

RESEARCH IN FOCUS

Food Traceability: Recipe for economic sustainability

Pakistan is producing and exporting major food items but the productivity of its horticulture sector and profitability is constrained by the poor quality of produce and by the lack of proper post-harvest management and transport infrastructure, including grading, packing, storage and transport with cold-chain systems. Pakistani exporters have not been able to penetrate high-end supermarket chains, which account for almost 80 per cent of fruit and vegetable sales in Europe and many other markets in developed countries. To boost exports to highly competitive international markets, exporters must export certified products that meet international food safety standards. Certification will also help stabilize prices in domestic markets as well.

The Punjab Agricultural Research Board is making every effort to strengthen the economy by

taking initiatives in research, development and innovative technology. The Board is therefore funding research projects to resolve cross-cutting issues of post-harvest losses in four areas:

- Optimization and standardization of operational parameters of hot water treatment systems to control post-harvest pest and disease in mangoes
- Development, optimization and technology dissemination of domestically sourced skin coating material for fruits and vegetables
- Exploiting the potential of controlled atmosphere technologies to extend storage and shipping of fresh produce to international markets
- Improvement of value chains and tradability of farmers' produce.

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