

Industry Backgrounder

January 2017

The Business of Blueberries

In British Columbia, plantings of premium quality highbush blueberries top 11,300 hectares grown by more than 800 farmers, and produce upwards of 77 million kilograms (170 million pounds) of blueberries annually. This accounts for 98 per cent of Canada's highbush blueberry market.

British Columbia's blueberry farms employ more than 10,000 people to work the fields and harvest the fruit annually.

Throughout blueberry season, from June through September, B.C. blueberries are both hand-picked and machine-harvested, and are available in a variety of grades and wholesale quantities. Because they are so versatile, along with being available fresh, B.C. blueberries are also packed for year-round distribution. As demand for the tasty and highly-nutritious fruits grow, markets for frozen, dried, juiced, powdered, puffed and puréed blueberry products continue to rise globally.

With more than \$1 billion in sales in the past five years, British Columbia is now the biggest highbush blueberry-growing region in the world. As a country, Canada ranks third, exporting to the USA, throughout Europe, China, India and Japan. Blueberries are Canada's number one fruit export.

The British Columbia Blueberry Council

The British Columbia Blueberry Council represents more than 800 growers of premium quality highbush blueberries located in some of Canada's richest and most fertile farmland. Based in the heart of British Columbia's Fraser Valley, the mission of the BC Blueberry Council is to enhance the viability and strategic development of the blueberry industry for the benefit of the growers, through promotion, research, industry education and relationship building.

Food Safety

The BC Blueberry Council is committed to helping growers produce safe, high-quality fruit by offering food safety workshops and farm assessments free of charge. The MarketSafe certificate course has also been developed for growers selling at roadside stands or farmers' markets. Processors in B.C. adhere to stringent standards of food safety and quality, ensuring premium products to our customers.

Environment and Agriculture

B.C. Blueberries may be grown conventionally or organically, but in both cases, British Columbia blueberry farmers strive to be responsible stewards of the environment.

B.C. blueberry growers care for their fields and the soil by promoting proper drainage through raised planting beds, and the use of irrigation and sawdust mulch for weed and moisture control. The area between the rows is often planted with a cover crop to help keep the soil healthy. Many conventional blueberry growers use an integrated pest management system (IPM) which stresses information, monitoring and careful diagnosis along with the best and safest control techniques to protect both the crop and the environment.

Canadian agriculture products like sweet, British Columbia blueberries are grown and handled in accordance with strict Canadian food safety standards, are reliable and environmentally friendly. Quality is in our nature.



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