

News and insight for North America's fresh produce buyers



By Carl
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RipeLocker tech boosts blueberries

The group's containers hold freshly harvested organic blueberries in "pristine condition" for eight weeks



Blueberry Hill blueberries after being in RipeLocker containers for eight weeks

RipeLocker has announced that its containers recently held freshly harvested organic blueberries in what it has described as "pristine condition" for eight weeks.

The company, a specialist in extending the post-harvest life of perishables, said that in the trial it used six of its pallet-size RipeLocker containers to store fresh organic blueberries from Blueberry Hill.

In addition to growing its own blueberries, Blueberry Hill owns Sorbatto Fresh, a packing and storing facility for 20 blueberry growers in Washington State, with about 90 per cent of the blueberries managed by Sorbatto Fresh being organic.

By using RipeLocker containers, Blueberry Hill said that it could greatly extend its normal selling season for blueberries, increase margins and provide higher quality for longer periods of time to its many customers.

RipeLocker containers are used for

storing and shipping fresh produce and flowers, and extend the post-harvest life by "weeks, often months", the company has said.

The containers are pallet-size, made from recycled materials and are reusable, and are leased to customers on an annual basis with the realised returns "far exceeding the cost of the lease".

The company has already completed efficacy trials with several high-value commodities such as berries, pomegranates, cherries, papayas, fresh hops and flowers, and said that it expected to announce additional orders of RipeLocker containers soon.

"Using RipeLocker containers to extend the post-harvest life of fresh produce and flowers quickly translates to better quality, longer selling seasons and greater margins for growers and packers," said George Lobisser, CEO and co-founder of RipeLocker. "We have seen excellent results in our efficacy trials, including this one with Blueberry Hill,

and are confident we will soon become the preferred container for storing and shipping perishables around the world.

"In addition, the ultra-low oxygen and pressure environment of our RipeLocker containers makes them perfect for organics," Lobisser added.

"We were extremely pleased with the pristine quality of the blueberries that had been stored in the RipeLocker containers for eight weeks – they looked like they came right out of the field," said Jeff Weijohn, owner of Blueberry Hill. "After seeing such great results, we quickly signed up to lease the RipeLocker containers as we anticipate a strong ROI from using them."

Blueberry Hill plans to use the RipeLocker containers it leases to store and ship its blueberries and potentially other perishables in the future, it noted.

How they work

RipeLocker containers offer a patented system to manage the atmospheric

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pressure, humidity and gas composition (oxygen and CO₂) within the containers to extend the life of fresh produce and flowers.

The containers suppress pathogen growth, resulting in significantly less decay. In addition, RipeLocker containers can provide

a vehicle for delivering organic fungicide vapors to kill the pathogen.

Based on the specific needs of each type of fresh produce or flower, RipeLocker tailors operating parameters, such as internal pressure, oxygen and CO₂ levels, to optimise the longevity and freshness.

The system responds to changes in the storage or shipping environment, making automatic precise adjustments to prevent damage and reduce decay.

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