

Purfresh to demonstrate products at Fruit Logistica

By CHRISTINA DIMARTINO

Purfresh, a company that offers a range of clean, science-based solutions for the global food supply chain, is headquartered in Fremont, CA, but it has sales and support locations around the globe.

David Bouchard, general manager for the company, told *The Produce News* that the 2012 Fruit Logistica trade fair on Feb. 8-10 in Berlin would be the fifth consecutive year that the company has exhibited.

"Fruit Logistica provides us with international coverage," said Mr. Bouchard. "This show is critical for us as it allows us to meet with customers and prospective customers. The show has a worldwide presence that is incredible, including all the major categories and even transportation and steamship lines. It's a worldwide venue rolled into one event."

Purfresh is in high demand today for protecting and preserving fruits and vegetables during the long ocean transit time. Mr. Bouchard explained that the technology does three things.

"It provides decay control, it minimizes mold and decay during transit as the ozone interacts and consumes the micro-bials and pathogens that cause decay," he said. "It then helps the ripening control during transit. The ozone consumes the ethylene in fruits and vegetables, which occurs naturally in these products."

"But the third and most important thing that Purfresh does is to enhance food safety during transit because the ozone also consumes pathogens such as *E. coli*," he added.

Mr. Bouchard said that the U.S. Department of Agriculture has approved ozone as a food-contact substance, so it plays well in helping to bring safe food into the United States from foreign countries.

"What Purfresh has brought to the market in the past four years is what other products have not been able to bring to it in the past 25 to 30 years," he said. "There is modified atmosphere today, which does a good job with ripening control. But with Purfresh you get that and food safety."

The Purfresh system utilizes a low-cost satellite or GSM, which stands for Global System for Mobile Communications, for tracking every container for any type of environmental alert during transportation of the product.

"If we receive an alert, we contact the ocean carrier immediately," said Mr. Bouchard. "Sometimes it's just a matter of plugging in the container to open an air vent, but whatever the problem is we can alert them to it so they can take action to mitigate the risk of losses."

At the end of the cargo's journey, complete trip details can be downloaded for a detailed view of atmospheric values during the trip. This type of information can be incredibly valuable in explaining arrival conditions, and it provides great insight into the freshness of transported loads.

Purfresh focuses 100 percent on transportation of product, and it works with growers, shippers, exporters and ocean carriers. It has contracts in 23 countries around the world, and it works with all carriers.

"At the Fruit Logistica show, expansion and acceptance of our product will be the major pieces of our conversations," said Mr. Bouchard. "We will also be demonstrating how our product offers the least cost for real-time tracking with GSM or satellite."

The Fruit Logistica trade fair is important to Purfresh because it is where "real business commerce occurs," Mr. Bouchard said.

He has been attending trade shows his entire adult life, but people actually buy and sell commodities at this show, he added.

"The Produce Marketing Association's Fresh Summit and the United Fresh shows are important, but they are more look-and-see shows," he said. "Fruit Logistica is a real transaction show, and people are there to conduct business."

The show, he added, has expanded tremendously over the past few years, and it is incredibly large.

"It is mind-boggling, but outstanding," he said. "It's a great place to have a presence, especially if your company does, or wants to do, business with others in the world."



David Bouchard

FDA traceability pilot projects soon to be underway

By TIM LINDEN

Sometime this month, researchers at the Institute of Food Technologists will launch two pilot projects for the Food & Drug Administration as an early step in developing traceability standards for agriculture.

The two projects will specifically deal with fresh-market tomatoes and a complex processed food product that includes chicken, though the eventual standards will apply to a wide range of agricultural goods.

The Food Safety Modernization Act mandated the pilot projects as well as a number of other items as the FDA marches toward a standard.

The timeline mandates that the FDA release its list of high-risk foods this month, file a report with Congress by the end of July 2012 that details efforts to establish standards and that the rulemaking procedures begin no later than one year from now in January 2013.

Tejas Bhatt, a staff scientist for IFT, which is an FDA contractor, updated the industry on the FDA's traceability initiative during a one-hour webinar Jan. 4 sponsored by the Western Growers Association.

Mr. Bhatt began his presentation by reminding webinar participants that "traceback is not recall" and that no single company has traceability with-

in its own walls but rather each company along the supply chain is a critical piece of the puzzle.

He said that traceability only occurs when all supply chain partners are operating on the same page and using common language, adding that the goal of the pilot projects is to find a way to create a framework so that each supply chain member can talk to each other using the same standards.

Mr. Bhatt agreed that each agriculture sector is different and commodities within each sector have their unique characteristics, but he said that the commonality of the delivering of these products to consumers that needs to be standardized.

Mr. Bhatt said that IFT has been contracted to conduct the commodity-specific pilot programs but then deliver a report that takes a broader view of traceability and extrapolates lessons learned to apply to all products. He expects that the final rules will be general standards that each sector will have to customize to fit their specific product.

To help with this project, IFT has developed five panels of experts that have offered input into the development of the pilot projects and will be intimately involved in the drafting of the final report. These panels are empowered in specific areas including general oversight, historical analysis, produce,

processed foods and cost. The panel members are from industry as well as government and academia. Economists will be very much involved to make sure that whatever standards are developed have a favorable cost-benefit ratio.

Speaking personally, Mr. Bhatt surmised that some potential outcomes from the studies and the ultimate rule-making process. He said that some changes in industry practices will be inevitable with "low-hanging fruit recommendations" being implemented immediately.

More significant changes with higher price tags could very well be phased in, he added, and speculated that a double tier of standards would be possible with the list of higher-risk foods having to jump a higher hurdle.

However, Mr. Bhatt was quick to point out that these were personal opinions and it is impossible to predict at this early date what type of standards will prevail. In fact, he said that several precautions have been made to take as much bias out of the process as possible, assuring objectivity.

The webinar, which was open to all industry members, is part of WGA's Lunch & Learn series, which presents a different webinar on the first Wednesday of each month to explore various topics, especially in the technology arena.

Curry & Co. adds North Carolina carrots

By LORA ABCARIAN

In late December, Curry & Co. announced the expansion of its carrot program with the addition of product grown in Ellerbe, NC. The company is headquartered in Brooks, OR, and introduced its Vidalia sweet carrot program to its customers last spring.

Distribution of the North Carolina carrots, which are packed at the company's facility in Statesboro, GA, began in December and will give East Coast retailers access to locally and regionally grown carrots during January.

"We had strong demand for our Vidalia sweet carrots in 2011 and have been asked by several of our customers if we had other carrot offerings," said Matt Curry, president of Curry & Co. "We are pleased to announce that we will be shipping fresh-grown North Carolina carrots throughout January."

"The quality of this year's crop is outstanding," said General Manager Dave Hicks. "We've had cool nights and warm days, which have been ideal for growing. Our carrot-growing region has sandy soils,



Curry & Co. expanded its carrot program last month with the addition of product grown in Ellerbe, NC. Seen here are growers Ricky Carter of Ricky Carter Farms and Jamie Brannen of Gerald's Farms/Curry & Co. (Photo courtesy of Curry & Co.)

and we use an energy efficient irrigation system for the entire crop, which isn't common in North Carolina. Overall, I think consumers will enjoy the great flavor of our North Carolina carrots."

The company will feature a newly designed carrot logo on its packaging, initially offering

one-, two- and three-pound consumer bags and larger bulk sizes for foodservice customers. Most of this year's North Carolina carrot crop will be marketed locally or regionally.

Availability of North Carolina carrots enables Curry & Co. to market cello carrots from December through June.