



Several research projects were represented at the Field Day.



This harvester from Doug Bragg Enterprises had a larger picker head width than seen in years past, perhaps replacing a double head in some fields.



Several equipment displays were on hand for producers to see what is new. These forklifts were demonstrating the ease of moving beehives.

# Big Challenges Face Blueberry Producers

By Frank Cassidy  
Special to The Shoreline Journal

Two weeks of sun; 23C; and a little rain before August 1.

That's the success formula addressed by growers during the Wild Blueberry Producers of Nova Scotia (WBPANS) annual Field Day July 17, celebrated under sunny skies and about 25C - two thirds of the equation.

Peter Burgess is the association's executive director, and he points to industry challenges from praying for good growing weather, a need to think smarter, and making huge investments in new equipment - as well as a low market price.

Dr. Stephen Ellis, Cumberland-Colchester Member of Parliament was on hand for the field day, and he presented several questions to Burgess, regarding conditions

facing small blueberry producers.

Burgess said the world market for blueberries is looking good. "We are seeing sale prices and volume that's moving out the door is much better than last year."

More good news is one of the advantages Nova Scotia has over competing producers from the eastern United States and New Brunswick is the relationship enjoyed with the Dalhousie University Agricultural College in Bible Hill. "It's one-of-a-kind research group" that offers invaluable expertise in all facets of the blueberry industry. "It's a great relationship we have with the AC. It's invaluable for us. Over the past 10 years we have put \$800,000 into research and we see the return."

For example, there has been a huge change in production. "Where once we had

1,500 to 2,000 pounds per acre, now we are up to 12,000 pounds," Burgess said.

In 2024, change is the key to success in blueberry growing, as in any other farming business. "It's not easy," but at the same time, "although it's a bit stressful, it's open to possibilities ... it's a great lifestyle," he said to Dr. Ellis.

The blueberry industry in Cumberland-Colchester is a vital one.

Thousands of acres of land are dedicated to growing the 'wild' variety, most of which is, following early August harvest, frozen and exported around the world.

Dr. Ellis was also impressed with 21st Century machinery such as computerized harvesters and spraying equipment, that has increased production capacity enormously. "What really caught my eye was a \$50,000 experimental drone sprayer that can self-adjust its height above the terrain below, as it speedily disperses pest controls across a blueberry field. And then there is AI, and cameras that can detect weed growth!"



Chef Alain Bosse, caterer to the annual Wild Blueberry Producers Association of Nova Scotia, and Dr. Stephen Ellis, Member of Parliament for Cumberland-Colchester 'stirred the pot' of blueberries in preparation for a variety of desserts at the association's annual field day held at the Kittilsen Farm outside of Debert July 17. (Cassidy photo)



Stephen Ellis, Cumberland-Colchester Member of Parliament and Brian Burgess, executive director of the Wild Blueberry Producers Association of Nova Scotia, discussed some of the challenges facing small farm producers, during the association's annual field day held at the Kittilsen Farm outside of Debert July 17. (Cassidy photo)

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JR Tardif, a leader in flail mower technology designed for blueberry fields in the Maritimes, had samples of machinery on display at the annual Wild Blueberry Producers of Nova Scotia (WBPANS) 2015 Field Day.

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