Hectre's AI solution to support Cultiva's fight against apple sunburn

Cultiva has signed with fruit tech company Hectre, to add further innovation and strength to their trial process.

Based out of Nevada, Cultiva are the developers of Parka®, a cuticle protectant powered by SureSeal™ technology. One of the many ways Parka assists apple growers is by preventing sunburn damage. This condition causes cell membrane degradation, which can continue through post-harvest storage, leading to costly downgrading of the fruit.

Cultiva's cuticle technology reduces sunburn by supplementing the cuticle of the fruit and leaf with a clear, elastic lipid bilayer that enhances the plant's antioxidant capacity and allows a higher photosynthetic efficiency compared to untreated fruit. This can lead to reductions in sunburn damage of up to 42%.

Hectre, the fruit tech startup originating from New Zealand, launched their mobile fruit sizing and color grading app, Spectre, to the US apple market in 2020. The app uses computer vision and machine learning AI technology to size and color grade apples, straight off an iPad as soon as the fruit is picked, or as it arrives at receiving. Spectre is now being used by industry leaders, including Washington Fruit & Produce, Sage Fruit and Honeybear Brands.

"As an innovation leader, we're continually scanning the technology space for new technologies that can add value to the work we do for our clients. We read about Spectre in various articles and identified that we could use the app to support our customer trials," notes Sean Musser, COO at Cultiva LLC.

Cultiva will be using Spectre to quickly and accurately gain insights into the positive impacts their products are delivering across their sunburn prevention customer trials.

"With Spectre's computer vision capability, using an iPad, we can take a photo of a bin of apples that's had the benefit of Parka® application, and gain the color grading results within seconds. We can then use Spectre on a bin of apples from the control area of the orchard which hasn't received a Parka® application, and quickly and easily compare the two color results. Better still, we can do it in the field, with our customers right at our side. That's extremely powerful," adds Musser.

Matty Blomfield, CEO and Co-founder of Hectre says, "We're really excited to have Cultiva come onboard as a Hectre customer. Their dedication to innovation is exceptional and fits really well with our ethos."

Spectre was initially created for the apple industry to facilitate fast and accurate, mobile fruit size estimation. Color grading followed, then citrus was added. Spectre is now also being used by the premium cherry industry.

"We're totally impressed with how the global fruit industry continues to find more and more ways to gain benefits from our Spectre technology. That's our goal. To support the success of as many growers and packers as we possibly can," adds Blomfield.

Named as winners in the 2021 global AgTech Breakthrough Awards, the Hectre app also includes a full suite of Orchard Management modules.

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