Peer Reviewed | Open access
Greenresearch © 2026 Issue II Vol.5
International Journal of Food Science, Nutrition and Agro-Processing Research (IJFSNAPR)

AI-Driven Quality Control in Agro-Processing for Improved Supply Chain Efficiency

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A contributory publication research for Greenresearch Digital Publishing
In affiliation with TES Digital Service Limited for the promotion of African Education under the International Journal of Food Science, Nutrition and Agro-Processing Research (IJFSNAPR)
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Received: 02.02.2026 | Revised: 28.03.2026 | Accepted: 11.05.2026

Abstract

The study examined the effect of post-harvest loss reduction technologies among smallholder farmers using a quantitative approach. The paper was motivated by the persistently high level of food losses recorded at the post-harvest stage despite increased agricultural production. A cross-sectional survey design was adopted, and post-harvest loss was measured as the proportion of output lost between harvest and final utilization. A technology adoption index was computed, and multiple regression analysis was employed to estimate the relationship between technological uptake and post-harvest efficiency. The findings revealed that the mean post-harvest loss was 23.4%, while the adoption rate of loss-reduction technologies remained below 50%. The regression results indicated that technology adoption significantly reduced post-harvest losses, and access to education, extension services, credit, and larger farm size further enhanced loss minimization. The study concluded that scaling up post-harvest technologies could substantially improve food security, increase farmers' income, and strengthen rural livelihoods. The paper contributed to the literature by providing a quantitative estimation of the magnitude of technological effects on post-harvest performance.

Keywords: Post-harvest loss, Technology adoption, Smallholder farmers, Food security

Introduction

Post-harvest loss had been widely reported as one of the most critical constraints to food security among smallholder farmers, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa where production systems were predominantly characterized by low technological adoption and weak market integration. Scholars had argued that while substantial investments had been made in increasing agricultural production, significantly less attention had been devoted to the preservation, storage, processing, and distribution stages, where a considerable proportion of food losses occurred. It had been estimated that between

20% and 40% of total food produced by smallholder farmers was lost after harvest due to inadequate storage facilities, poor handling practices, limited access to processing technologies, pest infestation, and inefficient transportation systems. These losses had translated into reduced household income, heightened food insecurity, and diminished return on agricultural investments. The subject of post-harvest loss reduction technologies had therefore emerged as a critical development discourse, particularly in the context of sustainable agriculture, rural livelihood improvement, and global food system transformation. Existing studies had maintained that technologies such as hermetic storage systems, improved threshing and drying equipment, cold storage facilities, solar-powered preservation units, and agro-processing innovations had demonstrated significant potential in reducing both quantitative and qualitative losses. However, adoption among smallholder farmers had remained uneven and often low due to factors such as high initial cost, limited technical knowledge, socio-cultural barriers, poor extension services, and inadequate access to credit facilities. The central goal of this paper was to examine the extent to which post-harvest loss reduction technologies had influenced loss minimization among smallholder farmers and to quantify the relationship between technological adoption and post-harvest efficiency. The paper had also sought to determine the key drivers of technology adoption and evaluate their statistical significance in explaining variations in post-harvest outcomes. From a theoretical standpoint, the study had been anchored on the Diffusion of Innovation Theory and the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework. The Diffusion of Innovation Theory had posited that technological uptake within a social system was influenced by perceived relative advantage, compatibility with existing practices, complexity, trialability, and observability. Earlier applications of the theory in agricultural research had demonstrated that farmers' adoption behaviour was shaped not only by economic considerations but also by communication channels, social networks, and institutional support structures. In the context of post-harvest technologies, the theory had been used to explain why certain innovations such as hermetic bags had experienced rapid uptake while others remained underutilized. The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework had provided a broader analytical lens by linking technology adoption to livelihood assets, including human, financial, natural, social, and physical capital. The framework had suggested that smallholder farmers' ability to adopt post-harvest technologies depended on their access to these assets as well as the institutional environment within which they operated. It had further emphasized that reducing post-harvest losses was not merely a technical issue but a pathway to strengthening resilience, improving income stability, and enhancing food availability. The significance of this study had been located in its quantitative estimation of the impact of post-harvest technologies on loss reduction, an area where empirical measurements had remained limited. While previous research had largely provided descriptive assessments, fewer studies had employed rigorous statistical modelling to determine the magnitude of technological effects. By providing empirical evidence, the paper had contributed to policy debates on agricultural transformation, rural development planning, and investment prioritization in post-harvest infrastructure.

Literature Review

Empirical Evidence on Post-Harvest Losses

Post-harvest loss had been conceptualized as the measurable quantitative and qualitative reduction in food along the supply chain from harvest to consumption. Early global assessments had indicated that developing countries experienced higher losses than developed economies due to infrastructural deficiencies and limited technological capacity. Studies had shown that cereal losses ranged between 15% and 25%, while losses in perishable crops such as fruits and vegetables exceeded 35%. Empirical investigations in Africa had revealed that maize, rice, and cowpea suffered substantial storage losses due to insect infestation and moisture-related spoilage. Researchers had reported that traditional storage structures, including cribs and mud silos, were highly susceptible to pest attacks. The introduction of hermetic storage technologies had been associated with significant reduction in grain damage and weight loss. In addition, mechanized threshing and improved drying technologies had been found to reduce breakage, contamination, and microbial growth. Evidence had suggested that solar dryers improved product quality and extended shelf life, thereby enhancing market value. Cold chain technologies had also demonstrated the capacity to reduce perishability in horticultural crops, although their adoption had been constrained by high capital requirements and unreliable energy supply.

Determinants of Technology Adoption

Empirical studies had consistently identified education, farm size, access to extension services, membership in farmer organizations, credit availability, and market access as significant determinants of technology adoption. Farmers with higher levels of human capital had shown greater willingness to experiment with new post-harvest practices. Social capital had facilitated knowledge diffusion through cooperative societies and farmer-based organizations. Financial constraints had remained a major barrier, as many smallholders operated under liquidity limitations. Access to microcredit had been positively associated with investment in improved storage facilities. Infrastructure, particularly rural roads and electricity, had also been found to influence adoption rates.

Application of Diffusion of Innovation Theory

The Diffusion of Innovation Theory had been widely applied to explain the spread of agricultural technologies. Studies had demonstrated that innovations perceived as economically beneficial and compatible with local practices were adopted more rapidly. Hermetic storage bags had diffused quickly because they required minimal behavioural change and provided immediate visible benefits. Communication channels had played a central role in the diffusion process. Extension agents, radio programmes, and farmer field schools had enhanced awareness and reduced uncertainty about new technologies. Observability through demonstration farms had also accelerated adoption.

Application of Sustainable Livelihoods Framework

The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework had been used to examine how asset endowments influenced farmers' technological choices. Farmers with stronger financial and physical capital had invested in improved storage and processing facilities. Human capital in the form of training had enhanced post-harvest management practices. The framework had also highlighted the role of policies and institutions in shaping livelihood strategies. Government subsidies, input support programmes, and public-private partnerships had facilitated access to post-harvest technologies.

Research Gap

Although existing studies had provided valuable insights, limited quantitative evidence had been available on the combined effects of multiple post-harvest technologies on loss reduction. Moreover, few studies had integrated adoption determinants into a unified statistical model that explained variations in post-harvest efficiency.

Methodology

The study had employed a cross-sectional survey design involving smallholder farmers. A multistage sampling technique had been used to select respondents. Primary data had been collected through structured questionnaires.

Post-harvest loss (PHL) had been measured as:

$$PHL=Qh-QsQh\times 100$$

where Qh represented quantity harvested and Qs represented quantity successfully stored or sold.

Technology adoption had been operationalized as an index computed as:

$$TAI=\sum Tin$$

where TiT_iTi denoted adoption of each technology and nnn represented the total number of technologies considered.

A multiple regression model had been specified as:

$$PHLi=\beta0+\beta1TAIi+\beta2EDUi+\beta3EXTi+\beta4CREDITi+\beta5FSIZEi+\epsilon i$$

Descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and ordinary least squares regression had been used for analysis.

Results

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.
PHL (%)	23.4	8.1
TAI	0.46	0.21
Education (years)	8.7	4.2
Extension access	0.58	0.49
Credit access	0.41	0.49
Farm size (ha)	2.1	1.3

The average post-harvest loss had been 23.4%, indicating substantial inefficiency. Technology adoption had remained below 50%.

Table 2: Regression Results

Variable	Coefficient	t-value
Constant	35.62	9.21***
TAI	-18.45	-6.34***
Education	-0.72	-2.41**
Extension	-3.96	-2.87**
Credit	-4.51	-3.12***
Farm size	-1.15	-1.98*

R2=0.64R^2 = 0.64R2=0.64

Technology adoption had significantly reduced post-harvest losses. A unit increase in adoption index had reduced losses by 18.45 percentage points. Access to extension and credit had also exerted significant negative effects.

Conclusion

This paper had set out to examine the quantitative effect of post-harvest loss reduction technologies among smallholder farmers and had demonstrated that technological adoption played a statistically significant and economically meaningful role in minimizing losses across the post-harvest value chain. The findings had shown that the average post-harvest loss remained considerably high, thereby confirming the persistence of structural inefficiencies within smallholder production systems; however, the regression results had revealed that increased adoption of improved storage, processing, and preservation technologies substantially reduced the magnitude of these losses. The study had further established that human capital in the form of education, institutional support through extension services, financial inclusion via access to credit, and resource endowment measured by farm size significantly influenced post-harvest outcomes, thereby reinforcing the propositions of the Diffusion of Innovation Theory and the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework that technological uptake and livelihood assets jointly determined productivity and welfare improvements. By quantifying the effect of the technology adoption index, the study had provided empirical validation for the argument that post-harvest interventions constituted a critical pathway for enhancing food security, increasing marketable surplus, stabilizing farm income, and improving rural livelihoods without necessarily expanding cultivated land. The implications of the findings had suggested that policies aimed at reducing post-harvest losses should prioritize scaling up access to affordable and context-appropriate technologies, strengthening agricultural extension systems, improving rural financial services, and investing in infrastructure that facilitated storage, processing, and transportation. Furthermore, the study had contributed to the broader discourse on agricultural transformation by demonstrating that loss reduction represented a more resource-efficient strategy for increasing food availability compared to production expansion alone, and it had provided a robust statistical basis for integrating post-harvest technology promotion into national and regional food security programmes.

Acknowledgment

The author acknowledged the contributions of agricultural extension officers and the smallholder farmers who provided the data used for this study. Appreciation was also extended to colleagues and reviewers whose constructive comments improved the quality and analytical depth of the manuscript.

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