



FOOD FRESHNESS TECHNOLOGY (FFT) is an innovations company that focuses on delivering solutions for food freshness. From a global population of approx. 6.5 billion people, 1 billion are still undernourished and to-date, there is a lack of effective, safe and ethical technology to help resolve this matter. The UN World Food Program, the world’s largest humanitarian agency, warned the world will only be able to produce enough food for everyone in 2050 if food security is made a top priority. Food charity, Love Food Hate Waste says that seven million metric tons (MT) of food and drink is wasted in UK households every year, with fresh produce among the top items trashed. FFT has therefore made it their mission to make products that sustain the world’s fresh food supply and has concentrated on developing innovative technologies that address significant unmet needs throughout the entire supply chain; from the grower and manufacturer to

the retailer, and from the retailer into the home. As well as addressing much bigger global issues, its products are also designed to increase consumer satisfaction through delivering better taste and quality due to the increased freshness of the products. As well as reducing wastage, this is a benefit that appeals strongly to FFT’s retailer customers.



The Freshness Strip

Shown in the photo, the product that was the subject of a recent TLF Panel survey was the Freshness Strip. It’s a little bigger than a postage stamp and readers may have spotted it and, like me, perhaps been intrigued by it, when opening a pack of fresh fruit bought from the local supermarket. Well this tiny piece of material is the answer to a big problem: that of rotting fruit. The product is actually a kind of filter that slows the

ripening process of a wide range of produce – including peaches, strawberries and tomatoes – allowing them to stay fresh for longer. The filter works by absorbing ethylene, a natural gas emitted by fruit as it ripens. It locks away the ethylene, which is a type of plant hormone, and so delays the point at which the fruit becomes over-ripe. The seven million tons of food thrown away by households in the UK alone is mainly because the use-by date has passed or because it has gone off. A useful tip is that as well as extending the shelf-life of fresh food by up to four days, it can, for a limited period, be re-used at home, e.g. by placing it in a bowl of fruit.

TLF Panel survey

FFT had won a contract with Morrisons to insert the Freshness Strip into punnets of strawberries and raspberries and were keen to understand the impact the freshness strip makes, how the fruit compares to fruit from other supermarkets and how it impacts food wastage levels. FFT then wanted to present the results to Morrisons to say the strip has had a positive impact on customers and they should continue to use the strip. Utilising TLF Panel we surveyed a representative sample of UK adults in July 2015 via an online survey.



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Qualification questions were applied and only consumers who had purchased strawberries and / or raspberries from Morrisons in the previous 5 weeks went on to complete the survey.

Consumers who had purchased Morrisons' strawberries only were asked questions relating to strawberries only, those who had purchased Morrisons' raspberries only were asked questions relating to raspberries only and those who had purchased both strawberries and raspberries in the last 5 weeks were asked both sets of questions. Within three days the panel had generated a sample of almost a thousand who had met the eligibility criteria.

Customers like the Freshness Strip

54% of respondents had noticed the It's Fresh! filter in the Morrisons' strawberry punnets and 62% for raspberries. Of those who had noticed a difference to the fruit quality in their recent purchases containing the Freshness Strip, the overwhelming majority (93% for strawberries and 94% for raspberries) thought the quality and freshness were better, and thought that this would lead them to buy more of those products in future.

Outcomes

FFT were very pleased with the survey results, which they presented to Morrisons, and with the subsequent outcomes. Morrisons decided to extend the use of the Freshness Strip and other supermarkets have adopted it too. In November, M&S, who were already using It's Fresh! for strawberries, raspberries and blackberries, became the first retailer in the world to use it in pears. With adverse media comment about the 200,000 tonnes of food wasted by supermarkets each year, there is a growing incentive for companies to adopt the technology. So as well as Morrisons and M&S, Tesco, Waitrose and Co-op are now using It's Fresh! and the strip can now be found in packs of peaches, nectarines, plums and cherries.

And there's salad too. It is already used for tomatoes and avocados and at the request of retailers FFT is now working on its application to flowers. Simon Lee, the founding Director of FFT expects the strip to work very well with some flowers where ethylene is a problem, such as roses and orchids.

Tesco ambient salad and avocado technical manager, Steve Deeble, said: "This is a major breakthrough in the fight to combat

food waste and could save the fresh produce industry tens of millions of pounds each year. It will also mean that shoppers will be able to keep fruit and vegetables for longer without feeling pressured to eat them within days of buying them."

Media coverage

FFT has also benefitted from very positive media coverage, including The Mail on Sunday and The Times in December. The Mail on Sunday headline says it all - "The tiny gas-guzzling strip that can keep fruit fresh for up to four days' longer (and cuts the food mountain)".

