Sojitz Cororation

Sojitz Machinery to Create Rice Revolution through Marketing a System to Cook Germ-free and Safe Rice of Good Keeping Quality

Also Proposes In-vehicle System for Emergencies and Disasters

(Japan, January 28, 2005)--The Sojitz Group machinery trading company, Sojitz Machinery Corporation (Head office: Chuo-ku, Tokyo; President and Representative: Satoshi Nagakubo) has commenced sales of a steam rice cooking system that enables efficient rice cooking.

Sojitz Machinery has undertaken nationwide sales of the 'RM Box-shaped Continuous Steaming Rice Cooking System', developed and manufactured by ACE SYSTEM (Head office: Izumi-shi, Osaka; President: Yoshihiro Sako).　The system meets all conditions for tasty cooked rice, such as those for gloss, aroma and stickiness.

The rice cooking system has three inner layers.　Each layer has a stainless steel mesh belt conveyor, onto which rice is placed before being sequentially fed to the upper, middle and the bottom layers.　The upper (80 - 100°C) and middle (120 - 140°C) layers are used for the boiling and steaming process, during which the system agitates the rice as it sprays hot water to complete steaming.　The bottom layer is

used for a process that allows the cooked rice to settle. When flavoring rice, the bottom layer sprays seasoning liquids and agitates the rice.

Sojitz Machinery expects to sell more than ten systems per year (turnover of approximately 1 billion yen) to school lunch centers, frozen food factories, prepared take-away food manufacturers, restaurants and hotels. As a new sales channel in addition to the above, the company proposes to utilize an in-vehicle system designed for local municipalities, which system offers mobility in the event of emergencies and disasters. Sojitz also plans to establish a cooked-rice processing factory so that the company can provide germ-free, safe and good keeping quality cooked rice of its own.

The main features of the system are as follows:

<u>Simply structured compact system with a small-footprint, requiring easy maintenance</u>
The box-shaped, three-layer system requires less than one-fifth of the space required by conventional rice kettles. For this reason, its fuel consumption is only about half, and it is extremely economical.   In addition, the simple structure of the system enables the frequency of maintenance to be reduced to one third of that required by other rice kettles, leading to savings in running cost and labor. System installations with an automatic high-pressure washing machine enable the continuous cooking of rice.

<u>Provision of safe, long-lasting and germ-free cooked rice of good keeping quality</u>
Forced heating with steam at 130 - 140°C for over 10 minutes completely kills even spore forming bacteria, which causes yellow discoloration in cooked rice (other rice kettles heat rice at a maximum temperature of 105°C). Such forced heating enables the provision of cooked rice that is of good keeping quality and is robust during frozen storage and reheating. Further, high-temperature steam rice cooking is best suited to the cooking of not only polished rice but also Sekihan (steamed glutinous rice with red beans) and Okowa (steamed glutinous rice with seasonal ingredients and flavorings).

<u>Easy acquisition of HACCP certification</u>
The system uses forced heating with steam at over 130 - 140°C, performs critical

control to prevent potential hazards in the manufacturing process, and secures food safety.

Good texture

Even steam cooking allows the cooked rice to keep an even moisture content, from the inside to the outside the grain.   As a result, it is difficult for the moisture to evaporate and for the cooked rice to dry out.   Thus, reheating the frozen cooked rice does not cause deterioration in flavor, and can also maintain a just-cooked level of softness.   Once the system is used to cook rice, data is stored in the computer, requiring no adjustments to be made for each rice cooking operation.   Rice of the same quality can be cooked regardless of who operates the system.

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