

IMAGES FROM THE

Maritime Wild Blueberry Producers
First Field Day Event - July 15, 2017



Acadian Machine Works, Tignish, PEI, brought along some larger processing equipment, which remained on the trailer. The company continues to be a supporter and sponsor of field day events throughout the Maritimes. (Rees Photo)



With the 2017 field day held at Doug Bragg Enterprises, Collingwood is was a great opportunity for the company to display a variety of the used harvesters and tractors, which are ready for immediate sale. (Rees Photo)



Dan McDonald chats with a customer at the Musquodoboit Valley Resource Supply booth. (Rees Photo)



This photo shows a rear view of the CKD Fabricators harvester. Note that the right side of the tractor has dual tires. (Rees Photo)

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Maritime Blueberry 2017 Production to Drop

By Maurice Rees

Several years of extremely high volume harvests which outpaced export sales is the primary reason blueberry producers are facing a period of extremely low prices. Until inventory and export sales are adjusted most producers say they will lose money on every pound of berries harvested.

Years of emphasis on production with plenty of research, and technological improvements producers across the region have seen record production in excess of 300-million pounds for the Maritimes and neighbouring State of Maine, not including Quebec.

However the 2017 harvest is expected to be lower than 2016 as a result of cool, wet and poor pollination weather at the appropriate time. It's hard to forecast with precision, but extension workers are suggesting yields might be down 20-25% across the region.

Historically, New Brunswick's annual harvest has been 40-50-Million pounds, but with exceptionally good growing season, over 82-Million pounds were harvested in 2016. Producers in Maine, PEI and Nova Scotia raked in higher volumes in 2016, but not the same rate of increase as NB.

To provide a market update, Peter Rideout, Executive Director, WBPANS called up extension specialists to come to the microphone to provide their best guess. Chris Jordan, PEI Agriculture explained that cool weather, winds and rain hampered the bees ability to pollinate at the right time, so as a result production is expected to be down this year.

Michel Melanson, NB Agriculture speaking on

behalf if his industry said last year's bumper crop in excess of 82-Million pounds up from an average of 40-50-Million pounds will not be reached this year. His best guess, for the variety of reasons including poor weather, possibility some fields have been taken out of production, is the 2017 harvest will probably be in 50+ Million pounds.

In a newspaper story published June 12, 2017 by The Associated Press and the Portland Press Herald, Dr David Yarborough, Wild Blueberry Specialist at University of Maine in Orono, it was reported: "Wild blueberries are a Maine tradition on par with lobsters and lighthouses, but prices to farmers have plunged from nearly a dollar a pound in 2011 to around 25 to 30 cents per pound last year. Maine, the largest wild blueberry-producing state in the nation, hit its five-year average of 93 million pounds last summer."

Dr Yarborough told producers at the Maritime Provinces field day on July 15 in Collingwood Maine's 2016 production exceeded 110-Million pounds. However he anticipates 2017 production to drop 20-25%.

Canada and Maine, the U.S.'s sole significant wild blueberry state, have both churned out high levels of the crop in recent years, Yarborough said. The two jurisdictions produced 400 million pounds of wild blueberries last year, Yarborough said. The norm is around 250 million pounds, he said. Regardless of the size of this summer's crop, prices are unlikely to surge back to higher levels quickly, Yarborough added.

The Portland Press Herald report also stated, "The U.S. Department of Agriculture

stepped in last year and allotted up to \$13 million to buy surplus Maine blueberries and help stabilize prices. But excess supply remains".

Chris Jordan PEI Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, Extension Specialist informed producers attending the Collingwood event, PEI's 2016 production was in the vicinity of 34-Million pounds. He added it's hard to guess, but a 2017 harvest of 30-Million pounds is expected.

Prince Edward Island's 2016 Wild Blueberry Producers Field Day



An assortment of food awaited visitors to PEI's 2016 Wild Blueberry Producers field day. (Submitted)



There was lots of shade for producers to visit the displays set up inside the building. (Submitted)



An assortment of equipment was on display for producers to inspect at the 2016 PEI Field Day. (Submitted)

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