

Press Release

Study: IFCO RPCs extend shelf life of fresh produce by up to 4 days

Benefits growers, retailers, customers and the environment

Pullach, Germany – 6. November 2018: IFCO, the leading global provider of reusable packaging solutions for fresh foods, announced today the results of a [study](#) on the impact of IFCO reusable plastic containers (RPCs) on the shelf life of fresh produce. IFCO RPCs extend the freshness and visual appeal of fresh fruits and vegetables for up to four days compared to single-use packaging. That was the conclusion reached by a new study commissioned by IFCO and conducted by Dr. Lippert Quality Management, a fresh food consultancy that is a spin-off from the respected University of Bonn (Germany). The firm conducted realistic tests on four common products – melons, tomatoes, mushrooms and grapes – across the entire supply chain from grower to consumer. The results show that IFCO RPCs help retailers increase profits by significantly reducing spoilage and waste, while boosting consumer satisfaction and loyalty. The RPCs already make a significant contribution to helping retailers achieve their sustainability and environmental goals and enabling them to prolong the shelf life of fresh produce extends these benefits even further.

Tests based on ten criteria

The Dr. Lippert scientists set up simulated supply chain conditions – including chilled and ambient temperatures to replicate typical transport, shop and domestic conditions. They ran the trials for up to 19 days, depending on the product type, and tested against a comprehensive list of criteria depending of commodity: **weight loss, stem health, sugar and acidity, temperature/humidity, firmness, infection, rot/mold, color, spoilage, appearance.**

The testers concluded that packaging plays a major role in shelf life for fruit and vegetables. Unlike single-use packaging, IFCO RPCs enable faster and more effective air circulation and heat dissipation around the produce. In addition, they can be stacked with no adverse effects on the produce. Handling is also minimized as retailers can display the produce directly in the RPCs.

Compelling results

Across the four types of produce, the results of Dr. Lippert QM's tests were conclusive.

- **Musk melons (cantaloupes):** the shelf life of melons packed in IFCO RPCs was **four days longer** than those packed in single-use packaging. Mold started to appear after four days in single-use packaging and not until **nine days later** for the IFCO-packed melons. On day 13, **100%** of the IFCO-packed melons were still saleable compared to 70% of those packed in single-use boxes.

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- **Tomatoes:** the vine condition of tomatoes packed in RPCs was significantly better after 7 days than those in single-use packaging, where vines had already started to deteriorate. The tomatoes were still saleable after 12 days in single-use packs compared to **15 days** in IFCO RPCs, giving retailers **two extra full days of shelf-life**.
- **Mushrooms:** 100% of the RPC-packed mushrooms were still saleable after 4 days compared to just 60% of those in single-use packaging, providing **two extra days** of shelf life. Bacterial spots – which consumers find off-putting – had already started to appear after two days on those in single-use packs, while the RPC-packed mushrooms showed **no spots at all** on day 12 of the test.
- **Grapes:** by day 6 of the test using cooler, store-like conditions, **91%** of the RPC-packed grapes were still saleable compared to just 55% of those packed in single-use boxes, providing extra shelf life of **one day**. When shipped, packed and displayed at room temperature, the results were even more conclusive, with just 10% of the fruit in single-use packaging still saleable after 9 days compared to **80%** for those packed in IFCO RPCs.

“The main difference to single use packaging is that ventilation in IFCO RPCs provides superior air circulation,” said Philipp Loer, the crop scientist at Dr. Lippert QM who conducted the trials. “A positive effect was visible on the quality of the products, resulting in shelf life up to four days longer.”

“The study conducted with Dr. Lippert QM is part of our ongoing research and development program, which aims to test and perfect our RPCs to deliver the best possible value to growers, retailers and consumers,” added Wolfgang Orgeldinger, CEO of IFCO SYSTEMS. “A longer shelf life of up to four days represents significant bottom line benefits for retailers, while boosting customer satisfaction and loyalty.”

Please find further information about the recent IFCO study at: <https://www.ifco.com/000f855f4e852d8f>

Source: Comparison of the ventilation of different IFCO RPCs and its effect on freshness and saleability of different fruits and vegetables, Dr. Lippert QM (formerly HortKinetix), in cooperation with IFCO SYSTEMS GmbH.

About IFCO:

IFCO is the leading global provider of reusable packaging solutions for fresh foods, serving customers in 50+ countries. IFCO operates a pool of over 290 million Reusable Plastic Containers (RPCs) globally, which are used for over 1.3 billion shipments of fresh fruits and vegetables, meat, poultry, seafood, eggs, bread, and other items from suppliers to grocery retailers every year. IFCO RPCs ensure a better fresh food supply chain by protecting freshness and quality and lowering costs, food waste and environmental impact compared to single-use packaging. IFCO is a Brambles Company. More:

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