

How farmers can reduce the losses on their farms this year

Crops harvested in fresh form usually get spoiled in a short time if no effort is made to preserve them.

The same happens to animal food products such as fish, meat, and milk. When food is spoiled it develops an offensive smell, an unpleasant appearance and a bad taste.

It becomes unfit for human consumption. To reduce losses farmers must take measures to improve the storage life, safety, and quality of the products by simple processes such as drying, salting, refrigeration, frying and smoking.

The quality of the food product is normally preserved and the farmer can still sell it at a good price later or store it for times of food scarcity.

In other cases farmers may process the food products by turning dry maize into flour which can be packed in bags and sold or consumed over a long period.

We may call such activities food processing or food preservation and besides increasing farmers profits the benefits include improved consumer safety, employment creation --- since many activities require human labor---- reduced weight, and easier transportation as dry fruits and root crops weigh far less, and extend product shelf life.

Drying or frying food kills disease causing germs and deactivates toxins that could be naturally present in some food crops. When crops are processed and exported they attract foreign exchange.

To reduce food spoilage careful farmers avoid placing harvested crops on bare ground where it can pick livestock droppings, soil particles, and bacteria.

Meat and milk should not be left for too long in the open where they will be invaded by flies and bacteria. Cold storage for the products seems to be the most protective.

Crops such as maize and bananas can attract pests and rodents and a careful farmer should take all necessary measures to keep them away.

There ought to be an arrangement for efficient transportation of all fresh farm products to the market. During transportation on trucks or motorcycles vegetables and fruits should be carefully kept in crates so that they don't get damaged.

All grain and legumes must be thoroughly dried soon after harvesting.