

Evaluation of present status of using safe packages for perishable transportation

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Fruit and vegetable cultivation plays a major role in the Sri Lankan economy. But one of the major problems in this sector is the high post harvest loss of about 30-40% which directly contributes to low income earned by farmers as well as high market prices for the consumers. Nearly 75% of the total loss is during transportation and mainly due to use of improper packages. In order to minimize this loss, the Institute of Post Harvest Technology (IPHT) conducts a development project since 2006 to promote suitable packaging methods and transportation for reduction of post harvest losses in fruits and vegetables in which plastic crates had been introduced at subsidized rates. And recently various other governmental and non-governmental organizations also initiated popularization of using safe packages for fruit and vegetable transportation. The government then passed a rule in making the use of safe packages for transporting fruits and vegetables compulsory. Therefore, this study was conducted to assess the present status of the use of safe packages for fruit and vegetable transportation and to identify stages and types of safe packages used as well as the benefits and constraints of using safe packages in transporting perishables.

Data were collected using a pre tested questionnaire from farmers, collectors, transporters, whole sellers, retailers and consumers from Anuradhapura, Colombo, Matale, Nuwara Eliya, Puttlem, Badulla, Hambanthota districts based on major economic centers situated in these areas. Further data were collected using visual observations, key informant interviews and using secondary sources as well.

The study revealed that all beneficiaries were aware of the benefits such as prevention of losses, quality retention, etc. in using safe packages in perishable transportation. Unlike for vegetables safe packages were being used for packing and transporting fruits such as mango, papaya and guava. Mostly used safe packages were plastic crates, corrugated fiber board boxes and wooden boxes. The use of safe packaging was limited due to many constraints and limitations. Most common were unavailability of plastic crates for purchase, high cost of transportation, less amount of load able to be transported per journey, no assured mechanism of returning of safe packages when moved through the supply chain.