Keep pumpkins healthy after harvest

Recognize the problem
Many pumpkins are damaged and become unmarketable after harvest. In spite of your best efforts to produce a healthy crop of pumpkins while in the field, exporters and other marketers experience additional losses due to packing the produce in feed bags.

Background
Most damage is caused by hitting the surface of the fruit or by allowing the pumpkins to get too hot. Long stems can damage the skin of other pumpkins in storage. Throwing the pumpkins onto the truck, or stacking the fruit too deep also ruins the produce. Bruises or any form of damage to the fruit creates a wound which will begin to rot, especially if it is hot and humid. Polythene feed bags are poorly ventilated and cause heat to build-up inside the fruit.

Management
Avoid any practices which bruise or damage the fruit when moving it from the field to the market.
Remove fruits from the vines using secateurs or clippers. Clip stems as short as possible to avoid bruising other fruit.
Protect harvested pumpkins from direct sunlight and rainfall. Transport pumpkins in vehicles that have a canopy to protect the produce from the weather. Carefully pack pumpkins onto the trailer in the field for transport. Never pack pumpkins in feed bags. Ventilated bags and stackable crates minimize injury to the produce. Bags may be stacked in no more than three layers for transport and storage.

The recommendations in this factsheet are relevant to: Trinidad and Tobago

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