

THE USHBC BLUESPAPER

News and Marketing Program Updates from the
U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council
November 2007

USHBC ENCOURAGES FOOD SAFETY AND GOOD AGRICULTURAL PRACTICE EFFORTS THROUGH NEWLY ESTABLISHED FOOD SAFETY COMMITTEE

The blueberry industry cares about providing a healthy and safe product for the consumer. To do so, the USHBC encourages both blueberry growers and handlers to continue to follow standards and guidelines that ensure safety and consumer confidence. In order to generate increased awareness of food safety and good agricultural practices, and provide a source of information for the blueberry industry, the USHBC has recently created the USHBC Food Safety Committee.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) report that foodborne diseases cause approximately 76 million illnesses, 325,000 hospitalizations and 5,000 deaths in the United States each year. More than 200 known diseases are transmitted through food. There are many more questions than answers regarding foodborne illness. With the recent problems facing the spinach industry, there has been a shift in concerns from just the preparation end of the food chain to the farm and production end. We are now seeing pressure on public health officials to examine potential points of contamination "from field to fork". A consumer response to food safety concerns has been the increasing consumption of organic foods and support for locally grown produce.

Our industry is committed to the safe production, packaging and distribution of blueberries and, given current concerns consumers may have regarding the foods they purchase, the USHBC is encouraging all blueberry growers and blueberry handlers to continue to monitor their handling, growing and management practices. The blueberry industry is fortunate that blueberries have a smooth outer surface and a pH that makes them less vulnerable to the growth of most pathogens. However, it is imperative that all parties involved in blueberries pay close attention to issues such as cross contamination, water used for irrigation, fertilizers used to promote growth, sanitation practices of workers who pick or handle the fruit, and the use of appropriate cooling, freezing and transport temperatures. The USHBC Food Safety Committee has been established to maintain current consumer confidence in blueberries and to ensure that consumers continue to receive a safe, wholesome product. The committee will assist the highbush blueberry industry, through information and education, in achieving this goal by providing a framework for the industry's individual quality control programs while at the same time investigating methods to ensure that highbush blueberries remain a safe, high quality product. The committee will serve as an information source providing information on Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) to our industry.

As an initial step, the USHBC Food Safety Committee will be sending a survey this winter to all highbush blueberry growers and handlers. The purpose of the survey will be to determine current food safety and traceability practices and to identify where additional information may be helpful. All growers and handlers are encouraged to respond to this survey as results will be used to determine the scope and the type of food safety material that will be of the most benefit to our industry. The committee will also be conducting an industry audit to determine any potential food safety vulnerabilities in producing both fresh and frozen product. Results of the audit and the survey will be used to develop educational materials which the committee plans to make available to industry members through both direct mail and electronically on the USHBC website in the months to come.

NABC CURRENTLY ESTIMATES 2007 NORTH AMERICAN BLUEBERRY CROP AT 499 MILLION POUNDS

Based upon reports from area representatives during the North American Blueberry Council (NABC) Fall Board meeting, held last month in Minneapolis, Minnesota, the 2007 North American blueberry crop could total 499.5 million pounds, down -36.9 million pounds from the record North American crop of 536.4 million pounds produced in 2006.

At this time, highbush blueberry production is estimated to total 326.5 million pounds in 2007 (154.0 million pounds fresh and 172.5 million pounds process). The Western region is expected to bring in 138.5 million pounds in 2007, up from 124.2 million pounds the previous year. California and Oregon report the biggest increases. California currently estimates a crop of 16.5 million pounds this year, up from 10.0 million pounds last year, while Oregon currently expects a crop of 40.0 million pounds, up from 34.0 million pounds in 2006.

The Midwest region is expected to harvest a crop of 94.2 million pounds this year, up slightly from the total of 92.4 million pounds in 2006. Northeastern production is expected to be below 2006 levels with a total of 48.8 million pounds in 2007 compared to 53.8 million pounds the previous year. The biggest decrease in highbush blueberry production is projected to take place in the Southern region where an estimated 45.0 million pounds were harvested this year compared to 61.9 million pounds in 2006. Late season frost this year was particularly damaging to Georgia where the 2007 crop is estimated at 11.0 million pounds in 2007 compared to 21.5 million pounds in 2006, and in North Carolina which estimates a 2007 crop of 14.8 million pounds compared to 25.5 million pounds the previous year. One bright spot in the south was Mississippi, which currently estimates a 2007 crop of 8.0 million pounds, nearly double it's 2006 production of 4.5 million pounds.

Most recent lowbush estimates peg the 2007 crop at 173.0 million pounds, down -31.1 million pounds from the crop of 204.1 million pounds produced in 2006. Most of this decline is due to decreased production in the major growing areas of Maine (66.0 million pounds forecasted for 2007 compared to 74.6 million pounds in 2006) and Quebec (40.0 million pounds currently

expected in 2007 compared to 69.1 million pounds the previous year).

USHBC MEETING SCHEDULE

2008 USHBC Spring Meeting

Thursday, February 28 to Saturday March 1, 2008
Pan Pacific Vancouver- 300 999 Canada Place
Vancouver, British Columbia, Phone (604) 662-8111

2008 USHBC Fall Meeting

Thursday, October 2 to Saturday, October 4, 2008
Washington D.C.- Hotel to be Determined

2009 USHBC Spring Meeting

Thursday, February 26 to Saturday, February 28, 2009
Biloxi, Mississippi- Hotel to be Determined

2009 USHBC Fall Meeting

Thursday October 1 to Saturday, October 3, 2009
Portland, Oregon- Hotel to be Determined

2007 USHBC Magazine Advertising Schedule

November

American Medical News	Dairy Field
Restaurant Hospitality	The National Provisioner
Food Management	Refrigerated & Frozen Foods
Restaurant Business	Snack Food & Wholesale Bakery
Foodservice Director	New Products Magazine
Candy Industry	Food & Drug Packaging

December

American Journal of Clinical Nutrition



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