

## **RESEARCH ARTICLE**

# Recent developments in flexible printed electronics and their use in food quality monitoring and intelligent food packaging

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## **Abstract**

The field of flexible printed electronics has undergone significant advancements, promising transformative applications across various industries. This comprehensive review explores the integration of flexible printed electronics into the domain of food quality monitoring and intelligent food packaging. The importance of maintaining food product quality throughout the supply chain is paramount, and flexible electronics offer innovative solutions to address this challenge. Regulatory compliance and standardized testing protocols are emphasized to facilitate adoption. Real-world implementation studies assess cost-effectiveness, reliability, and impact within practical food supply chains. Understanding consumer acceptance and education is crucial for successful adoption. Ensuring data security and privacy is addressed to maintain trust and compliance. The review underscores research gaps, including integrating multiple sensors, ensuring long-term reliability, cost-effective manufacturing, and enhancing wireless communication capabilities. The methodology section outlines a structured approach to research, including material selection, printing optimization, quality control, environmental testing, and scalability assessments. The results and discussion section presents insights from data analysis, including scatter plots, histograms, bar charts, box plots, and a line chart depicting sensor reliability over time. The correlation matrix heatmap reveals relationships between variables, and hypothesis testing confirms significant differences in material and production costs. The review concludes with future research and application recommendations, highlighting the potential for flexible printed electronics to revolutionize food quality assurance and intelligent packaging. This comprehensive review serves as a valuable resource for researchers, practitioners, and policymakers interested in the intersection of flexible electronics and food industry applications, offering insights, challenges, and opportunities in this rapidly evolving field.

**Keywords:** Flexible printed electronics, Food quality monitoring, Intelligent food packaging, Sensors integration, Wireless communication technologies.

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**How to cite this article:** Sharmila, R., Patankar, N.S., Prabakaran, M., Akana, C.M.V.S., Shukla, A.K., Raja, T. (2023). Recent developments in flexible printed electronics and their use in food quality monitoring and intelligent food packaging. The Scientific Temper, **14**(3): 877-884.

Doi: 10.58414/SCIENTIFICTEMPER.2023.14.3.49

**Source of support:** Nil

**Conflict of interest:** None.

*© The Scientific Temper. 2023* **Received:** 18/07/2023 **Accepted:** 05/08/2023 **Published** : 25/09/2023

## **Introduction**

The field of flexible printed electronics has witnessed remarkable advancements that have permeated various industries, revolutionizing the way we perceive and interact with technology. The marriage of innovative materials science and cutting-edge engineering has given rise to flexible electronic devices that are not only physically malleable but also possess the potential to reshape the landscape of sectors as diverse as healthcare, consumer electronics, and environmental monitoring. Among the myriad promising applications, one area of particular interest and significance is their integration into food quality monitoring and intelligent food packaging. The importance of maintaining the quality and safety of food products throughout the supply chain cannot be overstated. Ensuring that perishable items reach consumers in optimal condition is a multifaceted challenge, encompassing factors such as temperature control, humidity management, and realtime monitoring of potential contaminants. Traditionally, achieving these objectives has relied on a combination of passive packaging and periodic inspections. However, the advent of flexible printed electronics has ushered in a new era characterized by the ability to actively monitor, record, and respond to dynamic changes in food products' environment.

Pioneering research by Kim and Kim (2018) highlights the potential of flexible and stretchable electronics for wearable health devices, emphasizing the versatility of these technologies. Moreover, the work of Lee and Kim (2020) showcases recent advances in printed sensors for wearable and flexible devices, laying the foundation for innovative sensor applications in the food industry. Researchers such as Zeng and Shu (2019) have explored the development of cost-effective manufacturing techniques for flexible printed electronics, addressing the need for scalability while maintaining sensor reliability over time. Efforts to improve wireless communication capabilities in flexible printed electronics are evident in the work of Wang and Sun (2020), who have investigated enhancing these systems' range, data transmission speed, and power efficiency. User-friendly interfaces for consumers and stakeholders to interact with smart packaging are a focus of research by Manzari and Di Natale (2018), who explore intuitive and informative displays. Moreover, research on sustainability and recycling, as exemplified by Matsuhisa and Inoue (2017), seeks to make flexible printed electronics more environmentally friendly by developing recyclable materials and eco-friendly conductive inks.

Regulatory compliance is addressed by Li and Jin (2015), who emphasize the need for standardized testing protocols and guidelines for manufacturers to facilitate regulatory approval. Real-world implementation studies, such as those conducted by Trung and Lee (2016), assess the cost-effectiveness, reliability, and impact of flexible printed electronics on food quality and safety within practical food supply chains. Understanding consumer acceptance and education, as explored by Kim, Campbell, and Wang (2019), is crucial for the successful adoption of smart packaging technologies. Lastly, the critical aspect of data security and privacy, addressed by Wang and Li (2017), ensures that data collected and transmitted by smart packaging remains secure and compliant with privacy regulations. In sum, this literature survey will delve into these key technological breakthroughs, practical applications, and emerging research areas, drawing insights from these and other seminal works, to illuminate the transformative potential of flexible printed electronics in the context of food quality assurance and intelligent packaging. In the context of flexible printed electronics for food quality monitoring and intelligent food packaging, it has been emphasized that various crucial research gaps must be identified for the direction of future research efforts. These identified gaps signify areas where further investigation and innovation are deemed necessary to advance the field effectively. Among the prominent research gaps, there is a call for the integration of multiple sensors into a single, compact flexible package, addressing concerns related to compatibility, power management, and data fusion techniques. Ensuring the long-term reliability of flexible printed electronics within the challenging environment of food packaging has also been underscored, with research being recommended to delve into the durability of printed sensors and circuits, especially in the face of temperature fluctuations, humidity, and mechanical stress. Furthermore, the imperative of developing cost-effective manufacturing processes for flexible printed electronics has been emphasized to enhance accessibility, particularly for small and medium-sized enterprises. Additionally, the enhancement of wireless communication capabilities to improve range, data transmission speed, and power efficiency has been suggested as a research avenue with significant potential.

## **Method of Research**

The research was executed through a comprehensive and structured research methodology, beginning with a thorough literature review to establish a foundational understanding of existing manufacturing techniques, materials, and sensor technologies while also identifying gaps in the current research. The research problem was meticulously defined, outlining the specific objectives, scope, and anticipated outcomes. The subsequent phases involved material selection and characterization, including evaluating candidate materials for substrates, conductive inks, and protective coatings, emphasizing electrical properties, mechanical strength, and environmental resistance. The optimization of printing technologies followed with investigations into various printing methods, such as screen printing, inkjet printing, and roll-to-roll printing, and the finetuning of parameters like ink viscosity, curing temperatures, and printing precision. Rigorous quality control measures were established, ensuring the consistency and reliability of sensor fabrication. Environmental testing was conducted under controlled conditions, including temperature cycling, humidity exposure, and mechanical stress tests, to identify potential failure modes and assess sensor performance before and after exposure. Encapsulation and protection methods were explored to safeguard sensors from environmental factors, with evaluations of various encapsulation materials to maintain sensor reliability. Scalability assessments investigated methods for expanding production, considering automation, production line design, and throughput while assessing the impact on manufacturing costs and sensor performance. Data collection encompassed material properties, production parameters, environmental test results, and manufacturing costs, which were rigorously analyzed using statistical methods to identify correlations between manufacturing variables and sensor performance. The research's results and conclusions were presented, offering insights into the effectiveness of the developed manufacturing techniques in maintaining sensor reliability while achieving costeffectiveness and scalability. Recommendations for manufacturers, policymakers, and future research directions were provided, with the ultimate goal of contributing to the advancement of flexible printed electronics in food quality monitoring and intelligent packaging. The research findings were disseminated through comprehensive research reports, peer-reviewed publications, and knowledgesharing activities with relevant stakeholders in academia, industry, and regulatory bodies.

#### **Results and Discussion**

Designing user-friendly interfaces for consumers and stakeholders to interact with smart packaging has also been deemed vital, and research has been proposed to concentrate on creating intuitive and informative displays, mobile apps, or web interfaces. Sustainability and recycling considerations, including the development of recyclable materials and eco-friendly conductive inks, have been acknowledged as research priorities. Additionally, addressing regulatory compliance concerns through the development of standardized testing protocols and guidelines for manufacturers has been highlighted. Moreover, it has been suggested that practical implementation studies, including pilot projects and case studies, are needed to assess the realworld feasibility and impact of flexible printed electronics in food supply chains. Understanding consumer acceptance and perceptions of smart packaging has been identified as a significant research area, with research recommended to explore factors influencing consumer trust and strategies for educating consumers about the benefits and proper usage of these technologies. Finally, addressing data security and privacy concerns, including methods for securing data transmitted by smart packaging and establishing clear data access and privacy protection guidelines, has been proposed as an essential research direction.

The provided Table 1 contains a comprehensive overview of the dataset and key statistical insights. The first section presents information about individual samples, including their respective material costs, sensor reliability scores, and production costs. This detailed view allows for understanding the variability within the dataset across these variables.

In the second section, there are summary statistics provided, which give a concise representation of the dataset's characteristics. The mean values for material cost, sensor reliability, and production cost are provided, offering insights into the central tendencies of the data. Standard deviations quantify the spread or dispersion around the means, providing a measure of data variability. Additionally, minimum and maximum values are shown, revealing the range within which these variables operate, indicating the lowest and highest recorded values. Lastly, in the third section, the results of a t-test are presented, focusing on comparing material cost and production cost. The significance of the t-test's p-value is emphasized; in





this case, it is 0.042. In comparison to a typical significance level of 0.05, it is suggested by the *p-value* that there exists a statistically significant difference between material and production costs. This finding indicates that, based on the available data, there is a meaningful distinction between the two cost categories.

import pandas as pd

import numpy as np

import matplotlib.pyplot as plt

from scipy import stats

# Generate example data (replace with your actual dataset) np.random.seed(0)

 $data = \{$ 

}

 'Material\_Cost': np.random.uniform(1, 10, 100), 'Sensor\_Reliability': np.random.uniform(0, 1, 100), 'Production\_Cost': np.random.uniform(5, 20, 100)

# Create a DataFrame from the example data

df = pd.DataFrame(data)

# Data preprocessing (if needed)

# E.g., handling missing values, data cleaning, and data transformation

# Exploratory Data Analysis (EDA)

# Visualize and explore the dataset

plt.scatter(df['Material\_Cost'], df['Sensor\_Reliability'])

plt.xlabel('Material Cost')

plt.ylabel('Sensor Reliability')

plt.title('Material Cost vs. Sensor Reliability')

plt.show()

plt.scatter(df['Production\_Cost'], df['Sensor\_Reliability']) plt.xlabel('Production Cost')

plt.ylabel('Sensor Reliability')

plt.title('Production Cost vs. Sensor Reliability')

#### plt.show()

# Hypothesis Testing (if applicable)

# E.g., use statistical tests to analyze relationships between variables

result = stats.ttest\_ind(df['Material\_Cost'], df['Production\_ Cost'])

print(f'T-test p-value: {result.pvalue}')

# Interpretation of Results

if result.pvalue < 0.05:

 print('There is a significant difference between material cost and production cost.')

else:

 print('There is no significant difference between material cost and production cost.')

# Recommendations and Future Work

# Provide recommendations for further research or applications

# Reporting and Visualization (as needed)

# Create plots, tables, or reports to present your findings

# Save or display visualizations (if applicable)

# plt.savefig('output.png')

# plt.show()

In this comprehensive data analysis and visualization process, an exploration was conducted on a dataset comprising three key variables: material cost, sensor reliability, and production cost. It was observed that the scatter plot vividly illustrated the potential relationship between material cost and sensor reliability, enabling a visual assessment of any patterns or trends. The accompanying histogram provided insights into the distribution of sensor reliability, revealing its frequency distribution among the samples.

Moving towards statistical measures, the mean values of material cost and production cost were computed and compared through a bar chart. This graphical representation clearly illustrated the differences in these two cost factors, aiding in the identification of cost variations. Furthermore, the box plot visualized the spread and central tendencies of material cost and production cost, helping to identify any potential outliers and offering a better understanding of their distribution. The analysis also extended to the temporal aspect, with the line chart depicting sensor reliability over time, assuming that this variable had temporal relevance. This enabled the observation of trends or fluctuations in sensor reliability over a time period, providing valuable insights for applications that involve monitoring over time. Additionally, the correlation matrix heatmap revealed the relationships between the variables. A strong correlation suggested a potential interdependence between material cost, sensor reliability, and production cost.

Statistical hypothesis testing, specifically the t-test, was employed to investigate whether a significant difference existed between material cost and production cost. The *p-value* obtained was compared to the conventional significance level of 0.05. If the *p-value* was less than 0.05, it implied a statistically significant difference between the two costs, which could have substantial implications for decision-making. The comprehensive analysis and visualization process provided valuable insights into the dataset's characteristics, relationships, and potential differences between material cost and production cost. The results, which included visualizations and statistical tests, formed a foundation for making informed decisions in scenarios involving flexible printed electronics for food quality monitoring and intelligent food packaging.

### *Scatter Plot*

The scatter plot as shown in Figure 1, depicting the relationship between material cost and sensor reliability in the context of a food packaging dataset, offers critical insights into the potential associations between these two variables. This visualization serves as a powerful tool for exploring the dataset and uncovering any underlying patterns or trends. From the scatter plot, it becomes evident that there is no clear, discernible linear relationship between material cost and sensor reliability. The data points appear scattered without a distinct upward or downward trend. This absence of a pronounced linear correlation suggests that changes in material cost do not directly translate into systematic changes in sensor reliability. In other words, fluctuations in material cost do not appear to have a straightforward, linear impact on the sensors' reliability in the food packaging. This seemingly straightforward observation holds significant implications for food packaging design and cost management. It indicates that decisions related to material cost should be made considering factors beyond sensor reliability. Other variables or considerations may play a more substantial role in determining sensor performance and reliability within the context of food packaging. Therefore, designers and decision-makers should take a holistic approach, considering various factors, including the choice of sensors, environmental conditions, and quality control measures, to ensure reliable food packaging. The scatter plot prompts further questions and avenues for exploration. While no linear correlation is evident, nonlinear or indirect relationships between material cost and sensor reliability may still exist that warrant more advanced statistical analyses. Additionally, the scatter plot underscores the importance of collecting and analyzing real-world data in the specific context of food packaging to make informed decisions. The scatter plot provides an initial glimpse into the relationship between material cost and sensor reliability in food packaging. While it does not reveal a direct linear correlation, it underscores the need for comprehensive data analysis and a nuanced understanding of the interplay between variables to optimize sensor reliability in food packaging applications. This visualization serves as a starting point for deeper investigations and informs decision-makers that material cost alone may not dictate sensor performance in this intricate and dynamic environment.

#### *Histogram*

The histogram representing sensor reliability in the context of the food packaging dataset provides a crucial glimpse into the distribution of this variable as shown in Figure 2. Sensor reliability is a pivotal parameter in food quality monitoring and intelligent food packaging, as it influences the accuracy and trustworthiness of the collected data. The histogram is a powerful visualization tool that allows us to assess the frequency and distribution of sensor reliability values. It reveals that sensor reliability values within the dataset exhibit a roughly normal distribution. The bellshaped curve indicates this, a characteristic feature of normal distributions. Such a distribution is favorable in the context of food packaging, as it suggests that a substantial portion of the data falls within a reliable range of values, contributing to the overall quality and consistency of the collected data. The histogram also helps in identifying potential patterns or clusters within the data. In this case, it showcases the frequency of sensor reliability values in distinct bins, which can aid in identifying trends or anomalies. For instance, if specific ranges of sensor reliability values were consistently high or low, this histogram would highlight those patterns, allowing for targeted investigation and potential improvements in the sensor technology or data collection processes. Additionally, the histogram's visualization of sensor reliability distribution serves as a basis for making informed decisions about setting thresholds for data interpretation. For instance, in the context of food quality monitoring, critical decisions might be triggered when sensor reliability falls below or exceeds certain levels. The histogram assists in defining these thresholds based on the distribution of real-world data, thereby enhancing the reliability and effectiveness of food packaging systems. The histogram of sensor reliability is an invaluable tool for understanding the distribution of this essential parameter within the food packaging dataset. Its depiction of a roughly normal distribution, potential patterns, and the basis it





**Figure 2:** Histogram of material cost and sensor reliability

provides for setting data interpretation thresholds all contribute to its significance in ensuring the accuracy and reliability of data collected for food quality monitoring and intelligent food packaging applications.

#### *Bar Chart*

The bar chart comparing the mean material cost to the mean production cost within the context of the food packaging dataset is a vital visualization that offers crucial insights into the cost dynamics of this domain as shown in the Figure 3. This chart serves as a fundamental component of the data analysis process, shedding light on the central tendencies of two pivotal cost factors and their relative positions. Upon a careful examination of the chart, it becomes evident that a distinct difference exists between the mean material cost and the mean production cost. The y-axis of the chart clearly depicts that the mean material cost is considerably lower than the mean production cost, as is visually evident from the respective bars. This observation immediately brings attention to the fact that, on average, material cost tends to be more economical than production cost within the context of food packaging. However, it is important to interpret this disparity in context. While the chart effectively communicates this initial insight, it does not delve into this difference's underlying reasons or statistical significance. Further statistical analyses, such as hypothesis testing or confidence intervals, would be essential to draw robust conclusions and make informed decisions based on this data. These analyses would help ascertain whether this observed difference in means is statistically significant or if it might be attributed to random variation within the dataset. Furthermore, the chart prompts the need for a deeper exploration of the data's characteristics. It hints at the existence of potential cost outliers, which could significantly impact the overall cost dynamics. To gain a more comprehensive understanding, it would be prudent to complement this chart with measures of dispersion, such as standard deviations or interquartile Figure 1: Scatter plot of material cost and sensor reliability ranges, to assess the variability around these mean

values. The bar chart effectively presents the central tendencies of material cost and production cost, revealing a notable difference between the two. However, further statistical analysis and a comprehensive exploration of data distribution are imperative for conclusive insights and informed decision-making within the context of food packaging. This chart serves as a pivotal starting point, sparking curiosity and encouraging deeper scrutiny of the cost dynamics within the dataset, providing a foundational understanding that calls for statistical validation and more extensive investigation.

## *Box Plot*

The box plot comparing material cost and production cost was found to provide a comprehensive view of the distribution and statistical characteristics of these two critical variables within the dataset as shown in Figure 4. This visualization was deemed particularly valuable in understanding the spread, central tendencies, and presence of potential outliers in both material cost and production cost. The box plot showed that material cost exhibited relatively lower variability compared to production cost. This observation was based on the length of the boxes, with the material cost box notably narrower, indicating that the majority of material cost data points were concentrated within a relatively tight range. Conversely, the production cost box appeared wider, suggesting a broader distribution of data points and a more extensive range of values. The median line within each box provided insight into the central tendency of the data. It was noted that material cost's median line was positioned lower than production cost's median line, reaffirming the earlier observation that, on average, material cost tended to be lower than production cost within this dataset. One notable feature of the box plot was the presence of potential outliers in both material cost and production cost. These outliers, depicted as individual data points beyond the "whiskers" of the boxes, indicated extreme values deviating significantly from the bulk of the data. The identification of these outliers was deemed crucial, as they may warrant further investigation or consideration in subsequent analyses. It was observed that the box plot effectively summarized key characteristics of material cost and production cost, encompassing central tendencies,



**Figure 3:** Bar chart of material cost and mean production cost



**Figure 4:** Box plot of material cost and mean production cost

variability, and the presence of potential outliers. This visualization was considered instrumental in facilitating informed decisions and drawing valuable insights from the dataset, offering a clear depiction of the cost dynamics within the context of flexible printed electronics for food quality monitoring and intelligent food packaging. Further statistical analysis was acknowledged as necessary to delve into the significance of these observed differences and explore potential implications for decision-making and research directions in this domain.

### *Sensor Reliability Over Time*

The line chart that portrays the variations in sensor reliability over time prompts several considerations in its interpretation as shown in Figure 5. It is crucial to acknowledge that the concept of "time" in this context may not necessarily represent a chronological progression but instead signifies an arbitrary or experimental index. Therefore, a degree of caution must be exercised in drawing absolute temporal conclusions. Upon closer examination of the chart, it becomes apparent that a pattern of fluctuation in sensor reliability values is observed throughout the time index. This fluctuation implies that sensor reliability is not a static parameter but undergoes variations influenced by certain underlying factors or conditions. Nevertheless, the ability to attribute these fluctuations to meaningful events or trends is limited due to the absence of specific time units or contextual details. Furthermore, it is important to note that this chart alone does not offer a comprehensive



**Figure 5:** Sensor reliability vs sensor reliability over time

understanding of the factors responsible for the observed fluctuations in sensor reliability. Critical contextual information or variables that could potentially impact sensor reliability remains notably absent. Therefore, while the chart provides a hint of variability, it falls short of revealing the root causes or patterns governing these fluctuations. To derive more meaningful insights from this chart, it would be imperative to complement it with supplementary data or information pertaining to the factors influencing sensor reliability over time. Additionally, the application of statistical techniques, such as time series analysis, may be warranted to unveil latent patterns or trends concealed within the dataset, thereby enabling more robust interpretations and predictions.

#### *Heat map*

The correlation matrix heatmap as depicted in the Figure 6 presented in this analysis, was noted as a potent visual tool that offered insights into the relationships between the variables in the dataset, specifically material cost, sensor reliability, and production cost. It was observed that this heatmap provided a comprehensive view of how these variables were interrelated and whether discernible patterns or dependencies among them were present. Upon scrutiny of the heatmap, several key observations could be made. It was evident that material cost, as depicted on the vertical and horizontal axes, exhibited a relatively weak correlation with both sensor reliability and production cost. The heatmap showcased this by presenting these correlations in shades of color, with a spectrum ranging from cool (indicating negative correlation) to warm (indicating positive correlation). In this case, the colors predominantly fell within the cool range, suggesting that material cost did not strongly correlate with either sensor reliability or production cost. This finding was considered valuable, as it implied that fluctuations in material cost did not necessarily coincide with fluctuations in the other two variables, indicating a certain degree of independence. Furthermore, the heatmap



T-test p-value: 1.0646930541387789e-31

There is a significant difference between material cost and production cost.



#### **Figure 7:** Accuracy result

unveiled an intriguing aspect of the dataset: sensor reliability and production cost exhibited a slightly warmer color, implying a slightly stronger correlation between these two factors. This observation suggested that there might be some degree of interdependence between sensor reliability and production cost, although the correlation was not overwhelmingly strong. This finding raised interesting questions about potential causal relationships or shared factors that might influence both sensor reliability and production cost.

In a broader context, the correlation matrix heatmap was deemed a valuable starting point for more in-depth investigations. It prompted questions about the factors driving these correlations and motivated further statistical analysis to explore the significance of these relationships. Additionally, it underscored the complexity of the dataset, highlighting the need for a multidimensional understanding of the variables at play.

#### *Accuracy Result*

In the Python program provided, a data-driven approach was undertaken to construct and assess a classification model using a synthetic dataset as shown in Figure 7. The dataset was composed of two primary features, namely material cost and production cost, employed to predict a binary target variable denoted as 'Label'. The dataset was partitioned into training and testing sets to thoroughly evaluate the model's performance, with 80% allocated for training and 20% for testing. The chosen classification algorithm for this task was the decision tree classifier, renowned for its capacity to model and anticipate categorical outcomes. The model underwent training on the training dataset, enabling it to learn underlying patterns and relationships between the features and the target variable. Following the training phase, the model was applied to the test dataset for predictions, thereby facilitating an assessment of its performance. The central performance metric employed was accuracy, quantifying the model's ability to accurately predict class labels. It gauged the ratio of correct predictions to the total number of predictions made, furnishing a rapid evaluation of the model's predictive prowess. Furthermore, Figure 6: Correlation heat map of studied variables **a** comprehensive classification report was generated to offer an in-depth perspective on key classification metrics, encompassing precision, recall, F1-score, and support for each class (0 and 1). These metrics played a pivotal role in comprehending the model's ability to differentiate between the two classes and its effectiveness.

## **Conclusion**

The synergy between cutting-edge technology and the critical food safety and quality domain has led to remarkable advancements with far-reaching implications. Food quality maintenance throughout the supply chain remains a paramount concern, and the traditional methods of achieving this goal have limitations. The integration of flexible printed electronics introduces a paradigm shift, enabling active monitoring, real-time data collection, and adaptive responses, thereby enhancing food quality and safety assurance. The data analysis and visualizations presented, including scatter plots, histograms, bar charts, box plots, line charts, and correlation matrix heatmaps, offer powerful tools for understanding data characteristics and relationships. Hypothesis testing confirms significant differences, while our classification model evaluation demonstrates the potential for accurate predictive modeling. In conclusion, this research underlines the immense promise of flexible printed electronics in food quality assurance and intelligent packaging. It serves as a comprehensive resource for researchers, practitioners, and policymakers, offering insights into the transformative potential of these technologies. The integration of flexible electronics into the food industry is a significant stride toward a more transparent, efficient, and sustainable food supply chain.

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