

Wild Blueberry Commission of Maine



Activities, Issues, and News—Winter 2017



Maine Specialty Crop Block Grants Awarded to Commission for UMaine Orono Research

Special points of interest:

- * Check out www.wildblueberries.com for Wild Blueberry smoothie recipes

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The Wild Blueberry Commission of Maine (Commission) collaborated with University of Maine Orono research faculty to submit two Wild Blueberry Integrated Pest Management (IPM) research proposals for the 2016 Specialty Crop Block Grant program. The Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry (DACF) coordinates this competitive grant program on behalf of the U.S.

Department of Agriculture – Agriculture Marketing Service that serves as program administrator and distributes funds to the states. Commissioner Walt Whitcomb of the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry outlined specific priority area for Maine grants, including: “Enhancing integrated pest management research and education for programs for specialty crops.”

In the spring of 2016, the Commission staff worked closely with University of Maine researchers Drs. David Yarborough, Seanna Annis and Frank Drummond from the Wild Blueberry Research and Extension program to submit two proposals to study Wild Blueberry IPM for researching weed, pest and disease control. These IPM areas are the most important crop production management issues facing growers today.

One block grant in the amount of \$98,600 will address the following disease and weed IPM research and Extension objectives

that were initiated during 2014-15 and will continue through 2017. First: Evaluate herbicides with different modes of action and identify the best material and timings that will effectively control resistant weed species. Second: Evaluate fungicides with different modes of action to control mummy berry and how they will fit in with fungicide rotation. Third: Identify new material and timings to improve control of leaf spot disease.

Weather station network data and applied research will be used to provide growers with disease forecasts for mummy berry. Grower education will also be included in the implementation of this program.

The second Wild Blueberry IPM proposal in the amount of \$29,735 is to conduct IPM disease research with the following objectives: First: Research mummy berry disease by gathering laboratory and field data on fungal infection, disease transmission by pollinators, and spatial effects upon the severity of the disease. Second: Use research data to develop a simulation model of mummy berry disease infection and transmission and use the model to test efficacy of disease control management tactics by decreasing fungal survival, infection and transmission.

Over the last few years industry representatives from the Advisory committee,

a Commission committee that recommends research and industry priorities to the University for Wild Blueberry studies, have been working with UMaine Wild Blueberry researchers to pursue competitive grants. For 2017, a Specialty Crop Research Initiative (SCRI) pre-proposal titled “Climate Change, Consequences and Mitigation: A Blueberry Industry Priority” was submitted for review early in November 2016. A USDA-National Institute of Food and Agriculture grant program panel of reviewers will decide whether the pre-proposal should be developed into a full proposal and submitted. The University of Maine researchers will await the decision and be prepared to submit a full proposal upon request. These SCRI projects are longer in duration and are required to include economics and social science aspects along with scientific studies about production and/or food science and food safety, whereas the state-funded block grants are shorter in duration and often need to be continued in order to complete the 4-6 years of IPM research results necessary to prove that a practice works consistently. The Commission will continue to work with the UMaine Wild Blueberry research and Extension team on conducting much-needed research to understand best management practice for this unique North American crop. 🍷

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Increases in Wild Blueberries Servings Adds Taste, and Value, to School Nutrition Menus

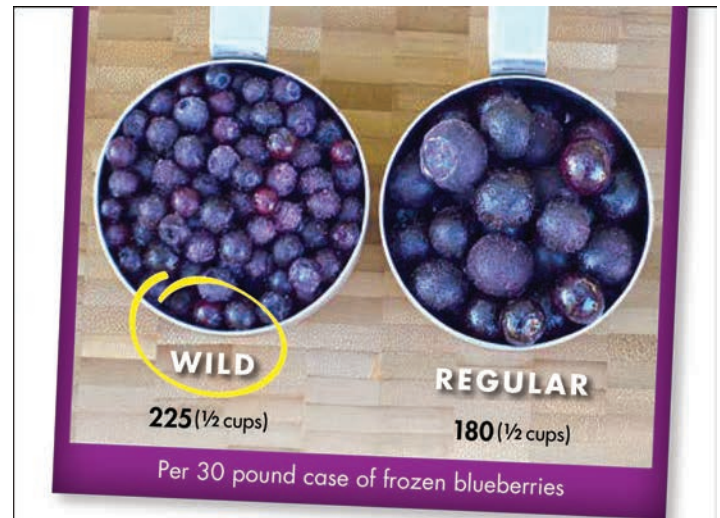
Real Foods Pick Wild! — Wild Blueberries Make a Big Difference. In every category tested, Wild Blueberries vs. cultivated blueberries increase purchase intent, increase consumption, and increase the price premium.
www.wildblueberries.com/powerofwild

An update to the USDA's Food Buying Guide is proving to be great news for school nutrition directors and also for Maine Wild Blueberry growers. The news means that nutrition directors can increase the nutritional value of their meals, add a super healthy fruit, and stay on budget. But perhaps most important of all, kids and parents will be happy because more delicious, local, Wild Blueberries will make it onto school breakfast and lunch menus.

According to a recent USDA Additional Yield Information supplement, one pound of Wild Blueberries provides 25% more servings than the same weight of cultivated blueberries. Because they are smaller and more compact, Wild Blueberries carry less water weight than larger cultivated blueberries so not only do you get more berries in each cup, but you get more servings per case. In fact, a 30-pound case of frozen Wild Blueberries gives you 225 half-cup servings, with the yield per-pound increasing from 5.9 to 7.5 half-cup servings. That's a lot more berries!

"This is really fantastic news for food service providers," says Ronald Adams, former Food Service Director in the Portland Public Schools. "Now schools can better afford to incorporate a premium, tasty, "super fruit" into menus, while supporting Maine's farmers, processors, and the local economy." Wild Blueberries are not just for breakfast any more either, Adams added. "With Wild Blueberries, you can get an antioxidant-rich healthy fruit any time of day."

The Wild Blueberry Commission of Maine



25% more* servings per pound.

Bottom line:
Save money and serve your students healthy, local food.

Wild Blueberries are a versatile, cost-effective ingredient to a healthy school menu. They are also Maine's special addition to the USDA's commodity foods program. By sourcing frozen Wild Blueberries, you'll be supporting Maine farmers and picking tasty and nutritious Wild Blueberries for your school program. You'll also serve 45 more kids with each 30 lb. case of frozen Wild vs. frozen regular blueberries.

Pick taste. Pick health. Pick wild.

Email Patricia Kontur at wban@gwi.net for more information or visit wildblueberries.com.

Wild Blueberries®
wildblueberries.com

* Source: March 2016, "USDA Food Buying Guide" and "Additional Yield Information for School Meals" <http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/food-buying-guide-school-meal-programs>

(Commission) is seizing the opportunity by investing in recipe development and planning to launch a new School Nutrition website under the www.wildblueberries.com banner. Currently, the Wild Blueberry

website is already full of detailed information about the nutritional benefits, heritage, and story of Wild Blueberries, as well as extensive recipes for consumers. The new School

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Eastern States Exposition Wrap Up – The Big E 2016

In 2016, the Eastern States Exposition (the Big E) marked its 100 year anniversary to celebrate what began as a regional agricultural fair early in the 20th century. The Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry manages the Maine building at the Big E, including supervising on-site facilities management and determining what vendors will exhibit each year in the Maine building. The Wild Blueberry Commission of Maine (Commission), the Maine Potato Board, the Maine Aquaculture Association, the Maine Wood Products Association and the Maine Maple Syrup Producers Association had booths in the Maine Building for 2016. The Maine Potato Board and the Commission are two longstanding exhibitors in the Maine Building at the Big E.

The “Avenue of States” is a special address at the Big E that showcases each of the New England state’s buildings. The buildings of Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont and Maine are collectively called the “state buildings.” The Wild Blueberry Commission has exhibited at the Big E for 35+ years. Half of the Wild Blueberry Commission exhibit is dedicated to foodservice that provides ready-to-eat Wild Blueberry specialties; the other half of the exhibit is to educate the fair-going public about Wild Blueberry agriculture in Maine.

Each state celebrates a “state day” during the 17-day Exposition. The Wild Blueberry Commission offered a special Wild Blueberry Smoothie to



Governor Paul LePage with Wild Blueberry Queen Kimberly Reed (right) and Crown Princess Jane van Der Schaaf.

showcase the taste and nutritional benefits of Maine Wild Blueberries for the Big E’s 100 year anniversary. Staff at the Wild Blueberry foodservice booth provided fairgoers with the best customer service and quality Wild Blueberry products grown and produced in the state of Maine.

Maine Day on the first Saturday of the Fair this summer was well attended. Governor Paul LePage and Commissioner Walt Whitcomb were two of the special guests at the Big E. The Wild Blueberry Queen, Kimberly Reed of Warren, who was selected at the Union Fair and State of Maine Wild Blueberry Festival in August, came to the building on Maine Day in her regalia. Queen Kimberly stayed for photos with the Governor and the Commissioner and provided IQF wild blueberry smoothie samples to fairgoers who

came to “Maine” to enjoy entertainment and foods and crafts on Maine Day. All other Avenue of States building staff and all over the Big E fairgrounds came to visit “Maine” and enjoyed their fill of Wild Blueberry smoothies and other Maine samples.

Fifteen to 20 volunteer growers and their friends and family staff the education information booth at the Fair each year. As always, we appreciate growers taking time out to come to the Fair, and talk to people about the special Maine wild blueberry. We thank those who made 2016 such a successful year! If you are interested in a giant, Big E-sized event check out the vast entertainment offerings and exhibits at the Fair at www.thebigE.com. We invite veteran and new volunteers to join us at the Big E in the Fall of 2017; a notice will be distributed in the spring! 🍷

**Check out March 2017
Read ME Agriculture at
[www.agclassroom.org/
me/programs/readme.htm](http://www.agclassroom.org/me/programs/readme.htm)
and sign up to read at
your local schools**

Challenges Bring Market Opportunities for Maine Wild Blueberries

Farmer Resources:

“New ‘get real. get Maine!’

Service Provider Directory connects service

providers and Farmers.

www.getrealmaine.com

is a free promotional

website that connects

thousands of consumers

all over Maine who list

food, farm and forest

products and also helps

consumers locate and

visit farmers’ markets,

agricultural fairs, or

agricultural events,

and offers farmers

informational services.”

— *Information and website sponsored by the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry*

Maine’s Wild Blueberry industry is facing challenging times. We are faced with low prices, large crops, cultivated blueberries’ expansion into the frozen market, and competitive currency exchange rates. Despite these issues, Maine’s Wild Blueberry growers and processors can be proud of the unique, delicious, and high-quality fruit that they produce. Both the Commission and the Wild Blueberry Association of North America are working aggressively to stimulate consumer interest and sales.

Establishing new market channels and expanding existing ones are the priority. The new School Nutrition

Program debuts in February. The goal is to increase sales within this channel to 3 to 5 million pounds or more in the next few years (fewer than 1 million pounds were sold in 2016). The Commission will also be connecting with more value-added companies in Maine and elsewhere and championing those who are creatively using Wild Blueberries in current and new products.

Through the Wild Blueberry Association of North America, promotional work continues to market Wild Blueberries as the ideal ingredient for smoothies. WBANA is also continuing to target food manufacturers and foodservice with the

message that consumers prefer products containing Wild Blueberries, a “real” food known for their taste, health benefits and sustainability. For export markets, Southeast Asia and China remain the focus. The health and nutrition message remains strong and is a great way to attract Wild Blueberry lovers here and abroad.

With more supply comes more opportunity: Wild blueberries are an extremely popular fruit and consumer demand for fresh and local foods continues to grow. With increased promotional and outreach efforts, Maine’s Wild Blueberry industry will successfully weather this current storm. 🌧️

School Menus, from page 2

Nutrition website will add to the story and focus on the needs of schools.

“Wild blueberries are universally loved and easy to use,” says Adams, “but schools need fresh and exciting menu ideas for Wild Blueberries that span breakfast and lunch.” Some foolproof ways to incorporate Wild Blueberries in a half-cup serving include:

- Wild Blueberry Pancakes & Wild Blueberry Syrup
- Wild Blueberry Smoothies
- Wild Blueberry Parfaits & Fruit Cups

- Grab-and-Go Salads with Wild Blueberries on Top
- Chicken or Turkey Wraps with Wild Blueberry Chutney
- Wild Blueberry Sweet and Savory Dipping Sauces

Wild Blueberries have been part of Maine’s heritage for generations. The small fruit has long been praised as delicious, kid-friendly, nutritious, and a premium treat that can be served year-round as part of a healthy diet. By choosing to serve foods that are locally grown, locally harvested, and locally processed, the schools are supporting an entire industry and a unique way of life here in Maine.

The new effort comes as the Commission and the University of Maine Cooperative Extension are working to stimulate increased local interest in Maine foods, such as Wild Blueberries.

“Maine is a leader nationally in selling food locally, but the Commission has only scratched the surface of the significant market opportunity available through schools,” explains Nancy McBrady, Executive Director of the Commission. “Fortunately, we now have the supply and ability to deliver more value to schools than ever before just as school support for Farm to School local foods is gaining strength.” 🌱