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RESEARCH PAPER

An economic assessment on post harvest losses in fresh vegetables

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SUMMARY : A study was undertaken to know post-harvest losses in fresh vegetables in Banaskantha, Sabarkantha and Mehsana districts of Gujarat state. For this study, 120 farmers, 20 wholesalers and 40 retailers were selected. The total marketable surplus ranged from 97.44 per cent in tomato to 99.88 per cent in cauliflower. The total post-harvest losses occurred at farm level varied from 12.06 per cent in cabbage to 17.64 per cent in brinjal where as at the market level, it was observed highest in case of brinjal (17.58 %). The major causes of post-harvest losses mentioned by wholesalers were improper size of packing, lack of care during transportation and selection of improper vehicles where as the major causes mentioned by the retailers were lack of grading, use of improper packing materials and transportation vehicles. The damage due to birds was observed only in brinjal and tomato but the damage of crushed fruits was observed only in cabbage, cauliflower and tomato which varied from 1.56 to 4.12 per cent.

KEY WORDS : Vegetables, Post harvest losses, Wholesalers, Retailers

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Perishable nature and bulkiness of agriculture produces is many a times curse of farmers as it induces forced sale and spoilage loss during transition. The post-harvest loss (PHL) directly increases the cost of marketing and also reduces the per capita availability of vegetables. The estimated economic loss in value due to PHL in fruits and vegetables has been over Rs. 23,000 crores in recent years. The overall losses vary up to 25 per cent in vegetables *viz.,* tomato, cabbage, cauliflower and chilli (Verma and Singh, 2004). In some studies, PHL ranged between 22 and 33 per cent (Guraha, 1997 and Vishwanthan *et al.,* 1999). The losses are highly product specific and location specific. The rate of post-harvest losses also depends on the length of marketing channel and state of marketing technology *i.e.,* mode of transportation, grading, packing, storing etc. The estimation of PHL at one or two levels in entire marketing channel results either under estimate or over estimate of PHL. Hence, quantification of losses occur at different stages is important in respect of taking actions to minimise losses as well as to develop a suitable marketing technology. The present study was, therefore, undertaken to estimate the post-harvest losses at the farm level as well as at the market level in Saurashtra region. The specific objectives of the study are to estimate the marketable surplus for major fresh vegetables, to workout the magnitude and amount of post-harvest losses and to identify the major causes of post-harvest losses at various stages.

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EXPERIMENTAL METHODS

The study was confined to major fresh vegetables *viz.,* tomato, cabbage, cauliflower and brinjal. In total, 120 farmers, 20 wholesalers and 40 retailers were selected .The distribution of sample farmers, wholesalers and retailers among the villages are given below. Total three markets *viz.,* Deesa, Vijapur and Pratij were selected from Banaskantha, Mehsana and Sabarkantantha districts, respectively. The distribution of sample