

Interko has unveiled its pioneering Containerised Ripening Room following five years of research and development in partnership with multi-national tropical fruit importer-marketer Fyffes.

During that time, the designer, manufacturer and installer of fresh fruit ripening rooms has built, installed and tested 120 ripening containers exclusively for Fyffes.

These tests have resulted in a proven turnkey system that offers a mobile, space-saving, multi-functional and high-quality option to ripen fresh fruit anywhere in the world, it said.

The solution works by constructing a ripening room inside a standard insulated refrigeration container, either retrospectively or from scratch, thereby turning the container itself into a ripening room.

The container can be used to ripen to perfection bananas, avocados and mangoes, among other fruits, such as apricots, either at the source or in the destination market.

Interko's Containerised Ripening Room opens "a new door of possibilities to operators looking to add value to their fruit through ripening".

It is designed to suit operators who want the flexibility of moving their room to a different location by truck or ship; for those who have inadequate infrastructure or space to house a standard-sized ripening room; for those who do not own their building and cannot invest in a permanent facility, or for those who need to respond quickly to a spike in demand on the spot market. Operators have the further option of either purchasing or leasing the system from Interko.

Chris Maat, Managing Partner/Director at Interko, said: "Interko first attempted to design a ripening container in 1999, and there have been other attempts within the industry."

"Now, after working with Fyffes for the past five years, Interko has tested and refined this system to the point where we have 120 container rooms operating successfully. I don't think any other manufacturer can claim that achievement. The Interko Containerised Ripening Room is another example of our continued drive for innovation."

Measuring 2.6 metres (8.5 feet) wide by approximately 12 metres (39 feet) long, Interko's Containerised Ripening Room can hold 20 full-sized pallets each stacked with up to 9 boxes of fruit.

True to the Interko range, the system has been designed with energy efficiency in mind,

plus it is quick to deploy. Considering the small dimensions of a container, the mechanical design is bespoke, including its own fan design. A gas-tight, high-speed roll door can also be provided for ease of access. The container is supplied with a small control room.

Maat explains: “The advantage of having a smaller space is the reduced volume of free air that is contained within the room, which allows for more direct control over the ripening process, compared with a standard ripening room. The operator relies on the sensors and control system, rather than walking down the middle aisle to monitor the development of the fruit.”

Maat continues: “We have proven over the last five years that it is possible to ripen fruit to perfection without manual controls or inspections. In fact, we have found an improvement in fruit quality precisely because operators must follow a stringent ripening process via the control room, rather than allowing themselves to be influenced by physical inspections. Interko is a global leader when it comes to fruit ripening innovation. We have spent five years testing and perfecting our Containerised Ripening Room prior to this commercial launch; our science is robust!”