



By Mike Knowles

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Ilip unveils smart avocado packaging



New system can indicate whether the fruit is ripe and ready to eat, as well as providing advice on how to use the product

New packaging that can relay real-time information about the ripeness of avocados and other fruits contained inside has been unveiled at Italy's leading fresh produce trade fair Macfrut in Rimini.

Called Smart Ripe, the new technology has been developed by Italian firm Ilip in collaboration with Radio6ense, a spin-off of the University of Rome Tor Vergata, and the University of Turin's Department of Agricultural, Forest and Food Sciences.

It has the potential to bring new value to fresh produce by ensuring consumers get exactly the product quality and shelf-life they want.

The new packaging was presented during a special workshop at Macfrut that looked specifically at how packaging is used to handle and present tropical fruit to shoppers at the point of sale.

According to Ilip, the system uses a highly sensitive radio-frequency

identification (RFID) tag within the packaging. This can detect certain dielectric variations in the fruit pulp associated with ripeness, such as turgidity, acidity and water and sugar content.

The information it gathers is then transmitted to a terminal that can indicate if the fruit is ripe, as well as offering advice on how or when to use it.

Smart Ripe has been trialled for avocados. It is understood to have provided useful information not just on when to eat the fruit, but also on how to use it – for example, in cooking, salads, sauces and so on.

The technology is currently designed for premium fruit and vegetable products such as tropicals (avocado, mango and papaya), but the principle can apparently be applied to different types of fruit or vegetable.

"Smart Ripe is the first technology that can monitor – in real-time and in a

non-invasive way – the freshness and ripeness of a fresh product," commented Luigi Garavaglia, R&D manager at ILIP.

"With this innovation, we are paving the way to numerous applications that will improve handling of fruit and vegetables at the point of sale and the consumer purchase experience."

Roberto Zanichelli, Business Development and Marketing Director at ILIP, added: "Smart Ripe is an innovation that we are very proud of because it is a step towards packaging that not only offers protection and conservation, but also a value creation factor for the supply chain.

"At a time in which plastic packaging is also facing criticism, we are proposing a vision in which packaging sustainability also involves advanced features that create value and improve supply chain management."

<http://www.fruitnet.com/americafruit/article/1474/parts-of-san-diego-quarantined-as-psyllid-count-mounts>

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