

Experts caution against quick fixes for postharvest decay, food waste

Several presenters at the fourth International Symposium on Postharvest Pathology called for new approaches to address postharvest losses while arguing against looking for "quick fixes" to remedy food decay caused by postharvest pathogens.



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Professor Dov Prusky from the Agricultural Research Organisation (ARO), Volcani Centre, Israel, called for new approaches to address pathological and biological changes in fruit to combat diseases and reduce waste.

Speaking on challenges facing postharvest disease management, Professor Samir Droby, also from the ARO highlighted the need to develop "novel approaches to control postharvest diseases based on effective and safe alternatives to chemical fungicides." He cautioned that adopting a 'silver bullet approach' to control pathogens has not produced products that have lived up to potential.

No quick fix for food waste management

Presenters also noted the importance of creating a balance between finding decay control strategies to combat food waste and maintaining the nutritious quality of food. Dr Ida Wilson of ExperiCo Agri Research Solutions emphasised the importance of ensuring that "money is invested in pathogen control strategies that are effective, sustainable, and importantly, finding solutions that don't harm the environment."

Continuing the thread of exploring new approaches for diseases control, Professor Rosario Torres of the XaRTA-Postharvest, Edifici Fruitcentre in Catalonia, Spain, looked at the response of apples and citrus fruit to *Penicillium* spp. – a type of fungi or mold affecting fruit and/or organic biodegradable substances. “Apples and oranges are some of the most valuable fruit crops worldwide. However, postharvest diseases caused mainly by fungi belonging to *Penicillium* spp. affect the postharvest quality of the fruit quality during storage,” explained Torres.

Along with causing decay of fruits, the waste causes important economic losses during postharvest handling. Therefore, Torres seeks to develop new and environmentally friendly control alternatives, by exploring the factors that control the interaction between each fruit and each pathogen. This research could help provide a better understanding of fungal diseases in apples and oranges using pathology, biochemical and molecular approaches to improve disease control strategies in fruit.

This symposium is an initiative of the International Society for Horticultural Sciences and the International Society for Plant Pathology. The event is co-hosted by the DST-NRF Centre of Excellence in Food Security (CoE).

For more information, visit [Postharvest Pathology](#).

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