

## **U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council Industry Background and Research Priorities**

*Updated October 2008*

### **USHBC HISTORY, FUNCTION and FUNDING**

- The U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council (USHBC) is a national research and promotion program for the highbush (cultivated) blueberry industry. It was established by a vote of the industry and is formally titled the "Blueberry Promotion, Research and Information Order (7CFR 1218)". A final rule by the U.S. Department of Agriculture established the USHBC in August of 2000.
- The USHBC is led by industry elected Council members with USDA oversight. Under this program, all domestic highbush blueberry growers producing 2,000 pounds or more of blueberries per year are assessed. The U.S. Customs Service also collects this same assessment on all highbush blueberries entering the United States.
- Assessment funds are used by the USHBC to increase blueberry demand through market promotion activity (consumer/foodservice publicity campaigns, magazine advertising, food manufacturer publicity, export market development) as well as to support continued blueberry research, with particular interest in blueberry health related research.

### **BLUEBERRY INDUSTRY BACKGROUND**

- Highbush (cultivated) blueberries are grown in over 35 states and British Columbia
- Domestic highbush blueberries are harvested from April to October
- There are approximately 2,800 highbush blueberry growers located throughout the U.S.
- An estimated 413 million pounds of highbush blueberries were produced in the United States and Canada (British Columbia) in 2008 (227 million pounds harvested as fresh blueberries and 186 million pounds harvested as process/frozen blueberries).
- Blueberry consumption in the U.S. is estimated at 22.2 ounces per person in 2007/2008 (9.2 ounces fresh and 13.0 ounces frozen)

### **USHBC STRUCTURE**

- USHBC functions through a 14 member Council with USDA oversight. The Council is made up of:
  - One elected Regional Grower Member from each of 4 regions
  - One elected Grower Member from each of the top 6 production states  
(*Michigan, New Jersey, Oregon, North Carolina, Georgia and Washington*)
  - One Council elected Importer
  - One Council elected Exporter
  - One Council elected Handler
  - One Council elected Public Member

### **RESEARCH PRIORITY**

- Priority is given to research projects that most match consumer needs and desires and have the greatest opportunity to influence consumption.
- Research that will add to the current portfolio of blueberry benefits is encouraged. Research must provide realistic, useful and practical results.

- The USHBC continues to consider research submissions in areas funded to date including vision, age related diseases and diabetes. However, proposals in all health related research areas are encouraged as the USHBC explores the potential wide range of health benefits that may be derived from blueberry consumption. Studies beyond current areas of exploration are welcome.
- As the USHBC is interested in pursuing research that could support a health claim for blueberries, studies leading to a potential claim will be given high consideration with primary interest in studies that include human clinical trials as part of their study protocol.
- Projects that increase the marketability of blueberries, or improve the competitive position of growers, are encouraged.
- Proposals that leverage costs through cooperation with other funding sources are of interest.

### ***RESEARCH 2009 APPLICATION TIMELINE***

*(Beginning October 2008)*

- **October 24** Requests for Proposals Issued by USHBC Research Committee
- **January 2** Proposal Submission Date
- **January 26** Initial Review by USHBC Research Committee Complete  
Projects of Interest Sent to Screening Committee
- **February 13** Response from Screening Committee
- **February 27** Meeting of USHBC Research Committee, Final Selection of Projects
- **April 1** Funding Notification

### **REPORTING REQUIREMENTS:**

**PROGRESS REPORTS FOR CURRENTLY FUNDED PROJECTS ARE DUE SIX MONTHS FROM PROJECT START DATE AND EVERY SIX MONTHS THEREAFTER. FINAL PROJECT REPORTS AND FINAL PROJECT INVOICE ARE DUE AT DATE OF PROJECT COMPLETION.**