

This simple technology could help prevent 72,000 tons of food waste every year

Imagine bananas that never go bad. To Aidan Mouat, chief executive of Chicago-based Hazel Technologies, it's not so far-fetched.

His company makes a product that extends the shelf life of all sorts of produce — avocados, cherries, pears, broccoli — by slowing the chemical process that causes decay. Some of the world's largest growers are using it to send their produce longer distances or reduce how much retailers throw away, and Mouat said a consumer version could be next.

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"I envision, in the next 18 months or so, literally selling a banana box to consumers," Mouat said .... "You keep it on your counter, put a [Hazel] sachet in there once a month, and you have bananas that last forever."

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The company makes small sachets — about the size of a salt or pepper packet packaged with to-go orders — that can be thrown into a box of produce to shut down the food's response to ethylene, a chemical naturally emitted by many fruits and vegetables that triggers the loss of firmness, texture and color.

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Spoilage prevention packaging has the potential to avert 72,000 tons of waste and 330,000 tons of greenhouse gas emissions, plus save 44 billion gallons of water a year ....

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