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Purfresh Inc. is offering 'clean' food safety solutions

By TIM LINDEN

Founded more than a decade ago as a niche player in drinking water purification, Purfresh Inc. has turned its attention to the food industry and has a number of products that "purify, protect and preserve the world's food and water supply."

David Cope, who has been chief executive officer of the firm since it expanded into food, said that Purfresh is "dedicated to finding clean technology solutions for the food industry." And while others are searching for answers, Purfresh, which is headquartered in Fremont, CA, already has a number of products on the shelf, including applications for pre-harvest and post-harvest as well as transportation.

Mr. Cope said there is nothing theoretical about the firm's applications as it has more

than 300 customers in 32 countries relying on the company to boost yields, control costs and improve the safety and quality of their products.

For growers, "Purshade" is used pre-harvest to block the sun's harmful rays and help maximize yield. According to Mr. Cope, applying "Purshade" is analogous to using a sun screen with an SPF rating of 45. He said that it helps a plant optimize its water use. "Purshade" does have a label but it does not need registration with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and as with all the firm's products, it is certified for use on organic production.

In the post-harvest arena, the firm markets its "Purfresh Cold Storage" application and service. Using an ozone-based filtration system, "Purfresh

Cold Storage" can greatly reduce decay and ripening by eliminating ethylene gasses in the air. Because it eliminates ethylene, "Purfresh Cold Storage" allows for the safe use of a cold room for multiple product categories.

About a year ago, the company introduced "Purfresh Wash" which again uses ozone to clean and disinfect the water that is used to wash produce in any typical packingline washing station. Mr. Cope said that the company has several installations in the Washington apple industry, among other places. "Purfresh Wash" can be used in a system that submerses the product in a wash, and it can also be used in a spray bar application where a stream of ozonated water is sprayed on the product and works as a

clean, safe disinfectant. Mr. Cope said that with this type of application, "Purfresh Wash" can save the packing facility "literally tons of water."

"Purfresh Wash" qualifies as a HACCP step in a company's food safety program, according to Mr. Cope.

The newest product on the Purfresh shelf is "Purfresh Transport," which again uses an ozone environment to control ripening and decay. Mr. Cope said that "Purfresh Transport" snaps right on to a container's refrigeration unit. The unit is equipped with a system that modifies the atmosphere and also has a sensor that feeds a web-based system via satellite. Purfresh can monitor the conditions of that container 24/7 to make sure that it is operating at an optimum temperature and with the correct

atmosphere. "This system allows us to solve problems when they are happening," he said.

"Purfresh Transport" is sold as a service on a per-trip basis. Mr. Cope said that it is often used for long ocean voyages, which allows a client, through Purfresh, to make sure the container is running at the right temperature and the right atmosphere.

For example, a container of apples going from New Zealand to the United Kingdom is going to be on the sea for several weeks, and obviously the correct conditions are very important, he said. The service costs between \$1,000 and \$1,600 per trip, which Mr. Cope termed comparable to a controlled-atmosphere service that doesn't offer the benefits of 24/7 monitoring.

