

Price Stabilization Top of Mind for Wild Blueberry Producers

By Linda Harrington

There was good attendance at the Spring Information Meeting for the Wild Blueberry Producers Association of Nova Scotia (WBPANS) at the Western Glengarry, Truro on April 5th. WBPANS President David Harrison opened the meeting, welcoming everyone and highlighting the agenda for the day. He recognized the importance of the Wild Blueberry Association of North America (WBANA)- Canada's role in the industry and the positive restructuring recently taking place.



WBPANS Executive Director Peter Burgess gave an update on the focus of the WBPANS Board of Directors this past year and going forward.

WBPANS Executive Director Peter Burgess noted 2023 was a challenging year with poor weather conditions, higher input costs, higher cost of borrowing, and a low farm gate price of .35/lb all leading to negative margins for many growers. He assured those present farm gate price stabilization for growers and the supply chain has been a focus of the WBPANS Board throughout 2023. The Board has also been looking at improving farm productivity and efficiency to help reduce

the costs of growing berries, promoting increased consumption of wild blueberries, and promoting the importance of the industry.

In 2023, there were 695 registered wild blueberry growers in Nova Scotia and despite the challenging weather, 45 million pounds of berries were harvested. This is consistent with the 5-year average but down from 57 million pounds in 2022.



Andrew Byers, of Perennia's Atlantic Tech Transfer Team for Apiculture spoke on Best Management Practices for Spraying Around Pollinators.

Andrew Byers, of Perennia's Atlantic Tech Transfer Team for Apiculture gave an interesting presentation on the importance of pollinators and best management practices. He noted bee pollinated crops contribute to approximately one third of the total human dietary supply, with an estimated global economic value of \$220 billion for crop pollinations services.

Pollinators have always been an important component in the production of wild blueberries. Andrew showed even at today's farm gate price of .35/lb the use of

pollinators has a potential monetary value of \$600/hive. He explained the importance of reducing risks to the pollinators during spraying by not spraying on flowering plants, avoiding good flying days, not spraying in windy conditions, and keeping spray away from the hives. Placing hives in the fields out of the range of pesticides and on high ground will help reduce exposure.

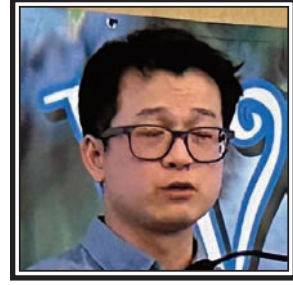


Wade Dover, Board member of 2024 WBANA Canada presented what the revised WBANA Canada looks like and where the focus will be with the restructuring.

Wade Dover, Board Member of WBANA-Canada presented a brief history of WBANA, which was formed jointly between Canada and the United States in 1981 to market a 40-million-pound crop. WBANA-Canada was established in the early 2000, with both sides still sharing research information. The pandemic years were slow and frustrating, and it became necessary to revamp the WBANA- Canada initiative. After much hard work, a new strategic plan is being finalized, with new bylaws, new financing structure, new mission, new values, and new vision. The Board is now made up of representatives from 4 grower associations

and 4 processors.

Wade introduced the newly hired WBANA-Canada Executive Director Patrick O'Neil. Patrick will replace Neri Vautour, who is retiring this June after more than 20 years with WBANA- Canada. A special thank you was extended to Neri, who has worked very hard for the industry throughout his career.



Hugh Lyu, Perennia gave an update on Wild Blueberry Management and Production, including where to find helpful resources and tools on the Wild Blueberry Blog.

Hugh Lyu, Wild Blueberry Extension at Perennia Food & Agriculture was pleased to report a favorable winter for most wild blueberry fields this year. There was good

3 Pages of scenes and information from the 2024 Wild Blueberry Producers Association of Nova Scotia Spring Information Meeting

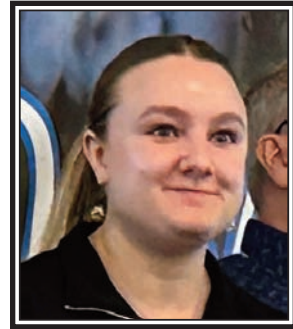
snow cover and no concerning cold temperatures. He says soils are warming up quickly and plant emergence and development will probably start early.

Hugh recommends growers checkout his blog regularly at <http://www.novascotiawildblueberryblog.com/> where he will give updates on growing conditions, and you can find links to resources and management tools.

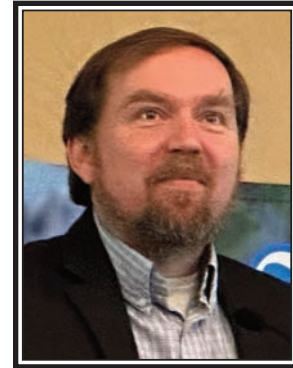
A Grower's Panel was held in the afternoon, discussing innovative practices on-farm including Two Step Mowing, Weather Stations and GDD's, Autosteer and Automated Sectional Boom Control and Mobile Equipment Cleaning.

For more information from the day's presenters visit <https://nswildblueberries.com/>

The annual WBPANS Field Day will be held in the Debert area on July 17th.



Kayla Gaudet, is an Apiculturist for the Atlantic Tech Transfer Team for Apiculture and Perennia.



Patrick O'Neil was introduced as the new Executive Director for WBANA Canada.



WBPANS President David Harrison welcomed everyone to the 2024 Spring Information Meeting and outlined the day's agenda.

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.

JR Tardif is a leader in flail mower technology designed for the Maritime Provinces blueberry fields. We have responded to customer's requests for a 54" flail mower to fit onto 25 hp tractors. We work with you to increase the yield from each acre, fill in bare spots and help make you more money. We can also supply you with chopper mowers, ToolPost Puller mower, stump grinder, flail mowers and now flail movers for compact tractors.

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- Roadside Mower** - Single head, side mount mower 5-foot head. There are 25 units in operation throughout Nova Scotia. Units are used in bush cutting operations and roadside mowing in the State of Maine.
- Excavator Mower** - Single head, boom mount mower has 5-foot head. Head is mounted to the excavator boom using existing bucket mounting pins enabling mower head to mow contour of the ditches.
- Highway Median Mower** - BMM-5 median mower is a combination of 2 mid-mount 5-foot side mowers mounted on left and right sides of 90 HP tractor unit and 2 five-foot heads with 1 four-foot head mounted under a tow frame with a total cut path of 21'6". All heads are independently raised and lowered.
- DBE Electronics** - We offer contract electronics manufacturing with an emphasis on product quality and on time delivery. Manufacturing capabilities include electronic assembly, printed circuit boards and cable assemblies for prototype to production run quantities. No quantity is too large or too small.
- Cranberry Harvester** - This is the latest addition of Doug Bragg Enterprises's lineup of custom manufactured products. This machine is intended for dry picking cranberries with as little waste as possible and with virtually no damage to the bog. The ground pressure with the recommended setup is less than a foot print of an adult of average size.