

Cold chain systems for perishable agrifood

Food loss and waste are global concerns due to their socioeconomic and environmental implications. The UN Food and Agriculture Organization estimates that one-third of all food produced or about 1.3 billion tons is wasted annually, causing major economic losses and contributing to greenhouse gas emissions. The lack of good harvest and postharvest handling practices and of good infrastructure for transportation, storage, cooling, processing, and marketing are major causes of food loss in developing countries in Asia. These were among the issues discussed by a group of 22 participants from 12 APO members during the workshop on Development of Cold Chain Systems for Perishable Agrifood Products hosted by the National Productivity Council (NPC) and the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperation (MoAC) in New Delhi, 24–28 March.

Additional Secretary Dinesh K. Jain and Joint Secretary Sanjeev Chopra of the MoAC, along with NPC Director General and APO Alternate Director for India Harbhajan Singh, graced the opening session of the workshop. In his welcome remarks, Singh expressed his appreciation to the APO for organizing the workshop in India and for paying attention to “an important concern which has serious implications for many developing countries.”

Additional Secretary Jain noted that India had achieved phenomenal success in horticulture with record production of 269 million metric tons. However, perishables continue to have high levels of waste. The National Centre for Cold-chain Development was established to address that issue and promote cold chains across user segments.

Participant from India Tague Tatung, Managing Director of the Horticultural Produce Marketing & Processing Board in Arunachal Pradesh, expressed his appreciation for the opportunity to attend the workshop and learn about current technologies and best practices in cold chains in advanced countries. APO Secretariat Agriculture Department Director J. Bernardo emphasized that, “Inclusion of the cold chain aspect within the value chain of perishable products is becoming indispensable, regardless of whether products are destined for domestic or overseas markets.”

The participants recommended that the APO continue to disseminate information and support capacity development in cold chain management considering its implications for productivity. They also suggested organizing observational study missions to countries with good cold chain systems in place since they are needed to support increases in production of highly perishable and valuable fruit and vegetable products. Such support could sustain productivity gains and increase small farmers’ income, especially in remote areas. 🌱



Opening session: (L–R) Additional Secretary Dinesh K. Jain, NPC Director General Harbhajan Singh, and APO Agriculture Department Director J. Bernardo.