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Capespan technology reduces carbon footprint

With the fruit industry facing pressure from retailers to reduce packaging and related carbon footprints, plus rising electricity costs, Capespan's V-channel air flow technology mitigates these issues.

Developed by ExperiCo Fruit Technology Solutions, the technology development division of the Capespan Group, the V-channel is essentially a dovetailed cut-out in the bottom of standard cardboard cartons. When the bases are pushed out using a specifically designed jig, it forms an additional air-flow channel.

Said ExperiCo manager Dr Martin Taylor, "V-channel technology in grape cartons containing product packed in carry bags has the advantage over standard cartons of enabling the grower to cool palletised grapes more rapidly by as much as 30%. This obviously is advantageous for quality, but also to move the product faster to the market. With a 30% reduction in cooling time and a forced-air cooling cost estimated at about R300 a pallet, the V-channel carton can reduce the cooling costs per pallet to R210 if used optimally. Not only does this represent a significant potential saving, the technology also creates the opportunity to reduce carbon emissions at various cold chain points. Consequently, the V-Channel is likely to provide opportunities for carbon trading in the future."

In South Africa, the volume of V-Channel cartons used on grapes has increased each year after commercialisation, with orders in excess of 1.2 million 4.5 and 9 kg grape cartons in the 2007/8 season. According to Taylor, no fruit quality problems associated with the use of V-Channel technology has been reported. "In fact, all quality maintenance comments have been positive." The technology also has been used successfully on a small commercial scale in certain offshore countries in 2008 and is attracting much global interest.

ExperiCo has licensed most carton manufacturers in South Africa to use the V-Channel and jig technology. Other organisations wishing to obtain licensing rights should contact ExperiCo via www.experico.co.za.

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For more information contact Dr Martin Taylor on 021-887-1134 or martin@experico.co.za