

THE USHBC BLUESPAPER

News and Marketing Program Updates from the
U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council
March 2010

USDA WITHDRAWS USHBC PROPOSAL TO INCREASE ASSESSMENT RATE

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has announced that it is withdrawing the USHBC proposal to increase the current assessment rate from \$12 to \$24 per ton in order to fund expanded market promotion and health research activities to keep pace with increased levels of production. The withdrawal rule was published in the February 23, 2010 edition of the Federal Register (Volume 75, Number 35, Page 7985).

As noted in the Federal Register, *"The Council recommended this action to expand its promotional activities and add an advertising component to bridge the potential gap between highbush blueberry demand and future supply. Furthermore, it was the Council's intent to use the additional revenue to strengthen existing consumer, food service and food manufacturer publicity; to expand its health research; and to develop an educational campaign on good management practices and food safety within the United States as well as internationally."*

During the comment period, July 27 to September 25, 2009, the Department of Agriculture received 45 timely comments. These comments may be viewed on the Internet at <http://www.regulations.gov>. Nineteen comments were opposed to increasing the assessment rate at this time and one comment supported a smaller increase of \$18 per ton."

The Federal Register notice goes on to state, *"In summary, the opposing commenters expressed concern with doubling the assessment rate in light of current, poor economic conditions. Several commenters also argued that there is no need to increase the assessment rate because revenue should increase with the anticipated increase in production. Others raised concerns about growers being able to cover their production costs if the assessment rate doubled. Given the comments received, AMS agrees that the proposed rule increasing the assessment rate from \$12 to \$24 per ton should not be finalized."*

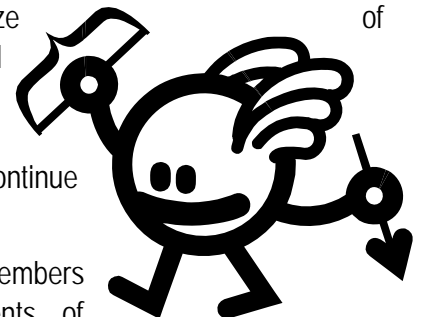
Given this decision, the USHBC will not explore expanded market promotion programs at this time but will continue with the initial Blueprint 2015 effort to create a unified message and theme for highbush blueberries for use in existing market promotion activities.

USHBC COMPLETES FIRST IN A SERIES OF ONLINE CONSUMER CONTESTS

The USHBC continues to use the internet to develop relationships with blueberry fans on *Facebook*, *Twitter* and *MySpace*, and has now entered the area of social media marketing communications with a series of monthly contests to emphasize year-round availability and maintain blueberry interest all year. Twelve contests, each with cash prizes, are designed to capture the interest of blueberry lovers and encourage them to pass along the invitation to join the club. The first blueberry contest featured a Valentine's Day theme where consumers were asked to show their love for blueberries by creating their own, unique valentine for

blueberries. Entries featured photos, artwork, poems or any combination of the three and the contest ran from February 1 to February 14, 2010. Winners and valentines were posted on the Blueberry Valentine Gallery on the USHBC *Facebook* page with the winning entry receiving a prize of \$500. Additional holiday and seasonally themed contests will continue throughout the year.

Blueberry Club members receive announcements of



the monthly contests through *Facebook*, *Twitter*, email or whatever means they specify when they join. In addition to prizes for the monthly winners, special prizes will be awarded to contestants who enter all 12 contests. Contests are being promoted through the *USHBC Facebook Fan Page*; *Twitter*; *MySpace*; food bloggers involved in the 2009 Blueberry Recipe Contest; and the USHBC website.

2009 BLUEBERRY PRODUCT OF THE YEAR AWARD WINNERS SELECTED BY USHBC

Ten finalists for the *2009 Best New Blueberry Product Award* were chosen from a list of approximately 300 products featuring blueberries. The goal of the contest was to identify a select number of unique products using blueberries in innovative ways that project the image of blueberries as a healthy, delicious fruit full of natural goodness and enhancing the positive associations of comfort foods.

Through their packaging and marketing, the winning products feature blueberries as homey and familiar and as a food people look forward to including in their diet



each day. In addition, each of these products has its own special blueberry story that emphasizes its uniqueness. This year, for the first time, the USHBC is honoring an entirely new category of exciting blueberry

products that promises to be an important area of expansion- pet foods. The following products received the 2009 Blueberry Product of the Year Award:

MaxFruit Blueberry Fruit Ice Bars made with 100% real cultivated blueberries; *Hassell Creek Blueberry Jam* described as "a biscuit's best friend"; *Salad Girl Blueberry Basil Salad Dressing* which contains the equivalent of 1 ½ cups of a combination of wild and cultivated blueberries in each jar; *Winn & Lovett Blueberry Syrup* an all natural syrup containing whole blueberries and sold by Winn-Dixie Stores; *Hogson Mill Whole Wheat Blueberry Muffin Mix* made with real blueberries and stone-ground whole wheat flour with dried, cultivated blueberries listed as the first ingredient after flour; *Entemann's Little Bites Blueberry Muffins*; *Elena's Blueberry Pie Ice Cream*; *Archer Farms Blueberry Lavender Sorbet* marketed by Target Stores and made with highbush blueberry puree.

Two winning pet foods were *Good Dog Blueberry Cobbler Treats*, a baked natural snack for dogs with blueberries as the first ingredient following oat flour and rolled oats; and *Fruitables Pumpkin and Blueberry Mix* dog treats which tout blueberries as "one of nature's best known super foods for your super dog".

USHBC POST OFFICE BOX AVAILABLE FOR CONSUMER RECIPE REQUESTS

The USHBC post office box is available for consumer use when requesting blueberry recipes and information. Blueberry industry members are encouraged to use the following text when inviting consumers to contact the USHBC for blueberry recipes and/or information:

For Blueberry Recipes and Information visit the U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council website at www.blueberry.org, or send a self-addressed, stamped (standard business size) envelope to:

*Blueberry Recipes
C/o U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council
P.O. Box 1036
Folsom, California 95763*

USHBC MEETING SCHEDULE

2010 USHBC Fall Meeting- Grand Rapids, Michigan

Wednesday, October 13 to Friday, October 15, 2010

Amway Grand Plaza Hotel- Grand Rapids, Michigan

Phone (616) 774-2000

2011 USHBC Spring Meeting- Dallas, Texas

Wednesday, March 2 to Friday, March 4, 2011

2011 USHBC Fall Meeting- Atlantic City, New Jersey

Wednesday, October 5 to Friday, October 7, 2011

2012 USHBC Spring Meeting- San Francisco, California

Wednesday, February 29 to Friday, March 2, 2012

Blueberries

The USHBC Bluespaper is published by the U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council: 80 Iron Point Circle, Suite 114; Folsom, California 95630. Phone (916) 983-0111; Fax (916) 983-9022; Web Site: www.blueberry.org.

The USHBC has adopted a diversity outreach plan to attempt to achieve a diverse representation on the Council. USHBC programs and meetings are open to all individuals. The USHBC prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, genetic information, parental status and marital or family status. The USHBC fully complies with any and all applicable Federal, State, and local equal employment opportunity statutes, ordinances and regulations, including, but not limited to Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990; the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967; and the Equal Pay Act of 1963. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact the USHBC office at (916) 983-0111. To file a complaint of discrimination, write to USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington D.C. 20250-9410 or call 800-795-3272 (voice) or 202-720-6382 (TDD).