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## Middle East Needs to Do More to Monitor Frozen Food Safety

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While food safety in the Middle East has improved in the past decade, not enough attention is being given to potentially hazardous changes in food temperatures during transport, according to a leading industry expert.

"Much has been done to prevent food poisoning and create an hygienic environment in which food is prepared and stored in the high temperatures of this region but more needs to be done to ensure greater safety in the transport of chilled and frozen food," said Chris Weiner, general manager of Dubai-based ArabIT.

"Hygiene inspections of food preparation plants, storage areas and food outlets are vital but so is reliable information about the conditions in which chilled and frozen food is being transported," he said.

ArabIT is the certified service provider in the United Arab Emirates of the advanced telemetry fleet management system produced by Telargo of the United States. The high-tech system can track and monitor food transport vehicles 24 hours a day, seven days a week including food storage compartment temperatures and when storage doors are opened and closed and for how long,

"Potentially hazardous foods must be properly cooled or frozen during transportation and storage from the processing plant, ports or airports to the retail outlet or food service establishments," Wiener added.

"Good hygiene regulations should require companies to follow food safety standards and keep accurate records of their supplies and processes throughout the food supply chain. For example, the transport of potentially hazardous refrigerated foods should require temperature recorders to verify proper refrigerated temperatures are maintained when food is in transit. These recorders can also be one of the criteria for end-users accepting or rejecting a load."

In the Telargo system, up to eight sensors can simultaneously capture the temperature for different points within a vehicle's payload compartment.

"Vehicles are also equipped with sensors on the doors of the storage area that indicate when they are opened or closed. That data is coupled with the information about the location, date and time," Wiener explained.

All temperature data captured by the sensors provides users with web-based, real-time information about the condition of transported goods from start to finish of a driver's route. An alarm can also be triggered when the temperature rises above allowed limits.

"Everyone gains from the proper monitoring of food transport in this way, whether it is frozen or chilled," said Weiner. "Above all the public would be safer from the danger of food poisoning; food control authorities would have a reliable inspection system which can be incorporated into licensing requirements; and food outlets would be more secure in the knowledge that hygiene standards had been maintained during transport."

The Telargo system combines established technologies from Global Positioning System and wireless communication to digital mapping and hosted as well as mobile applications. Telargo has implemented systems for clients in Austria, Brazil, Hong Kong, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Macao, Malaysia, Mexico, Slovenia, Thailand, Turkey, and the United States as well as the UAE.

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