

An almost futuristic form of produce labeling is making its rounds on the European market and literally leaving its mark on fruit and vegetables. 

Spain's Laser Food broke onto the scene last year and now inscribes personalized labeling directly onto the skin of apples, kiwifruit and persimmons, among other things, in Spain, France, Italy and Poland.

Marketing manager Jaime Sanfelix described the laser process to www.freshfruitportal.com, which he said works with the natural qualities of the fruit.

"The system designed by Laser Food does not burn the skin with a laser. With laser light energy, we liberate the oils in the fruit skin and apply a liquid that interacts with the liberated oils to make the label visible without damaging the commercial life of the product," he said.

At a velocity of up to 64 fruit a second, Sanfelix said the labeling quickly adds an individual passport for each piece of fruit.

"Each fruit carries its own written identification and since it is being marked in a permanent way, traceability of the product is totally guaranteed for the consumer," he explained.

Beyond confidence in origin, Sanfelix cited a number of other benefits to consumers.

 "Consumers accept the new labeling perfectly because it provides them a number of benefits. Most of all, it eliminates the inconvenience of traditional paper labels. They don't like traditional labels because of contaminants, they don't contain information and they are annoying when they stick to the fruit," he said.

"They like this new labeling system because it's permanent, it doesn't come off, it has clear identifying product information that doesn't allow copies, each unit is traceable, it's ecological and it allows personalization."

On a larger scale, the laser labels have also received an environmental nod of approval.

"Through a special project, the European Environmental Community selected our company to introduce this technology to the market, considering its superior efficiency from an environmental point of view," he said.

"With our technology, you only need the machine in a warehouse where you fruit is processed for supermarkets. Everything is done there and you don't need more supplies,

travel, applications or storage. The carbon foot print of paper labels is much bigger.”

Due to the elimination of extra transportation and material, Sanfelix estimated that the laser process costs about 30% to 40% less than traditional stickers.

www.freshfruitportal.com