

**AGRI-BUSINESS**

# Blue Star inks deal to sell ripening system

**S. Shanker***Mumbai, Feb. 3*

Air-conditioning and refrigeration major, Blue Star, may have just hit upon the right solution to ripening banana and, in the process, reduce post-harvest wastage as well.

This could push back conventional and unacceptable practices such as smoking and addition of calcium carbide, besides dipping in ethylene.

Blue Star has tied up with Italy-based Fruit Control to offer a gas-based emission system, which is said to bring wastage to near zero.

It appears to have gone down well with traders as repeat orders are beginning to flow in. Mumbai-based Rishi Ice and Cold Storage has sought more units after purchasing a 48 tonner, stating that the system suited its requirements.

Mr R. Krishnan, Senior General Manager, Cold Storages, Blue Star, said units worth Rs 11 crore have been sold and being a recent launch large orders were expected from

Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Haryana and West Bengal.

The company claims that the payback period of the equipment is 12 months, with storage capacity/tonne of refrigeration working to Rs 10 - 12 lakh. The cost of ripening one tonne of bananas, he said, would be close to Rs 40.

While, local refrigeration units offer near similar solutions, the efficacy of the Blue Star product appears to be drawing more traders in.

**RIPENING CHAMBER**

The cooling system or ripening chambers ensure that the temperature is maintained between 14-18 degrees C, relative humidity at 90-95 per cent, ethylene concentration at 100-150 particles per million and duration of exposure at 24-48 hours. Carbon-dioxide levels are kept below one per cent. A control panel also facilitates the system to be used for other fruits such as mangoes.

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