

RESEARCH NEEDS ON POSTHARVEST HANDLING OF DECORATIVE CUT FOLIAGE IN SRI LANKA

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Cut foliage as a group comprises a very diverse range of species and includes leaves or branches of plants and is used for interior decoration. Sri Lanka currently exports cut foliage to several countries. However, it appears that the awareness of the local industry is limited, with respect to the specific postharvest needs of different cut foliage varieties.

A field survey was carried out to gather information related to problems encountered in the postharvest handling of cut foliage. Some leading cut foliage exporters in Sri Lanka were visited to familiarize with the processing chain and to identify the priority based areas of the problems in postharvest handling. Nursery management and handling at each stage (preharvest, harvest and postharvest) of cut foliage varieties were examined. Discussions were held with personnel responsible for each stage of handling. Information on each variety was gathered through a questionnaire.

Based on the field survey, some of the priority areas of the exporters' needs in the postharvest aspects of handling of cut foliage were identified. These include identification of correct maturity at harvest (based on morphological/chronological indices), experimentation on pre and postharvest chemical treatments on varieties in demand which have a low shelf life, improvement of packaging systems and introducing new cut foliage varieties to the market.

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