A Look at Postharvest in Iran

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Abstract

Being a developing country Iran is the 7th major horticultural producer. Official statistical reports state Saffron and cut flowers as having the least and the highest postharvest loss of about 0.006 and 33.0 percent respectively. They also report postharvest losses in Iran as being six more times than the world’s mean, which is equal to the food needed for 20 million people. However, nonofficial specialists report 35% as the minimum loss and in some cases they estimate it over 50% which is over 20 million tons, worthing over 100 million dollars. The major problem in controlling this great postharvest loss is that the Ministry of Agriculture is only responsible for the production of agricultural products; while on the other hand the postharvest losses are under the authority of other ministries and organizations. In this article factors effecting postharvest losses in Iran, recent developments and approaches in reducing them, and finally the rate of production, qualitative and quantitative loss and reduction, export-import, and postharvest losses per capita for most of the horticultural products are given.

INTRODUCTION

Iran is the first producer of Pistachio, Saffron, Palm dates and Sour cherry (Molavi, 2002; Anonymous, 2003). It also holds different top production status for a lot of horticultural products making it the seventh fruit producer in the world (Anonymous, 2003). Besides that Iran holds the third position in horticultural product variation (Rouh-al-Amin, 2003) and its horticultural export was 600 million US dollars in the year 2002 (Tahmasebi, 2003).

Agricultural losses play an important role in economics and agricultural sector of most countries. The amount of agricultural losses in developed countries varies between 5-7 percent (Zhalah-Rezaei, 2003), while in Iran this amount is usually more than 50 percent in some cases (Zhalah-Rezaei, 2003). Officials report losses as being 6 more times than the worlds mean (Rouh-al-Amin, 2003), while non-officials estimate it between 35-70 percent (Shayesteh, 2003). For a better imagination, if we consider 35 percent losses for 44 million ton of agricultural products in Iran, the losses would be equal to 16.52 million tons worthing over 100 million US dollars. This could be used to feed 20 million people (Shayesteh, 2003).

It is only a short time that officials are paying attention to postharvest losses and they are at the stage of planning effective programs to control and reduce postharvest losses of agricultural products.

Considering the importance of postharvest and its losses in economical status of developing countries such as Iran, current status of postharvest and postharvest activities besides problems causing the great amount of postharvest losses and objectives of a postharvest program in Iran are discussed and finally some recommendations are given.

Due to perishability of horticultural products, their economical importance and concerning a great amount of postharvest losses to them, in this article we focus mostly on postharvest of horticultural products.