

Purfresh claims ozone device keeps fruit fresher

Roger Hailey - Monday 17 May 2010

A SNAP-ON device to the airflow system of a reefer container, delivering low-dose levels of ozone, is claimed to reduce harmful micro-organisms in the global chill chain, *writes Roger Hailey*.

California-based system designer Purfresh said that research it commissioned from the US National Food Lab showed that “controlled supplementation of ozone (an active form of oxygen) in a test container was able to kill and control the spread of salmonella, listeria and E. coli by more than 99.9%”.

An estimated 70m tonnes of perishables were transported in refrigerated containers last year. During transport, with transit times ranging from seven to 50 days, harmful micro-organisms can multiply rapidly, putting food at great risk of contamination and spoilage, said Purfresh.

The Purfresh system, it is claimed, can control ripening and reduce decay during transportation, leaving taste, texture and smell characteristics in their natural state.

A spokesperson said: “Purfresh Transport is available on a per-trip basis, and the price ranges from \$900 to \$1,650, depending on commodity and trade route. More than 1,000 trips were made last season using the equipment.

“When the container reaches its destination, the unit is taken off and then used for another trip, most likely on a different container. The price includes installation/removal of the unit.

“Purfresh Transport delivers what no other solution can — an easy-to-deploy, chemical-free approach to protecting the quality of fresh produce.”

Container lines credited by Purfresh to use the system include Hamburg Süd, Zim, CSAV, CCNI, Evergreen and CMA CGM.

Asked whether the \$900 per trip price tag was a disincentive (a new reefer container costs up to \$18,000, including machinery) the Purfresh spokesperson said: “Most shippers use some type of solution to ship fresh produce, be it controlled atmosphere, modified atmosphere bags, fungicides etc, all of which require an additional cost as well.”

Citing the example of a reefer cargo of grapes, worth \$31,000, the savings associated with using the Purfresh solution are estimated by the company at \$4,349, including \$1,170 in reduced wastage, \$300 in avoided claims processing and \$1,560 in increased marketability.

The spokesperson added: “Some ocean transport solutions don’t work with highly sensitive commodities, such as cherries. With Purfresh Transport cherries can be ex-ported via ocean, versus air, a huge saving.”