

**IMAGES FROM THE
Maritime Wild Blueberry Producers
First Field Day Event - July 15, 2017**



The weather was awesome and a great day to relax with a lawn chair in front of the Case Tractors on display from VanOostrum Farm Equipment Case/JCB dealer. (Rees Photo)



Jeff Robinson gets an interpreter to explain the proto-type of the new conveyor system to handle the large boxes, which the industry is switching to. (Rees Photo)



CKD Fabricators, Parrsboro brought this large harvester to the field day. (Rees Photo)

New Brunswick Production Reaches 82-Million Pounds

By Maurice Rees

Over a decade ago, New Brunswick's blueberry industry was divided into three districts which old Annual District Meetings prior to the provincial AGM. The purpose of the ADMs is to examine the operations of BNBB, to review the financial statements and to elect Board members.

The organization is constantly reviewing its procedures to ensure it constantly meets the needs of producer members. The regional breakdown is as follows: District 1 includes: Charlotte, Saint John, Kings, Queens, Sunbury, York and Carleton Counties. District 2 comprises Westmorland, Albert, Kent and

Northumberland excluding the parish of Alnwick. District 3 is made up of Gloucester, Restigouche, Madawaska and Victoria and the parish of Alnwick in Northumberland County.

Wild blueberries are the most important fruit crop in Atlantic Canada. Although blueberries have been harvested and sold in New Brunswick for generations, the modern blueberry industry had its beginnings in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Typically New Brunswick, producers harvest between 30 million to 40 million pounds annually. High prices, increased acreage and improved efficiencies pushed

2016 harvest to 82 million pounds.

An important part of blueberry production is pollination. During this time, from mid-May to mid-June depending on location, trailer loads of honey bees can be seen moving around the province as they are delivered to blueberry fields. Producers also rely on native pollinators, leafcutter bees and managed bumblebees to assist with pollination.

Over 90% of New Brunswick wild blueberries are sold to processors who clean, sort and grade the berries for freezing. Individual Quick Freezing (IQF) preserves the nutritional value

and great taste of berries and makes them easy to pour from the container. Wild blueberries are sold around the world in over thirty countries. Some key markets are the United States, Japan, Germany, the United Kingdom and France.

The balance of the wild blueberry production is processed in on-farm processing facilities. These berries are processed into an abundance of innovative, tasty products that include vinaigrettes, chutneys, relishes, and dessert sauces as well as traditional favourites like pies, jams and jellies. There are even blueberry wines and liqueurs produced in New Brunswick.

Colwell Commits to Helping Wild Blueberry Producers

By Maurice Rees

A bright sunny summer day and pricing problems in the wild blueberry industry brought Hon Keith Colwell, NS Minister of Agriculture to the first Maritime Provinces field day held in Collingwood at Doug Bragg Enterprises Ltd.

The main focus of his message is government is going all out to help the province's number one agrifood export with a value of \$88.5-Million from 1,000 producers managing 40,000 acres. One of the programs is the Homegrown Success Program which was funded at \$131,446, an increase from previous years.

Colwell said even though producers are receiving low prices for their berries, the department continues to work hard to increase export opportunities and work

with industry on marketing efforts.

An area which is receiving lots of attention is pursuing markets in China and Asia for retail, online and foodservice along with blueberry wine. A lot of emphasis is being spent on blueberry wine and research profiling blueberry wine in China where there is interest from 5-6 wineries in Nova Scotia.

With reference to online sales, Colwell suggested everyone think outside the box. He referenced a recent test to market live lobsters in China through online sales. If lobsters can be sold on-line why not blueberries? He said, A while ago on online pilot project in China sold 90,000 lobsters with a value of \$3.2 million CAD within 24 hours.

He feels consumer packs of fresh or Individually Quick Frozen

(IQF) high quality blueberries could be sold into foreign markets, even though the volumes would not be as large as food service sales, everything would help especially on branding.

Governments participation with industry with the Lowbush Blueberry Development program which was funded to a total of \$308,826 to producers last year is just another example. Bees, which are very important to a successful crop did not go unnoticed. The Department continues to work with beekeepers in Nova Scotia to ensure pollination needs are met and to reduce reliance on importing bees from other provinces. Concern about the small hive beetle has caused there to be a very strict inspection process before bees leave their home province.

Colwell committed his departments efforts to work with the industry and hopes that within five years everyone can look back and view current situations as just "a small bump in the road".



Hon Keith Colwell, Minister of Agriculture, addresses producers during a quick after lunch speech. (Rees Photo)







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