

A pioneering new technology aimed at improving the shelf-life of a range of fresh fruit is being rolled out in major supermarkets across Britain.



It's Fresh! strips are a discreet sheet filter that slows down the ripening process in fruit. Around the same size as a postage stamp, the filters are placed in boxes in produce like strawberries, raspberries, peaches, plums, tomatoes, avocados, cherries and kiwifruit to keep them fresher for longer.

U.K. supermarkets including Morrisons, Tesco, Marks & Spencer, Waitrose and Co-Operative Food are all using the technology

Shelf life is extended by two to four days and allows retailers to offer a better quality product by giving them more time to transport fruit from plant to plate, according to It's Fresh! founder Simon Lee.

"There is still much work to be done, and we are in talks with many others, both in the U.K. and around the world, to widen the use of the It's Fresh! filters in as many relevant categories as possible," he says.

"It's a very exciting period for It's Fresh. Most major supermarkets are now seeing the benefits of our filters in terms of the savings they make and the added value for customers."

Not consuming fresh fruit and vegetables quickly enough is one of the main reasons British consumers throw away produce.

Food charity, Love Food Hate Waste, statistics say seven million metric tons (MT) of food and drink is wasted in U.K. households every year, with fresh produce among the top items trashed.

Rabobank analysts claim It's Fresh! technology is a 'step change' for the industry because reducing waste and supply-chain costs are among 'the most important fresh produce industry issues', according to a release.

Ethylene guzzling technology

The filters, which are added when fruit is packed and prior to transportation, operate passively and the process does not involve treating or spraying fruit with any kind of chemicals. It comprises a patented mix of minerals and clay.

As fruit naturally begin to ripen, ethylene is absorbed and locked away by the filters, naturally delaying the point when the fruit is ready to eat.

"The tiny sheet filters the air to remove ethylene which is the ripening hormone given off by the fruit," says scientist Lawrence Matthews, the chief technology officer for It's Fresh!

"This slows the development of rots and moulds and extends the quality, freshness and flavor."

The filters have gone through all necessary testing and meet all health and safety requirements for the European Union and the U.S.

"It's certified as safe, is non-invasive and very simple to use. Once you remove the filter, the fruit resumes its natural ripening," Matthews adds.

www.freshfruitportal.com