

USDA-backed [Hazel Technologies](#) is broadening the horizons of its packaging inserts that breathe longer life into fresh produce, through a partnership with Florida-based Agritrade Farms which has farms in Central America.

The Hazel formula takes the active ingredient 1-MCP used to slow ripening through the commonly used product SmartFresh, but instead it's applied as a sachet rather than in a bucket of powder mixed with water.

Through the new deal with Agritrade, one of the largest growers of specialty vegetables in Honduras and the Dominican Republic, the technology will be applied to okra for customers in North America and Europe.

In a release, Hazel highlighted okra was one of the most difficult specialty vegetables to ship at peak quality, but following positive trial results Agritrade Farms will start using the 'Hazel Okra' insert for its entire program.

The first commercial shipment of okra utilizing the technology was packed and shipped in Honduras in December.

"Most people forget that many vegetables have shelf-life challenges in addition to fruits," said Hazel Technologies CEO and co-founder Aidan Mouat.

"Our partnership with a global grower-shipper like Agritrade Farms is an example of how our technologies can increase grower returns, reduce food waste, and expand geographic markets for specialty vegetable packer-shippers, along with fruit packer-shippers."

Hazel Okra is the latest addition to the company's suite of technologies funded by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) through product development grants. The packaging inserts have also been applied to protect post-harvest quality in tomatoes, melons, tree fruit, kiwifruit, avocados and some specialty vegetables.

"Hazel® Okra will help us bring okra, one of the fastest growing items in retail produce aisles, to the consumer fresher than it ever has been before," said Agritrade Farms partner and vice president of sales, Paul Boris.

"Using this technology will help us dramatically increase the condition and lower shrink of each shipment."

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