



Wild Blueberry Commission of Maine



Activities, Issues, and News—Summer 2017

Wild Blueberry School Nutrition program successfully launched

The Wild Blueberry Commission's new School Foodservice Program has seen some exciting gains since it officially debuted this winter. USDA sales data for April 2017 show that more Maine Wild Blueberries were sold in April 2017 than were sold to schools for all of 2016.

- April 2017: 1.275 M lbs.
- Total 2016: 1.18 M lbs.

And Maine Wild Blueberries outsold highbush blueberries by ~100,000 lbs. in April 2017.

Further, eight new states are now serving Maine Wild Blueberries in their schools: Arkansas, Florida, Michigan, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia and Washington.

It appears that the boost in sales is coming from strong performance due to our new, smaller packaging size option. The cases containing 8 3-lb. bags (24 lb. total) outsold the traditional 30-lb. case. Given the popularity of the smaller bags and the relative newness of our program, we believe that the impact of the national effort has yet to be fully felt. With continued outreach regarding the product's value, versatility, recipes, nutrition and packaging options, it is our hope to see increased and sustained orders of frozen Maine Wild Blueberries for the rest of 2017 and beyond.

This work is being accomplished by the Commission's participation at a number of important school foodservice trade shows across the country. In June, we will be at the Texas School Nutrition Association's annual trade show (the third largest in the country, and Texas schools buy



Wild Blueberry Commission exhibit at the School Nutrition Association of Connecticut trade show in March 2017.

the most frozen Maine Wild Blueberries), and this fall we will travel to Missouri, Indiana and South Carolina for similar events. We also created a new website that features nine Maine schoolkid-tested Wild Blueberry recipes and also contains information about why cooking with Wild Blueberries is so special and healthy for kids. Visit www.wildblueberries.com/foodservice to learn more.

With continued perseverance and outreach, the Commission aims to make Maine Wild Blueberries a staple

on school menus across the country. Thirty million lunches and 14 million breakfasts are served each day across the country. That could be a lot of Maine Wild Blueberries! In addition, what kids eat in schools can influence parental behavior, so educating a new generation of Wild Blueberry fans can also translate into more family purchases of Maine Wild Blueberries in general.

We will continue to update growers about sales data and program growth going forward. 

Special points of interest:

New webpage available for School Nutrition staff to access information and Wild Blueberry recipes at www.wildblueberries.com/foodservice

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Yarmouth takes grand prize in Farm to School Cook-off

*Posted on May 16, 2017
by Maine Department of Education*

At the Eastern States Exposition (the Big E) each September, the Wild Blueberry Commission sets up a public education exhibit in the Maine Building. Wild Blueberry growers, family and friends volunteer at the booth to answer consumers' questions, provide samples of Wild Blueberries and educate the public during the 17 days of the fair. Volunteer expenses at the Big E are paid by the Commission. If you are interested in volunteering call the Commission office at 207-581-1475.

Whole-grain crepes, a Wild Blueberry kelp smoothie, granola-encrusted French toast and fish tacos were featured on the menu as the top two teams of school food service staff faced off at Freeport High School on April 26. This was the final round of the 2nd Annual Maine Farm to School Cook-off, sponsored by the Maine Department of Education, Child Nutrition department. The cook-off aims to promote local products in school meals while showcasing the skills of school food service staff.

Each team prepared a breakfast and lunch meal that was presented to a panel of judges, including a culinary arts student, a chef and a school nutrition director. The judges scored the dishes based on presentation, taste, creativity and food cost, as well as food safety and time management.



Pictured L to R: Stephanie Stambach (Maine DOE), Nikki Dovoren and Blaire Currier (Yarmouth School Department Food Service).

For breakfast, Yarmouth whipped up whole-grain crepes with a strawberry topping and Maine maple syrup. This was paired with a Wild Blueberry kelp smoothie. The judges were impressed by the flavor and texture of the smoothie and commended the team for introducing a less-common food to students in an appealing way. RSU 52 created a granola-encrusted

French toast and Wild Blueberry compote paired with a strawberry smoothie. Each team was tasked to incorporate Wild Maine Blueberries as a challenge ingredient in their breakfast dishes.

For lunch, Mexican fare was featured by both teams. RSU 52 cooked up chicken quesadillas with a fresh fruit salsa and grilled potatozana.

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Wild Blueberry Commission Legislative Update

The first session of Maine's 128th Legislature has mainly focused on the Governor's biennial budget, minimum wage policy, the 3% tax surcharge on Mainers' incomes that are over \$200,000, and other non-agricultural related issues. However, the Commission monitored over 40 bills dealing with natural resource and rural issues such as hunting, tree growth, property taxes, pesticide use, groundwater extraction, and broadband connectivity, and others. For instance, the Commission testified against LD 422 that would have:

1. Placed a moratorium on the extraction of water by

certain entities; and

2. Created a Water Trust tasked with crafting policy on allowed groundwater usage.

Inadequate representation of agricultural irrigation needs was our major concern with the proposed Water Trust. The bill was amended to create the Water Resources Planning Committee that included a more balanced representation of public, private and government sectors and better represented agricultural interests. However, the amended bill was vetoed by Governor LePage.

In addition, we supported LD 1399 to establish the Maine Broadband Initiative

to invest in and support universal high-speed broadband for Maine rural communities. While it has been approved by both chambers of the Legislature as of this writing, the funding for the initiative must be appropriated. To date the bill's fate is unclear.

At the Federal level, we have been monitoring the President's proposed budget that would eliminate funding for specialty crop export program support, as well as cut funding for the Specialty Crop Block Grant program that otherwise funds critical Integrated Pest Management and food safety research for Wild Blueberries.

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WBANA Promoting Maine Wild Blueberries in China and Hong Kong

The objective of the Wild Blueberry Association of North America – U.S. (WBANA) export program is to promote Wild Blueberries, and increase market access and trade and consumer demand in offshore markets.

In May 2017, WBANA attended HOFEX, a Hong Kong food, beverage and restaurant trade show that occurs every other year. Hong Kong is a sophisticated market with a population of 7 million people. The city's market sophistication lies in trade servicing including logistics, distribution, importing, infrastructure, storage and finance. It is also the home of regional headquarters for over 1,300 multinational companies, including about 20% that are from the U.S. Re-exporting is a big part of the business at the Hong Kong seaport, which is the fifth-largest in the world. In



Wild Blueberry Association – US booth at HOFEX Hong Kong, May 2017.

Hong Kong, 30% of all food imports are re-exported to mainland China and other Asian countries. Groceries and hotel, restaurant and institutional (HRI) sectors are very competitive and a primary source for food imports to this island. From Hong Kong, tourists take the ferry to visit Macau, an offshore island that is, like Hong Kong, also a China special administrative region.

Macau is a playground for tourists and the “Las Vegas” of Southeast Asia, where entertainment and casinos abound.

Also in May 2017, WBANA exhibited at the SIAL China trade show in Shanghai. SIAL China is one of the largest trade shows in Asia, where thousands of food suppliers are exhibitors from countries all over the world. About 77,000 people attend SIAL

China. Because the show is one of the largest in Asia, it draws traders from various markets and many of the large cities in the coastal area of eastern China where most of the population resides. The USDA-FAS promotes U.S. agricultural products in China and provides useful information about China's free trade zones and e-commerce websites that sell direct to consumers. The e-commerce and hotel, restaurant and institutional sectors have recently been a great export opportunity for Maine lobster sales into the China market. Large e-commerce corporations like Yihaodian (YHD), recently sold by Walmart international to a Chinese e-commerce company, and Alibaba, the huge online retailer based in China, have taken center stage in the growth of the China retail economy. ☕

6th annual Wild Blueberry Field Day Farm Trade Show on July 19 in Jonesboro

The 6th annual Wild Blueberry Farm Trade Show, held in conjunction with the University of Maine Cooperative Extension Blueberry Hill Farm Field Day, is Wednesday, July 19 this year. Equipment, product and service companies are invited to exhibit at or sponsor the Field Day luncheon and activities for the Maine Wild Blueberry business. The Wild Blueberry Farm Trade Show will take place from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. during the annual University of Maine Cooperative Extension

Wild Blueberry Field Day on July 19, 2017 at Blueberry Hill Farm in Jonesboro.

University of Maine Cooperative Extension educational sessions, including crop discussions, research talks and in-field demonstrations will be on the agenda, along with trade show exhibits. The Farm Trade Show exhibitors represent businesses that sell products to or provide services for Wild Blueberry growers. The exhibitors bring their products, services and knowledge to interested

farmers at the Field Day. A free luncheon provided to more than 200 people during the Field Day is organized and managed by the Blueberry Hill Farm professionals and student research crew, who take time out of their daily work schedule to prepare a barbecue luncheon for Wild Blueberry growers and other guests. Networking and educational opportunities are plentiful during the full day schedule.

Additional sponsorships are available and exhibitors are welcome. There will be

a limited number of outdoor spaces available at the show and vendors must pre-register for an assigned space. Each registration will include a vendor company listing in the program, and lunch is free for all who attend. Sponsors will receive special recognition in communications and materials at the Blueberry Hill Farm. Please call Nancy England at 581-1475 or email england@maine.edu if you would like to register as an exhibitor or sponsor of Wild Blueberry Field Day. ☕

Legislative Update, from page 2

We have communicated with Senators Collins and King and Representatives Pingree and Poliquin about

how important these two programs are to the Maine Wild Blueberry growers. In addition, work has begun in Washington, DC to craft the new 2018 Farm Bill, a comprehensive agriculture

and food policy bill passed by Congress every five years. The Commission joined a coalition of agricultural trade groups to advocate for those Farm Bill programs that are essential to

specialty crops — export/trade support, agricultural research funding, and ongoing nutrition program support, including pilot programs providing frozen fruit to schools. ☕

The FDA Food Safety Modernization (FSMA) Product Safety Rule is final

Information in this article was shared by Linda Titus of AgMatters LLC – contact Linda at 207-631-3303 or lindatitus@hotmail.com. Linda can assist with GAP/GHP or Produce Harmonized GAP audit preparation or with preparation for FSMA.

As of November 16, 2015 the FDA Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) Product Safety rule is final. The earliest compliance dates for some farms began in September 2016. More information is available at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services / U.S. Food & Drug Administration website: <https://www.fda.gov/food/guidanceregulation/fsma/ucm334115.htm>.

The rule establishes, for the first time, science-based minimum standards for the safe growing, harvesting, packing and holding of fruits and vegetables grown for human consumption.

The Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry will be offering all growers a one-day workshop that is required by law for each farm to attend. Registration will be done through Soil & Water Conservation Districts (SWCD). Prices are being finalized at this time. The schedule is as follows:

- Friday, July 21, 2017
Augusta – Maine Forest Products Council Building – Kennebec County SWCD as Regional Host
- Thursday, November 16, 2017
Presque Isle – Central Aroostook SWCD as Regional Host
- Thursday, January 18, 2018
(snow date 1/19/2018)

Farm to School Cook-off Continued from Page 2

Yarmouth prepared fish tacos using Gulf of Maine fish with a side of roasted potatoes and apple salsa. The judges

Bangor – Penobscot County Cooperative Extension – Penobscot County SWCD as Regional Host

- Tuesday, March 27, 2018 (snow date 3/29/2018)

Falmouth – Cumberland County SWCD as Regional Host

Each is a full-day workshop (8-5) and attendance for the whole day is required for credit. Price is being finalized at this time.

See the following summaries of sections of the rule and key requirements. Important sections of the Rule include:

1. Agricultural water – water quality, sampling/testing and frequency of testing, which is based on the source of the water.

2. Biological soil amendments and minimizing the contact with harvested produce – Use of raw manure and risk assessment of harvesting after use of the amendment, and use of stabilized compost.

3. Sprouts – requirements that help prevent contamination of this product that has been frequently associated with foodborne illness outbreaks.

4. Domesticated and wild animals – standards used to limit the contamination of produce that animals may come in to contact with on a working farm.

5. Worker training and health and hygiene – Preventing contamination from ill or infected persons, using hygienic practices during handling of produce or food-contact surfaces, training and

education for farm workers and supervisors.

6. Equipment, tools, and buildings – sanitation and prevention of contamination of produce.

7. Exemptions – produce foods and grains that are rarely consumed in raw state, produce used for personal or on-farm consumption, farms that have average annual value of produce sold during the previous three-year period of \$25,000 or less, produce that is commercially processed in such a way that reduces microorganisms of public health significance, and qualified exemptions.

8. Variances – states', tribes' or foreign countries' ability to submit a petition to request an FDA variance.

11/16/15 FSMA PRODUCT SAFETY RULE COMPLIANCE DATES

Covered activities, except for those involving sprouts, are:

- Four years for very small businesses; those with more than \$25,000 but no more than \$250,000 in average annual produce sales during the previous three-year period.

- Three years for small businesses; those with more than \$250,000 but no more than \$500,000 in average annual produce sales during the previous three-year period.

- Two years for all other farms.
- The compliance dates for certain aspects of the water quality standards, and related testing and recordkeeping provisions, allow an additional

two years beyond the above mentioned compliance dates for the rest of the final rule.

Compliance dates for modified requirements for farms eligible for a qualified exemption are:

- January 1, 2020 for labeling requirement (if applicable).
- November 16, 2015 for retention of records supporting eligibility for a qualified exemption.

For all other modified requirements:

- Four years after November 16, 2015 for very small businesses.
- Three years after November 16, 2015 for small businesses.

For more information, go to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services / U.S. Food & Drug Administration website at <https://www.fda.gov/food/guidanceregulation/fsma/ucm334115.htm>.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT (EIS)

The FDA has also released the Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), which places the Produce Safety rule in the context of its likely impact on the environment, including human health and socioeconomic effects. The Draft EIS was published in January 2015. The FDA considered public comments submitted in the two months that followed in drafting the Final EIS. The FDA considered the findings of the Final EIS in finalizing the produce rule. 

commended the teams for a creative twist on a traditional salsa. Maine potatoes were used as the challenge ingredient for lunch.

Congratulations to Yarmouth, who took the grand

prize and was named the 2017 Maine Farm to School Cook-off Champion! All recipes from the cook-off will be shared in a Maine farm to school cook-off recipe book to be compiled this summer.

For information on how you can be part of next year's Farm to School Cook-off, contact Maine DOE's Child Nutrition Consultant Stephanie Stambach at stephanie.stambach@maine.gov. 