

**Title** Managing postharvest innovation: a review of developments and trends  
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### **Abstract**

**Purpose of the review:** With the fast developments in technologies, combined with increased global competition and changing customer demands, innovation is increasingly seen as a means for sustainable growth. This paper reviews literature on the management of innovation and the most prominent findings from postharvest innovation practices.

**Main findings:** Three areas of postharvest innovation were identified: product innovation, enablers for fresh foods and quality improvements and netchain innovation. Several examples from the agri-food industry illustrate the developments in these three areas. With regard to the management of innovation, the firm's network plays an important role. Cooperation is seen as a way to lower development costs, accelerate product and process development and maximise commercialisation opportunities in innovation, especially when the innovation concerns change of interdependent chain and network processes.

**Directions for future research:** From a management perspective, a more comprehensive view of the critical success factors for postharvest innovation is needed. This is even more important for netchain innovations, where different organisations cooperate. More specifically, packaging plays a key role in current postharvest innovation, so new packaging technologies should be explored by postharvest researchers in industry as well as in academia. In this respect, a food package design should be regarded as an integrated component of the food supply chain, influencing the efficiency of the entire value chain in terms of functions, features, information and costs, but also influencing the environment. Furthermore, concerns about functional foods have to be overcome if firms fully want to benefit from this potential for added value.