

Abstract

The project “Improving melon supply chain handling systems” has been investigating the impact of current handling practices and conditions from harvesting to retail sale on melon quality. Consignments of rockmelons and seedless watermelons have been monitored from districts in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, Northern Territory and Western Australia to Brisbane, Sydney and Bairnsdale in Victoria.

The monitoring has involved observing and documenting handling practices and monitoring fruit and air temperatures in packed cartons and bins. Saleable life at 20°C has been assessed for fruit sampled from cartons and bins at the time of packing and at the destination point.

The monitoring has found that each consignment has a different temperature profile and fruit can be exposed to both high and low temperatures. The saleable life test showed that rockmelons deteriorate in external appearance before any loss of internal quality. Sunken, discoloured areas and sometimes rots start to appear after 2 days at 20°C. For seedless watermelons, loss of internal quality occurs before the external appearance deteriorates. Stock movement and fruit quality of rockmelons and seedless watermelons were monitored in a retail store in Brisbane over a 7 day period. The monitoring found that most fruit were sold within 2 days of delivery to the store.