

Uflex and Perfotec in Asia Fruit Logistica for Modified Atmospheric Packaging (MAP) **Dutch - India collaboration makes it mark in the packaging industry**

Uflex is currently collaborating with the Dutch company Perfotec to move forward in its ambitious Active Modified Atmospheric Packaging (MAP) project, which N. Siva Shankaran, Vice President-Flexfresh™ Uflex, and Bas Groeneweg, CEO of Perfotec, recently showcased at Asia Fruit Logistica, in Hong Kong.

On the one hand, Uflex offers the special patent polymeric protective film Flexfresh™, which manufactures for the packing of fresh fruits, vegetables and flowers. Perfotec provides a fast respiration meter, which is used to ascertain the respiration rate of fresh produce, with an associated software that calculates the required film permeability. Perfotec's laser system then uses this information to adapt the permeability of the Flexfresh™ film manufactured by Uflex through micro perforations.

According to Shankaran, all types of produce have their own rate of respiration; therefore, every type of product needs to be examined on the basis of its respiration rate, before Flexfresh can be customized. "The choice for what kind of fruit we're going to work with is purely based on the requests from our customers, who are suppliers, as well as fruit retailers marketing fresh produce from across the world."



"So far, the results and interest from potential customers here in Asia has turned out to be much better than expected. We've almost gotten as many leads as in Fruit Logistica in Berlin," says Groeneweg. According to Shankaran, there is a lot of demand for the MAP solution (Flexfresh™) that Uflex is offering in association with Perfotec across the globe. Due to longer distances to markets, shelf life extension is even more important in these regions than in Europe or the United States. This also allows airfreight to be replaced by sea freight, reducing the logistical costs.

Uflex and Perfotec are working on several projects. Together, they've managed to stretch the shelf life of blueberries up to 50 days and for pomegranates up to 60 days. "Our solution for blueberries is still in its trial phase, but the initial results are good already," says Groeneweg. Starting December, the system will be used in the Southern Hemisphere. "Blueberries are very vulnerable, but we've managed to keep the product dry, firm and protected from any fungus. It is important to mention that there is no need for sulfur pads when using Flexfresh."

The main challenge for Perfotec and Uflex is to convince clients to switch over to their solution. "Once our system is tested, it gains a sound reputation. For instance, if we can handle a difficult product like blueberries, then we can handle any fruit," states Shankaran.



"Marketing is right now an uphill task. If word of mouth goes around, this process would become a lot easier. It's still hard to convince growers and retailers to abandon their existing methods and apply something new," added Groeneweg.

As for the competition, Shankaran is convinced that this will not be a big problem, since all countermeasures to extend the shelf life in logistics have their own downsides. A container with controlled atmosphere leads to dehydration of the produce, while other methods create too much moisture, which raises the risk of fungal infestation. "Our competition couldn't solve the problem of condensation, but Flexfresh™ is the first solution to appropriately address this and that sets us apart from our competitors."



It is worth noting that apart from these collaborations, the two companies, which first came in contact in 2014, when Uflex bought Perfotech equipment that was to be used to determine the film permeability required for Indian mangoes, will remain independent. Uflex and Perfotech each work in different fields and regions, which guarantees that the two companies won't overlap on each other's territories.

As for the future, Uflex is planning to enter the African market, after tasting success in the US, Europe and now Asia. The company now caters to about 75% of the world with its Flexfresh™ and is further expanding its reach. "We have over three decades of strong experience as an end to end flexible packaging solution provider and enjoy the reputation of being India's largest multinational devoted to flexible packaging materials and solutions," says Shankaran.

Headquartered in Noida (National Capital Region, New Delhi), Uflex have state-of-the-art manufacturing facilities in India, UAE, Mexico, Poland, Egypt and USA. The firm serves as a one stop shop for flexible packaging solutions for a wide range of sectors in the US, Canada, South America, the UK, Europe, Russia, CIS countries, South Africa and other African countries, as well as the Middle East and the South Asian Countries. Uflex products enjoy a formidable market presence in over 140 countries across the globe," says Shankaran.

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