

# New Opportunities for Wild Blueberry Industry Focus of Workshop

By Linda Harrington

Over 60 interested persons attended a workshop "Unlocking the Value of the NS Wild Blueberry Industry", held a day prior to the WBPANS AGM with a focus on new opportunities within the wild blueberry industry.

The interactive afternoon provided new information, an opportunity to discuss and formulate ideas, a chance to learn about options for moving forward and how to create new efficiencies and/or produce new products.

Peter Burgess, of Perennia suggested "within challenges there are always opportunities". He stated Nova Scotia has rather unique demographics, with 1100 growers and approximately 44,000 acres in production, there are a significant number of small fields managed by custom

applicators/harvesters where farmers have less direct control over the inputs. The varied topography in the province is another challenge.

Burgess suggested ways to address challenges on individual farms are by looking at productivity, efficiency, alternative revenue streams, creativity and quality product. "The solutions may be difficult but the opportunities are there," he said.

Peter Van Dyk gave a presentation on Value Added Products, reflecting on his experience growing a family business. Van Dyk's Wild Blueberry Juice has been manufactured for 15 years and is now shipped all over the world. He suggests anyone looking at new products "make a high-quality product and price it where it has to be" and "to know where you

are selling and who you are selling to."

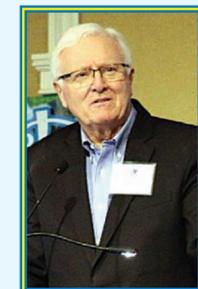
The workshop welcomed input (via skype) from Mike Nicholas, of Nicholas and Knight Ltd. in the UK. He had several suggestions for creating a clear plan of action, giving insight into the UK markets and his own experiences. He suggested growers "take control of your own destiny".

Dr. Eric Albert, Perennia presented information on the vast array of infrastructure and services available to help with innovation. He presented a virtual tour of the Perennia Innovation Centre with a detailed discussion about the services available.

Laurie Kittilsen - Director of Programs at NSDA and Shawn Ingraham - Senior Policy and Planning Officer for Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada looked at Funding

Perspectives. Laurie suggested applicants have fully developed concepts, with well developed proposals before making applications, as time is valuable.

Group sessions followed the presentations, with those present drafting suggestions for new products, new marketing strategies and opportunities. The discussion and completed survey's will help give direction for the WBPANS in the coming year.



Bill Casey, MP Cumberland-Colchester was a guest speaker at the WBPANS AGM on Friday, Nov. 18th. He told producers he understood the challenges currently facing the industry and said the government is working towards helping find solutions.



Honourable Keith Colwell, Minister of Agriculture brought greetings to the WBPANS Banquet and pledged his support to the Wild Blueberry Industry.



Marion Bartelt-Simon, MK2 Agency of Hamburg, Germany displaces a glass jar wild blueberry product that has become very popular in Germany while Neri Vataour - Executive Director WBANA Canada displays a similar product modified for the UK market. On the table in front of them are just some of the new products containing wild blueberries.

**Check out KITCHEN KORNER on page 5 for a delicious recipe for a WILD BLUEBERRY SMOOTHIE**

## The 2017 Executive for Wild Blueberry Producers Association of Nova Scotia



Front (left to right)- Janet Geldart- Administrative Assistant, Jeff Orr- Past President, Barron Blois- President, David Atkinson- Vice-President, Stephen Parks-Director, Jim Baillie-Industry & Sustainability Committee Chair; Back Row (left to right)- Mark Austin- Director, Alice Pugsley- Promotion Committee Chair, Jim Wood- Director, Art Sargent-Director, Jeff Perrin- Director, Peter Rideout- Executive Director. Missing from photo- John Cameron- WBANA Rep., Joe Slack- Financial Committee Chair.

# Record Crops Create Marketing Challenges

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Provinces what better way to support your local farmer than to buy a local product, that not only tastes good but is good for you.

Peter Rideout, Executive Director of WBPANS says the over-supply and low price situation is very serious, but it is not hopeless. "We have to remember that there is great strength in this industry. We have a wonderful, delicious, healthy product that we have

built markets for around the world. Now there is an urgent need, and an opportunity, to grow those markets further and to find new markets. A concerted effort must be applied here."

MP Bill Casey offered his support during a talk with producers at the AGM. "When wild blueberry producers do well, the community does well," he said adding, "I assure you we understand the challenges you are facing and we

are trying to find solutions."

Minister of Agriculture Keith Colwell added his support at the AGM Banquet, where he was the guest speaker. "We will work with the industry to grow the market. We need to find value added products with high returns."

Minister Colwell has completed 4 trips to China this past year and is encouraged by the progress being made, including the signing of a major agreement with the biggest online marketing company.

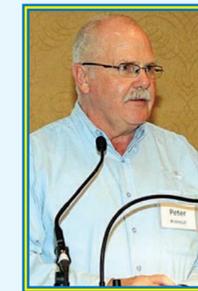
He pledged to help come up with funding to increase marketing potentials for wild blueberries and work with producers to help solve the problem of low price.

Locally the WBPANS promotes tourism in NS while celebrating the wild blueberry during the annual Wild Blueberry Harvest Festival. This past year was the most successful yet with events showing increased attendance. The Festival is held in mid-August, with the grand opening event at the Farmer's Market in Truro.

Over 300 Wild Blueberry Producers attended the AGM this year and many took the opportunity to exchange ideas and concerns with fellow producers and the Board. WBPANS President Barron Blois has grown up in the industry and been involved for over 60 years. He stresses the need for the provinces to work together and for pro-

ducers to have 2 way discussions with processing partners. "We need a long-term plan that puts wild blueberries in front of all consumers in not only Atlantic Canada but all across Canada."

Two research scientists were inducted into the WBPANS' Recognition Book



Peter Rideout- WBPANS Executive Director gave an update on the current State of the WB Industry.

for 2016. Dr. Paul Hildebrand, retired Research Scientist with Agriculture & Agri-Food Canada and Dr. David Yarborough, University of

Maine were introduced and a formal presentation made at the Banquet on Friday, Nov. 18th.



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Jeff Robinson, Pictou County Berry, sits on the Grasshopper berry picker at the entrance to the WBPANS AGM meeting at the Glangerry - Truro Convention Centre. (Rees Photo)



Carl Bragg (left), of Doug Bragg Enterprises, was on hand to discuss innovations in wild blueberry harvesting.



Andre Tardiff, of JR Tardiff, shows the tough grinding blades of the TRS1416 Stump Grinder on display at the WBPANS AGM.



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