

Semi-Structured Interview / FGD Guide
Post-Harvest Losses (PHL) of Fruits & Vegetables and Nutritional Implications in
Ghana

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Study Title: Drivers and Nutritional Losses Associated with Post-Harvest Loss of Fruits and Vegetables in Ghana: A Cross-Sector Analysis

Institution: KNUST

Ethics: GHS-ERC 004/10/22; CHRPE Ref: CHPRE/AP/411/22; Municipal research permit HWDA/ME.19.024

A. Purpose & Objectives

This guide supports semi-structured focus group discussions (FGDs) with farmers, traders/retailers and women in households. The objectives are to:

- Explore practices along the value chain (harvest, handling, storage, transport, retail, household use) that contribute to PHL.
- Understand perceived drivers of losses.
- Document coping strategies, handling innovations, and local solutions to reduce PHL.
- Explore links between PHL and household food consumption, dietary diversity, and nutrition of women and children.

B. Modules & Target Groups

Use the relevant module(s) based on participant type. Combine with cross-cutting probes as needed.

- Module 1 – Farmers / Producers (smallholders, aggregators)
- Module 2 – Traders / Retailers (wholesale, market queens, shop/stall owners)
- Module 3 – Households (women of reproductive age; primary food preparers)

C. Facilitator Instructions

1. Build rapport; speak in the participant's preferred language. Use this English guide as a backbone; translate concepts faithfully.
2. Obtain written informed consent before recording. Reconfirm permission to audio-record.

[illegible]

G. FGD Ground Rules (Read Briefly for Groups)

- There are no right or wrong answers—please share your honest views.
- One person speaks at a time; avoid side conversations.
- Keep examples anonymous; do not mention names of non-participants.
- Phones on silent; brief breaks as needed.

H. Interview / FGD Questions

Module 1 – Farmers / Producers

1. Can you walk me through your last harvest for your main crop(s)? From the field to the point of sale, what steps did you take?
 - Probes: harvest timing/criteria; sorting/grading; packaging (sacks, crates); temporary storage; transport means; who is involved (gender/roles).
2. At which points do you notice the most losses or quality deterioration? What typically causes it?
 - Probes: pests/diseases; bruising; sun/heat; rain/flooding; delays; poor packaging; labour shortages; price shocks.
3. On average, how much do you estimate is lost in a typical harvest? How do you estimate that?
 - Probes: local units; % of crates/bowls rejected; unsold after market day; seasonal differences (peak vs lean).
4. What storage or handling methods do you use on the farm? What has worked well, and what doesn't?
 - Probes: shade; raised racks; evaporative cooling; field sorting; use of crates vs sacks; access to water/packhouse.
5. How do market conditions, transport costs, and buyer behaviour affect your losses?
 - Probes: price setting; market queens; return policies; bulk buying; grading; credit; road conditions.

6. In your household, how do these losses affect income and food eaten at home, especially for women and children?
 - Probes: reduced variety; smaller portions; skipping animal-source foods; seasonal hunger; coping strategies.
7. Have you received any training or support to reduce losses? What would help most?
 - Probes: extension services; group storage; crates; cold rooms; market information; micro-finance.
8. If you could change one thing along the chain to reduce losses, what would it be and why?

Module 2 – Traders / Retailers

9. Tell me about your typical trading day, from sourcing to selling. Where do losses occur most?
 - Probes: loading/unloading; stacking; display under sun; overnight storage; refrigeration access; electricity.
10. What are the common reasons that produce is rejected or spoils before sale?
 - Probes: bruising; ripeness; mould; heat; long distance; market levies; space constraints.
11. How do you handle unsold stock? Do you discount, process, donate, dry, or discard? Why?
 - Probes: trimming; sorting; converting to sauces/dried products; relationships with chop bars/schools.
12. Roughly what proportion of your stock is lost in a typical week? Does it change with the season or the weather?
13. What facilities or services would reduce your losses the most?
 - Probes: shaded stalls; clean water; cold rooms; night security; better roads; standardised crates; information systems.
14. Do losses affect the kinds of foods you and your family eat at home? In what ways?

- Probes: taking damaged/ripe items home; meal planning; children's preferences; diversity of vegetables.

Module 3 – Households / Caregivers

15. Please describe how you usually buy, store, and prepare fruits and vegetables for your household.

- Probes: shopping frequency; bulk vs small quantities; storage (cool, basket, fridge); washing; cutting; cooking methods.

16. In the past week, did any fruits or vegetables go bad or get thrown away? What happened?

- Probes: type/amount; reasons (over-ripe, insects, smell); where stored; who noticed; cost implications.

17. When money is tight or during lean seasons, how does your household adjust fruit and vegetable use?

- Probes: switching to shelf-stable items; smaller portions; fewer varieties; feeding priorities for children.

18. What helps you keep produce fresh longer at home? What makes it difficult?

- Probes: fridge access; containers; knowledge of storage; family size; time constraints; water.

19. Thinking of women and children, how do fruit and vegetable losses affect meals, diversity, and health?

- Probes: school meals; anemia concerns; vitamin-rich foods; pregnancy/lactation needs; child acceptance.

20. Have you received any information or training on reducing food waste or improving diet quality? What would you like to learn?

Optional Mini-Activities (10–15 min each)

21. Loss-point mapping: Ask participants to sketch steps from harvest to plate and mark where loss occurs most.

22. Pile-sort of drivers: Provide cards with common drivers (heat, bruising, delays, pests, price drop, etc.); sort into “major,” “moderate,” “minor.”

23. Estimation exercise: For the last market week/harvest, estimate total brought vs sold vs discarded/donated/processed.

Closing & Thank You

Is there anything we did not ask that you think is important? What message would you give to district leaders about reducing losses and improving family diets? Thank you for your time.

Field Observation Checklist (Facilitator/Note-taker)

- Setting (farm/market/household); date/time; weather; crowding; hygiene conditions; water access.
- Packaging/containers (sacks, crates, bowls); stacking; shade; display; proximity to waste/drains.
- Evidence of sorting/trimming; disposal areas; pests/vermin; odors; flies.
- Cold storage/refrigeration; electricity; interruptions; fees; security.
- Notable quotes and verbatim examples (record code, not names).

Version Control & Contacts

Version 1.0 (English). For translations (e.g., Ewe, Twi), ensure back-translation and adaptation to local terms while preserving intent of each question.

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