion tonnes of food annually. In industrialised countries the majority of wastage takes place at the consumer level, but in developing countries most of the food losses are on the farm and during transport and processing. These losses are consequently carried over to the consumer as an increase in the food price. Furthermore, poor post harvest practices not only cause loss and wastage but reduce quality and can in some cases result in contamination of food. Good postharvest practices can result in the farmer and distributor/ processor selling more products and the consumer at the end of the day receiving a safer, more nutritious longer lasting product. This improves the stability of food supply and opens up opportunities to export surplus.

In order to tackle this problem, ASNAPP (Agribusiness in Sustainable Natural African Plant Products), the Department of Horticultural Science at Stellenbosch University, Stellenbosch University's HOPE Project and USAID Southern Africa combined efforts to host this postharvest workshop in Lusaka, Zambia from 8-10 November 2011 to offer participants from Southern Africa the opportunity to learn how to mitigate postharvest losses and improve food safety and quality in African horticultural products. Speakers included Mr Luke Mbewe, Chief Executive Officer of the Zambian Export Growers Association (ZEGA) and Board Member of ASNAPP in Zambia, scientists from Stellenbosch University (Department of Horticultural Sciences and Department of Plant Pathology), ASNAPP, and Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey (USA) and a number of postharvest specialists from the South Africa horticulture industry.



Dr Petrus Langenhoven (ASNAPP), Me Mariana Jooste (SU), Mr Luke Mbewe (ZEGA), Dr Elke Crouch (SU)



Dr Petrus Langenhoven (ASNAPP), Mr Elton Jethas (ASNAPP), Me Mariana Jooste (SU), Dr Elke Crouch (SU), Prof Jim Simon (Rutgers Univ), Dr Cheryl Lennox (SU)

Attendees at the workshop represented seven different countries e.g. Botswana, Zambia, Namibia, Tanzania, South Africa, Kenya and Malawi. Many of whom provide extensions services to growers, whom are producers themselves or those whom operate pack houses in their respective countries.



Participants attending the workshop

A wide range of topics were covered discussing, to name but a few, the importance of the cold chain, packaging, sanitation, food safety and disease management on ensuring food safety, quality and to minimise postharvest losses. The highlight of the conference was a field visit to the York Farm packing facilities and the Freshmark distribution centre in

Lusaka to see postharvest processes in practice, identify good postharvest techniques in practice and gain some insight into the challenges and logistical constraints faced in postharvest processing of food in Africa.



Participants inspecting snow peas during a practical at York farm



Participants briefed by Mr Andrew Stock, manager of the Freshmark distribution centre in Lusaka

The workshop culminated in an open discussion between participants and guest speakers over the practical implications of what was covered in the workshop, for not only the larger commercial producer and food processors/distributors, but the small scale farmer. The take home message was that there needs to be greater emphasis on promoting good agricultural practices pre- and postharvest to minimise postharvest losses of produce and ensure product safety and quality. Also, innovation and cooperation will be the key in identifying practical solutions to facilitate the improvement in postharvest practices in areas which suffer from logistical and infrastructural constraints. This is of particular importance to smaller scale producers across the continent.