

## **From production push to postharvest pull: Is a shift of emphasis needed in the agricultural development agenda of developing countries?**

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For the past 50 years, the main response to the shortage of food production in developing countries has been to invest in crop production technology. This approach is best exemplified by the creation of the international agricultural research centers which are credited with bringing about the “green revolution” and a great number of innovative technologies for crop production and protection.

However, the food crisis in developing countries, and particularly in Africa, has refused to go away. Although the rural population has doubled in Africa in the past 40 years, the urban population has increased nearly six-fold. The increasing urbanization and the growing access to world markets has raised the need for a strong postharvest sector that can ensure proper storage of harvested crops and their processing into food products that meet consumers’ needs for quality, convenience and safety.

This paper argues that the present postharvest sector in Africa is under-developed and is, therefore, unable to support a large increase in crop production. A consequence of this is that many innovative crop production technologies, including high-yielding varieties, developed at high cost are not being adopted by African farmers. On the other hand, two examples of the dissemination of postharvest technologies enabling soybean and cassava producers to reach local and regional markets demonstrate that the adoption of these technologies triggers the demand for more raw materials and therefore provide incentives for the adoption of production enhancing technologies. Improved postharvest systems with strong linkages between crop producers and end-users not only generate added value but also create employment opportunities in rural areas, thereby contributing to economic growth and poverty reduction. It is concluded that increased investment in the postharvest sector at this time would lead to greater adoption of production technologies, increased food supply and greater economic growth in Africa and other developing countries.