

Recent postharvest developments in organic fruits: the positive, the negative and the debatable

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Abstract

This is an overview, with examples, of some recent developments related to organic fruits after they are harvested. In general, this overview also applies to organic vegetables. The positive: there is an assumption, somewhat justified, that organic postharvest methods to control pests and maintain product value are not effective enough. However, there is now evidence that some organic postharvest methods are not only being successfully adopted by the organic fruit industry but also by the non-organic industry as well. A recent example would be the total replacement of the postharvest pesticide, diphenylamine (DPA), by the apple industry in Italy using organically-acceptable methods. The negative: there is an incorrect, and potentially dangerous, assumption that organic postharvest methods for controlling pests, by definition, are safe for humans and the environment. The development and eventual withdrawal of the EPA-approved and OMRI-approved biocontrol fungus, *Muscodora albus*, will be discussed as an example of the fallacy of this assumption. The debatable: there is an on-going debate about the nutritional value and safety of organic fruits (and vegetables). Some of the most contentious aspects will be discussed and critiqued. The critique will question the relevance of the debate, the validity of the information being quoted and illustrate how horticultural factors need to be incorporated if the debate is to progress beyond rhetoric.