

# Sensitech brings cold chain checks to new level

The acquisition of Cox Technologies is boosting Sensitech's position in the strip-chart sector and heralds its arrival in the Australian market, reports **Jeff Long**

**A**CCORDING to Juan Carlos (JC) Marin, vice-president of international sales for Sensitech, the firm really isn't just in the business of selling in-transit monitoring hardware to the perishables industry, it's all about helping customers to better manage their cold chain through enhanced information and analysis. Or, to put it more simply, the more you know about your vulnerabilities, the better off you are.

Until just a few years ago, tracking temperature for produce shipments was a matter of slapping a recorder in the truck trailer or sea container, shutting the rear door and saying a quick prayer. If the quality at destination proved unsatisfactory, it was not unusual to have the temperature-recorder chart show nothing out of the ordinary, leaving the shipper scratching his head wondering what had gone wrong.

"Historically in this industry, customers were monitoring temperatures in transit in order to understand what happened during a particular shipment," said Mr Marin. "What we have been doing in the last several years is to work with our customers to help them understand how their in-transit monitoring system works, what type of information they should be getting, and how they should be getting it."

According to Susan Bonacci, Sensitech's vice-president of marketing, merely collecting data is not the point. "We're trying to move away from simply evaluating the integrity of the transaction and help customers evaluate the integrity of the process. If you only have the ability to look at the information related to a single transaction," said Ms Bonacci, "it's hard to see trends."

Sensitech personnel examine all critical points along their customers' cold chain to better understand where problems occur, robbing fruits and vegetables of their inherent quality. "We're trying to help them set up a process which will allow us to understand what corrective actions need be applied so the integrity of

their product will remain intact from orchard to store," explained Mr Marin.

Central to Sensitech's data collection and analysis is their TempTale4 electronic temperature

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monitor. Designed to be placed inside with the refrigerated product pre-shipment, the TempTale4 is retrieved from the shipment at destination in the traditional fashion, where the trip data is then downloaded to a PC and forwarded on to Sensitech. The collected information is maintained in a large database known as the Cold Chain Manager (CCM). By using a specially designed programme, Sensitech is able to analyse the temperature history of a just-completed shipment to correlate with other trip histories maintained in the CCM database in order to spot trends that may be negatively impacting on a customer's products.

"The combination of our database and our analysis process puts our customers in a position to really understand what is happening within their cold chain," continued Mr Marin.

Essential to retrieving trip data is being aware of who is receiving shipments with TempTale4 instruments on board. "We are involved with the customer's in-transit logistics," explained Mr Marin. "We know who their receivers are, when the product will arrive, and what the customer is looking out for. With thousands of these instruments being used in South Africa, Chile and soon in Australia, we are in a position to



Sensitech's JC Marin

understand these trends."

This may point to product being loaded with improper pre-cooling or repeated problems with certain steamship lines.

Internationally, Sensitech markets the TempTale4 monitor under the "Exporter" tagged to the production region. In Chile, Sensitech markets the TempTale4 monitor as the "Chilean Exporter." In South Africa it's the "South African Exporter." The "Australian Exporter" is planned for launch in October or November 2004, expanding Sensitech's Down Under presence thanks to the recent acquisition of Cox Technologies.

"Cox has a very strong position in the Australian produce industry," said Mr Marin. "The acquisition of Cox allows us to have a very good understanding of that industry and will immediately allow us to provide the same level of service as in other countries."

In the end, it's the service that Sensitech is really selling. "We are the only company that can help the customer understand what is happening to their product in transit, learn from the data, and take corrective action," said Mr Marin. "It's the value we bring to our customers." ■