North American Highbush Blueberry Market Situation

Two types of blueberries are grown in North America, the highbush and the lowbush. The highbush, also known as a “cultivated” blueberry, is commercially grown in 33 states and two Canadian provinces, developed almost 100 years ago from highbush blueberries in the wild. The highbush is sold both fresh and frozen. The lowbush blueberry, also known as the “wild” blueberry, is grown in Maine and Eastern Canada and is primarily sold as a frozen blueberry. This report focuses on the highbush blueberry industry.

Specify Real Blueberries

Blueberry production continues to expand with new acres, farming and processing efficiencies. The production of North American highbush blueberries in 2013 was 640.1 million lb. (290,344 mt.) up from 559.4 million lb. (253,740 mt.) in 2012.

Blueberries provide real fruit benefits adding value to most any product. The fruit’s natural blue pigment provides an identifiable way for customers to spot real blueberry-containing products. Research has shown that consumers are willing to pay more for products containing real blueberries and prefer real blueberries over artificial. They identify blueberries with health benefits such as antioxidants and fiber. In key-person interviews, 88.8% of consumers would pay 50 cents or more for products with real blueberries. Focus group respondents would pay 15 to 25% more for products with real blueberries.
(Source: Hebert Research, Inc., 2008.)

Fresh and Frozen Blueberry Opportunities

Food processors around the globe continue to develop new products with blueberries: North America had about 1,000 new products in 2013. Most have blueberry images and health info on packs. World—3,100 new blueberry containing products with development in Asia, Europe and Latin America! Beside traditional items, new categories are growing including juices, pet foods, natural cosmetics, and others. More frozen blueberries are going into consumer-size poly bags. This category is developing fast as consumers enjoy blueberry goodness and convenience year round.

Blueberry Consumption Increase

Fresh market per capita annual US consumption is estimated at 1.25 lb (567 g.) per person. Consumption of processed blueberries is estimated at 1.01 lb. (459 g.) with US per capita annual blueberry consumption at 2.2 lb (1,026 g.) per person.

Market Demand for Blueberries

An increasing percentage of the US crop is exported. North American exports in 2011 totaled 115.5 million lb. (52,390 mt.). Overseas demand for frozen blueberries has boomed, especially in Japan, South Korea and China. Manufacturers are producing blueberry-containing products at record clips which accounts for ongoing demand for frozen blueberries, juices and concentrates.

US Highbush Blueberry Council

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