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Development of a Methodology to Analyse the Post Harvest Systems

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Abstract

The Post Harvest System (PHS) is including all activities, which are necessary to supply food to the consumer, e.g. harvesting, transport, storage, processing, and marketing. In addition, the PHS includes all stakeholders from the farm level to the consumer and all decision-makers. It is considered as one integrated function rather than a sequence of separate entities and as such by definition achieves an effective and efficient food supply. Moreover, the PHS is interrelated with the agricultural production as losses in PHS need to be compensated by an increase in production, with compensation increasing exponentially as the losses rise.

Most of the international donor and research institutions are focusing on the development of the production sector, whereas post harvest investments are still at an initial stage. This tendency is still valid even though development agencies increasingly recognise the important role of the PHS in the overall goals of food security, poverty alleviation, and sustainable agriculture. In the last decade, donors have placed greater emphasis on potential returns of their investments and on the efficacy of project implementation, whereby post harvest research rates of return on average are comparable to those from the production sector.

Although the system approach in agriculture was long recognized, only until the late 1990s research and development agencies started to consider it.

The present study, in the context of the PHS in Ghana, aims at developing a methodology to assess the economic impact of PHS interventions on the pre- and postproduction sector. The study deals with small-scale farmers and traders in the Sub-Saharan African (SSA) context with case study evidences from three different ecological zones. Preliminary results of the study will be discussed.

Keywords: Agriculture marketing, Ghana, post harvest systems, processing, storage, transport, West Africa