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Improving fruit quality in India

'Apples are the mainstay of the economy of the northern Indian state of Himachal Pradesh,' says Bas Hettterscheid, a researcher at Wageningen Food & Biobased Research. 'Millions of people earn their living from apples. We want to work with local partners to combat post-harvest losses and improve the quality of the fruit.'

This is being done at the behest of the regional authorities which, with the support

of the World Bank, want to see the sector grow. 'A programme has been set up for doing this by boosting yields, improving storage and opening up new markets, such as in the big cities.'

Hettterscheid and his colleagues in the post-harvest department are designing modern storage facilities for storing apples under controlled, cool conditions so that they keep longer and can be sold all year round. 'We

also provide farmers and staff at the refrigeration facilities with training on quality control, storage and the physiology of different apple varieties.'

Improving the quality is key, stresses Hettterscheid. 'That is important so as to be able to sell the fruit all year round in Delhi and other big cities. At present a lot of apples are bruised when they arrive at the market.'

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