

For fresh fruit and vegetable marketing and distribution in Asia



By Carl Collen

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End of the Ice Age?

Stepac says its Xtend packaging can help eliminate the need for ice when transporting vegetables like broccoli



Packaging company Stepac has highlighted the ability of its Xtend Iceless modified atmosphere/modified humidity (MA/MH) packaging to aid in the long-haul transportation of fresh vegetables such as broccoli.

Stepac, part of the Johnson Matthey group, has claimed that its technology effectively eliminates the need for ice and non-recyclable wax cartons during transportation, with Xtend bulk packaging maintaining freshness while enhancing food safety.

In addition, Xtend also offers a "positive environmental impact", according to Stepac, through driving "substantial reductions" in carbon emissions and food waste.

The group pointed out that in certain countries, such as the US, broccoli and other produce items are typically packed in waxed cartons filled with ice to keep the produce cool and maintain freshness during storage and shipment.

However, when the ice melts onto the produce it not only creates mess but encourages growth of both plant and human pathogens.

Waxed cartons also are non-recyclable, which generates untenable disposal problems for supermarkets, many of which are seeking greener alternatives in the wake of new laws imposed to tackle this problem.

"Xtend Iceless offers a dry – and much leaner and greener – means of transporting fresh produce, wholly eliminating the need for ice," said Dr Gary Ward, business development manager for StePac. "Moreover, it makes waxed cartons totally unnecessary.

"Xtend Iceless MA/MH packaging is fully recyclable and offers an affordable solution suitable for land or sea freight," he continued. "The packaging is 'climate positive', generating a net savings in carbon emissions as a result of significantly extending the shelf-life of fresh produce and reducing supply chain waste. It's a 'win-win' for all.

"An alarming 40 per cent to 50 per cent of food is lost post-harvest due largely to spoilage in transit," Ward added. Indeed, according to the Food & Agriculture Organization, an astronomical 1.3bn tonnes of food worldwide is wasted

annually, a vast majority of which perishes before ever reaching the consumer.

Shift

According to Stepac, the shift to iceless packaging is already gaining momentum among distributors of fresh produce globally.

In the US, where broccoli is transported by land on trucks bearing weight constraints, road traffic accounts for 50 per cent of air pollution.

"Transport of broccoli from Salinas, California, to New York City in Xtend Iceless packaging allows 33 per cent more broccoli to be packed in the same container space, yet results in a 30 per cent reduction in gross weight. This translates into 40 per cent lower logistical costs as well as a reduction in carbon footprint," the group added.

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

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