

Helping processors in Asia utilise latest gas technologies

The Asian Food Technology Centre at Pathumthani on the edge of Bangkok includes Air Products' Innovation Centre which is operated for customers in south-east Asia by their Thai Subsidiary Bangkok Industrial Gas Co Ltd.

This Centre is the company's interface with customers and prospective customers who can come here to test various freeze and gas packaging options on their products before deciding which one is best for their own particular product and situation.

Innovative culture

Air Products is an American company that has some 22,000 employees and operates in over 40 countries. It prides itself on its innovative culture and operational excellence.

Currently 20% of its global business is in Asia (compared to almost 50% in the USA and 30% in Europe), but it is in Asia where the company expects its future growth to occur.

At the end of the day the company's goal is to sell gas but to do this it needs to develop expertises in a variety of sectors and a key one for future growth is the food industry.

Here gases have two main uses – in cooling and freezing technologies and for gas mixes for extending

shelf-life with approaches such as gas packing and gas flushing.

The Asian Food Technology Centre is looking at the application of these two technologies to develop the marketing opportunities for local foods and this is done by working very closely with the local food producer.

The Centre has the expertises associated with using the gases and the local food producer understands the characteristics and properties of his products and their markets.

The Centre stresses that, when it comes to freezing products, the end result of the process is as good as the quality and hygiene of the product that was first put into the freezing technology.

The use of gas mixes to extend the shelf-life of products is a technology that is on the up in Southeast Asia and here The Asian Food Technology Centre aims to be to the fore as a development partner with local and regional food companies.

This also involves working with companies such as Multivac and Cryovac as the properties of the various films that can be used on packing machines are also a key factor in deciding the best gas combination to be used for a particular product.

When it comes to freezing, the company provides a variety of options in their wide range of machines.



Air Product's Innovation Centre.

These range from relatively simple tumble freezers to more sophisticated machines, such as their Freshline Tumble Freezer, which evenly coats ingredients as it freezes them, and their Freshline Multi-recipe Batch Freezer that is able to meet the stringent requirements of cook-chill and cook-freeze in the catering industry.

Variety of fresh products

On the preservation front, their Freshline MAP is used for a variety of fresh products and the company's expertise on equipment and gas mixes is readily available.

They are also involved in specialist niche applications such as their LIN Dispenser which provides accurate levels of nitrogenation and package pressurisation for the canning and bottled drink industries.

Another interesting technology is that of cryogenic grinding which is used for herbs, spices and other additives as it improves quality by retaining the characteristics of the product.

The Asian Food Technology Centre is a much needed development to assist the emerging Asian food industries who would be foolish not to visit the Centre to see how it could benefit their businesses. ■

Inside the Innovation Centre where customers can undertake test runs with their products.

