International Post-harvest Symposium  
(IN-PḥASE)

The post-harvest system should be thought of as encompassing the delivery of a crop from the time and place of harvest to the time and place of consumption, with minimum loss, maximum efficiency, and maximum return for all involved (The Hidden Harvest, 1976)

Background and Justification

Post-production operations account for more than 55 per cent of the economic value of the agricultural sector in developing countries and up to 80 per cent in developed countries. Although they are the basis of socio-economic development in rural areas and are of critical importance in meeting the food security and nutritional requirements of populations, relatively little public sector and developmental support is targeted to addressing these fundamental concerns and the growing and changing trends within the sector. The current budgetary allocation for post-harvest development within the International Agricultural Research System (CGIAR) for example, accounts for less than 4 % of total funding.

Three decades have elapsed since the last major conference geared toward developmental support for the post-production sector. The focus then was on the reduction of post-harvest losses. Considerable growth in the sector, as well as changes in market demands and trade regulations point to the increasingly important dimension of produce and product quality, if developing countries are to gain advantages from the safety, security and potential trade benefits of a stable food supply. By and large, developmental policies and strategies seldom support this growth and change, and technical capacity within the sector remains relatively weak.

In recognition of these deficiencies in policies, strategies, and technical and financial capacity to address the fundamental and growing concerns of the post-harvest sector, the Agro-Industries and Post-Harvest Management Service (AGSI) of FAO with the endorsement of Ph Action¹, embarked upon the organization of a Global Post-harvest Symposium (INPḥASE). The outlook of the proposed Symposium is to generate an international focus and awareness of the fundamental importance of post-harvest sector as a means of contributing to socio-economic development in developing countries; to explore and highlight technical and policy issues which impact upon growth and change within the sector; to develop a vision and plan of action that will form the basis of a new Global Initiative on Post-harvest Technology (GIPḥT) and to solicit funding in support of it.

Objectives

♦ To create an improved international awareness of the breadth of the post-harvest sector and the importance of its contribution to socio-economic development in developing countries;
To explore and highlight technical and policy issues which impact upon growth and change within the sector;

To develop a vision and a plan of action for implementation of the GIPhT;

To seek financial commitment from private sector, donor and development agencies in support of the GIPhT.

Profile of the International Post-harvest Symposium

Venue

The Symposium will be hosted by FAO at its Headquarters in Rome. All activities of the Symposium will be coordinated by AGSI.

Timing and Duration

The Symposium will take place over a 5-day period during the month of April 2002.

Agenda

Plenary sessions will examine technical and policy concerns of the post-harvest sector from a global perspective.

Technical issues will be addressed, during days one and two of the Symposium; policy issues will be addressed on days three and four while the final day will focus on the endorsement of GIPhT.

All speaker presentations will be invited. FAO/AGSI will coordinate the preparation of all background technical and policy documents. A draft plan of action for GIPhT will be prepared by FAO and will be circulated to all participants prior to the Symposium.

Technical Sessions

Technical sessions will review the post-harvest sector on a regional basis with a view to developing an global perspective of the unique problems and potentials of the post-harvest sector.

Policy Sessions

Since regional policy issues will have been addressed within the context of regional technical papers, private sector, NGOs, the International Agricultural Research Community and the donor community will address policy issues on days 3 and 4 of the Conference. Special attention will be given to a review of the draft GIPhT, and mechanisms for its implementation on day 4.
Endorsement of the Final Report

Day 5 will focus on the finalisation and endorsement of a strategy in support of the GIPhT.

Expected Outcome

The Symposium will seek to obtain firm financial commitment from private sector, donor and development agencies, in support of the GIPhT as well as to develop a vision and a plan of action for its implementation.

Participants

Participation in the Symposium will be by invitation, and is expected to be approximately 400. Invited participants will include senior level stakeholders representing the post-harvest sector, international donor organisations, National Development Support Organisations, the Global Forum for Agricultural Research and the CGIAR System, NGOs, private sector organisations, internationally recognised organisations and FAO member states.

PRE-CONFERENCE ACTIVITIES

Pre-conference activities will include the conduct of 5 Regional Workshops, e-mail conferences, and the development of a web-site.

Regional Workshops

The Agro-Industries and Post-Harvest Management Service (AGSI) will, in collaboration with the Global Forum for Agricultural Research (GFAR), host Regional Workshops in five of the designated GFAR Regions, during the period April to July 2001. Each Workshop will incorporate the participation of all Sub-Regional Fora in the respective Regions, as well as individuals representing a diversity of stakeholder backgrounds from the Region. These Workshops will seek to obtain an appraisal of the status of the post-harvest sector both from an institutional and a stakeholder perspective. The outcome of these Workshops will be synthesized and presented during technical sessions of the Symposium. Proceedings of each Workshop will be accessible through the Symposium WebSite, which will be made available in French, English and Spanish.

E-Mail Conferences

In order to develop a global perspective on specific issues, which are pertinent to post-harvest development, and to encourage stakeholder interest and
participation in the Symposium, a series of e-mail conferences will be conducted prior to the Symposium. These e-mail conferences will be hosted by collaborating institutions and will address specific themes such as consumer issues, socio-economic issues, globalisation and trade, environmental issues, the potentials of biotechnology for post-harvest, new opportunities for special product categories, the relevance and importance of post-harvest indicators, appropriate technologies, health, safety and nutritional issues, quality issues and information. The outcome of these e-mail conferences will be incorporated into technical sessions of the Symposium, and will be synthesised for posting on the Conference web-site.

Web-Site

A web-site will be established in order to provide up-to-date background information on the Symposium. The web-site will be accessible in French, English and Spanish, and will include: Workshop proceedings; syntheses of e-mail conferences, basic conference information as well as a feature on "Perspectives on the Post-Harvest Sector." The latter will incorporate the views of senior level stakeholders from all areas of the post-harvest sector.