

France: Firmness measuring machine that will revolutionise the market

So far, only a US-based company offered the possibility of measuring the firmness of fruits. However, "customers were not entirely satisfied, since it is a machine that was designed 20 years ago and which had not been updated, and to this you had to add a poor after-sales service," explains Klotz, CEO of the company Agrosta.

This machine was not reliable and has only been used for cherries. This is why Agrosta, together with Laurent Klotz and Steve Taylor, of Winterwood, concluded that the market needed a firmness measuring instrument that they could trust, but which could also control other parameters, such as the colour and the size of the fruit. And that was how SoftLab was born.

This machine covers the needs of producers and marketers, offering total security to their customers when it comes to the state of their products and their optimum ripeness.



As a main characteristic, they point out that "we wanted to apply the latest technologies to the fruit and vegetable sector. Our SoftLab consists of 3D prints: 3D printed motors, screws with the same characteristics, and linear axes also printed in 3D, as well as electronic boards," states Klotz. Agrosta assures this is the most advantageous option, as these elements are produced in large amounts, which reduces costs. We are dealing with components that are always available, since they themselves have the special printers in their facilities, and they have been highly tested, showing great durability.

Today, SoftLab is being marketed in 55 countries, including Chile, Argentina, Vietnam, the US, the UK, South Africa, Mexico, Canada, India and the Netherlands, among others. Its price is €4,100, including shipment to any part of the world, and "we estimate that the return of investment is achieved within a year," clarifies Klotz. Furthermore, the machine can be used for a wide range of products, such as blueberries, cherries, apricots, tomatoes, strawberries or blackberries.

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