Quality in Handling in Fruit and Vegetable Chains: A Challenge For Retailers

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Abstract

This paper addresses the fresh produce supply chain in the retail sector. Its particular theme is product handling, arguably the single most important determinant of chain performance in this case. The specific focus of the paper is on achieving quality outcomes in handling fresh produce but it should be remembered that there are other perspectives on supply chain performance such as economic outcomes, marketing outcomes and environmental outcomes. Thus the reader should keep in mind that supply chain performance is a whole-of-system concept, and this paper address the performance of only one of its sub-systems.

The paper assumes a particular sequence of logical relationships that justify its focus on the quality in handling. The sequence is as follows:

1) Firms in integrated chains are more competitive because they are able to create more value than firms acting independently (Spekman et al., 1998);
2) Achieving quality in handling is a pre-requisite to achieving through-chain integration (Handfield and Nichols, 1999);
3) Achieving quality in handling should therefore be conceptualised as a value-creating process (Van Roekel and Broekmans, 1997; van Hoek, 1998); and in this way
4) Achieving quality in handling improves the competitiveness of the supply chain (Fearne and Hughes, 1999).

Keywords

supply chain management; product handling; performance

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