

For fresh fruit and vegetable marketing and distribution in Asia



By Carl Collen

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Stepac takes on cherry challenge

High demand for cherries in China revs up need for functional packaging to extend shelf life and reduce waste



Packaging specialist Stepac, part of the Johnson Matthey group, has revealed that it has been working closely with its partners to implement a comprehensive supply chain solution for the delivery of fresh cherries.

Stepac has joined forces with Israel-based Tadbik Ltd, an advanced packaging solutions group producing flexible packaging, labels, RFID, packaging machinery and in-pack promotions, to produce the next generation of modified atmosphere resealable lidding films.

The new technology is engineered to extend the shelf life of fresh cherries in aesthetic and functional retail packaging as well as reduce waste.

Tadbik created a 'FreshLid' laminated film structure that is sealed to trays containing fresh produce and whose upper layer can be repeatedly peeled back for reuse.

The companies then worked together to develop suitable condensation control

properties and control film permeability to deliver optimal modified atmosphere compositions (MAP) for high-value fresh produce items such as cherries. This innovative packaging will be marketed under the Xgo line, Stepac's leading retail brand.

Efforts to overcome common challenges in lengthy supply chains and to move toward more responsible and cost-effective delivery processes, is generating increased demand for advanced functional packaging solutions. Meeting these challenges is especially critical when it comes to preserving and extending fresh produce shelf life and reducing waste.

"Successful implementation of MAP requires a holistic approach that includes an understanding of post-harvest pathology, produce physiology, cold-chain logistics, and the interaction of each of these factors with packaging design," explained Gary Ward, technical development manager for Stepac.

According to Stepac, the packaging design incorporates multiple capabilities

to effectively slow respiration and ageing processes, and to control humidity inside the packaging and extend fresh produce shelf life.

Xgo resealable lidding film technology provides benefits including freshness and flavour preservation prolonging the combined storage and transportation life of cherries to more than 35 days, multiple servings at full taste during extended home refrigeration, and a constant attractive packaging design throughout multiple uses.

In a pilot study, FRUSAN (Frutera San Fernando S.A.), a market leader in the Chilean cherry export market, shipped several refrigerated containers filled with cherries in 2.5kg trays and sealed with Xgo resealable lidding film to retailers in China, arriving in time for the Chinese New Year.

The success of the pilot project propelled increased interest in the use of the film by FRUSAN for the upcoming Chilean cherry season, while also creating a ripple effect, expanding the use of this high-value solution among cherry packers and shippers.

"Chinese importers are willing to pay

Stepac has been working with its

and ensuring a fully controlled quality

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

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premium prices for high-quality cherries and blueberries," Ward outlined. "This drives the growing export of these fruits from Peru and Chile to China, and with it the need for attractive, functional packaging to preserve quality during the lengthy sea freight."

distributors Fiamma (Peru) and Empack (Chile) to provide a comprehensive solution to its customers, offering valuable advice on post-harvest handling, conducting routine inspections in China and other destinations,

supply chain.