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Technology can chill drink in 45 seconds

Over the long hot summer many of us reached for a cold drink. But what is the financial and environmental cost of our demand for cool drinks?

Across Europe, combined commercial refrigerators and freezers are estimated to consume 85TWh of electricity per annum, equivalent to the energy required to power over 20 million households.

RapidCool, an innovative project supported by European Union research funding, aims at reducing the energy requirements for cooling drinks at the point of sale, saving retailers money and, ultimately, helping the environment. The outcome is a low-energy, low-cost rapid cooling technology that enables pre-packed beverages to be stored at ambient temperature and then rapidly chilled on demand.

This device cools down drink cans and bottles from room temperature to 4°C in as little as 45 seconds. It solves the problem of continuously running heavily stocked chillers in order to supply cooled drinks during opening hours.

Results show energy savings of over 80 per cent compared with some standard open front drinks chillers and a 54 per cent saving compared with glass door coolers (figures based on cooling 200 x 500ml cans per day).

The potential saving on electricity costs equates to €832 per fridge per year compared with open front drinks chillers and €219 versus glass door coolers (electricity price at 0.20 euro/kWh).

The RapidCool concept was devised by British company Enviro-Cool (UK) Ltd, which received a €903,000 grant from the EU to help progress the concept to commercial production.

Michael Jennings, European Commission spokesman for research, innovation and science, said: "This is a product that will save businesses money, do something for the environment and create jobs. The Commission has pledged to invest even more EU funding in projects that can really make a difference in people's lives."