

PRESENT STATUS OF POSTHARVEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES OF PINEAPPLE (*Ananas comosus*) IN SRI LANKA

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Pineapple (*Ananas comosus*) is an economically significant fruits cultivated in Sri Lanka. It is the third largest exported fruit in the country. Pineapples are distributed from farmer to consumer through the supply chain via supply chain actors with different postharvest management practices. Therefore, this study was conducted to assess present status of post-harvest management practices, problems and existing supply chains for pineapples in Sri Lanka. A total of 256 participants, including farmers, collectors, wholesalers, retailers, exporters and consumers were randomly selected from *Gampaha* and *Kurunegala* districts and stratified. Data were collected through a survey using pre-tested questionnaires, key informant interviews and secondary sources. Results were analysed using descriptive and parametric statistics. The study revealed that the pineapple supply chain follows the conventional chain, including farmer, collector, wholesaler, retailer and consumer, but with slight deviations. Harvesting, sorting, grading, transporting, trimming and temporary storing were the major post-harvest practices followed. In addition, when pineapples are exported, fungicide treatment, cleaning and packaging of fruits were practiced. The main maturity index used was the number of days after flower induction. Sorting and grading were undertaken based on damaged and weight of fruit. Postharvest loss of pineapple (11.15%) was significantly lower ($p < 0.05$) than general postharvest loss of fruits in Sri Lanka (35%). Highest postharvest loss was observed at retailer and wholesaler stages. Most common retail outlets were supermarkets, fruit and vegetable stalls, road side outlets and weekly fairs. Majority (70%) of consumers purchased one pineapple per time. Lack of required facilities, stalk breakages during transport, fungal diseases and internal physical damages were the major problems of pineapple supply chains in Sri Lanka. Thus, action should be taken to solve the above stated issues at the different supply chain actors.

Keywords: Pineapple, Postharvest losses, Postharvest practices, Supply chain, Supply chain actors