

Fumigation process sees improved quality, shelf life

By Doug Ohlemeier
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A Miami logistics and warehousing company has introduced a fumigation system that controls temperatures to lessen fruit decay and extend product shelf life.

In June, Coral Gables, Fla.-based Flagler Global Logistics received U.S. Department of Agriculture certification for the port-centric process, which uses lower controlled temperatures than traditional methods.

The patented process reduces temperature fluctuations and improves air flow during fumigation, cooling and storage, which promotes consistent quality throughout the pallet, according to company officials.

Traditionally, fumigation occurs in ambient temperatures which can vary wildly and can also produce large temperature spikes, which harms product quality and shelf life.

In Flagler's process, fruit is emptied into chambers similar to banana ripening rooms in an enclosed dock where temperatures remain consistent.

Because of temperature consistency, the product doesn't experience condensation, which often mixes with fumigation and discolors fruit. By avoiding decay, the system helps prolong shelf life, said Chris Scott, CEO.

This past season, Flagler used the process on asparagus, blueberries, grapes, ginger, kiwis and lemons. The company expects to triple volume this winter.

Flagler has received strong customer response and during the summer commissioned a study by the Illuminate Group to show how the process helps South American asparagus, blueberries and grapes.

In a test, those commodities were exposed to simulated transportation and storage temperatures through distribution centers and retail environments and the study showed perishables fumigated by the process receive an additional seven to 10 days of retail quality shelf life compared to traditional fumigation, according to company officials.

Because of temperature and humidity control, the fruit maintains a consistent quality throughout the pallets, Scott

said.

"We have found the life of product coming out of our process is as much as 10 days longer than any other process out there," he said. "Our objective is to provide a better quality product to increase the value of the commodity, which in turn reduces shrink, the No. 1 cost in the retail industry."

Flagler repacks bulk product at its 114,000-square-foot cold storage warehouse adjacent to Miami International Airport. The streamlined process should save growers and retailers 30% in costs, he said.

"The value of this will really be measured through the supply chain, through the retailer at the end," Scott said.

An integrated worldwide



Courtesy Flagler Global Logistics

Coral Gables, Fla.-based Flagler Global Logistics has seen an increase of up to 10 days of shelf life for product that goes through its temperature controlled fumigation process.

logistics company, Flagler is a wholly owned subsidiary of Florida East Coast Industries LLC. Flagler plans to discuss the

process with customers at the Produce Marketing Association's Fresh Summit 2015 in Atlanta at booth No. 5228.