**6th Annual General Meeting**

**March 31 and April 1**

Algonquin, St-Andrews

Accommodations: [www.nbwildblue.ca](http://www.nbwildblue.ca)

**Meeting and Trade Show**

**Friday**

Registration: 9-10 am  
Meetings: 10 am – 4:30 pm  
Reception and Banquet: 6 pm

**Saturday**

AGM: 9 am – 12 pm  
Meetings: 1-3:30 pm

**Cost:** Thanks to our very generous sponsors as well as GFII funding, registration is only $40 for the 2 days, including banquet, both lunches and refreshments.

BNBB will be holding (3) Annual District Meetings (ADM) just prior to the Annual General Meeting (AGM). The purpose of the ADMs is to examine the operations of BNBB, to review the financial statements and to elect Board members.

This year, (3) directors are up for election. They are John Ness (District 1), Murray Tweedie (District 2) and René Chiasson (District 3). As an eligible producer, if you are interested in being a member (members are directors on the Board), please communicate your interest with the office as soon as possible. Nominations will also be taken from the floor at the ADMs.

**District 1**

**Wednesday, March 29, 2017 at 6:30 pm**

The Algonquin  
184 Adolphus St., Saint-Andrews

**District 2**

**Tuesday, March 21, 2017 at 6:30 pm**

Multipurpose Centre  
58 Festival St., Shediac

**District 3**

**Tuesday, March 23, 2017 at 6:30 pm**

Villegiature Deux Rivières Resort  
Tracadie-Sheila

As eligible producers, we encourage you to get involved and participate in the decision making process!
Help Design a Better BNBB

Here’s your invitation to help build a stronger, more effective industry organization that works for everyone

BNBB was established in 2006 to be the collective voice of all blueberry producers across New Brunswick, specifically in the areas of promotion and research. But is the organizational structure that was put in place over a decade ago still working well for us in 2017, or do we need to make some changes?

Then and now

When BNBB was established in 2006, the province was divided into three Districts, as indicated in Figure 1. Each District had roughly equal production, so BNBB’s nine-member Board of Directors included three Directors from each District, elected at Annual District Meetings. But much has changed since 2006. Notably, production in the northeast has expanded greatly to the point where District 3 now includes over 75 per cent of NB’s wild blueberry acreage.

Yet our Board structure has not changed, so its present make-up of three Directors per District is no longer aligned with production realities. Some producers have expressed concerns about this and other governance issues. Your Board has heard those concerns, and has started a process of:

• Examining our current governance structure to identify weaknesses;
• Identifying options for ways we can fix those weaknesses; and
• Implementing changes to make BNBB a more effective voice for all producers.

Changing BNBB’s governance structure is a big process that will eventually involve changing Regulations under the Natural Products Act. So it’s critical that we get it right: that we hear from all producers, explore all options and choose a governance structure that’s best for us and our industry.

Here are some issues and proposed options for action.

1. BNBB’s Board of Directors

The Board of Directors is BNBB’s highest authority, empowered with making decisions on behalf of our organization. Here are three possible options for a renewed Board structure:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CURRENT</th>
<th>OPTION 1</th>
<th>OPTION 2</th>
<th>OPTION 3</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nine Directors</td>
<td>Ten Directors</td>
<td>Nine Directors</td>
<td>Eight Directors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 3 from District 1</td>
<td>• 2 from District 1</td>
<td>• 2 from District 1</td>
<td>• 4 from District 1</td>
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<td>• 3 from District 2</td>
<td>• 2 from District 2</td>
<td>• 2 from District 2</td>
<td>and 2 combined</td>
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<tr>
<td>• 3 from District 3</td>
<td>• 3 from District 3</td>
<td>• 1 elected At-large (from any District)</td>
<td>• 4 from District 3</td>
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A provision could be added under Option 3 that the Board Chairperson is chosen one year from Directors representing Districts 1 or 2, and chosen the next year from Directors representing District 3. Under Option 1, one At-large Director would be elected each year; and, if desired, a provision could be added that no more than two At-large Directors from any single District sit on the Board at any one time.
2. Elections
Currently, Directors are elected at Annual District Meetings for terms of three years. All producers who cultivate two hectares or more are eligible to vote, but they or their designated representative must be in attendance to vote. Here are some options for voting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MAINTAIN CURRENT PROCESS</th>
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<tr>
<td>- Directors are elected at Annual District Meetings</td>
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<tr>
<td>- All eligible producers or their designated representatives may vote, but they must be in attendance to vote</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Producers vote only for Directors in their District</td>
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<tr>
<th>OPTION 1</th>
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<tr>
<td>- All Directors are elected by a mail-in ballot, where producers receive Director candidate information and blank ballots by mail, and submit their completed ballots by return mail</td>
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<tr>
<td>- All eligible producers or their designated representatives may vote; no meeting attendance required</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Producers vote for Directors in their District and for At-large Directors</td>
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<th>OPTION 2</th>
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<tr>
<td>- Combination option</td>
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<tr>
<td>- At-large Directors are elected by a mail-in ballot</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Directors representing Districts are elected at Annual District Meetings</td>
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NB’s Dairy and Egg producers have Boards comprised of both District-aligned and At-large Directors. A mail-in ballot system has been successfully used for many years.

**IMPORTANT:** BNBB’s current election process is still in effect for Director elections scheduled for this month’s Annual District Meetings. If you cultivate at least two hectares of blueberries, please read the article on page 4 for important voting information.

3. Ensuring that producer concerns and issues are brought to the attention of BNBB’s Board
Currently, issues and concerns of producers are brought before the Board by BNBB’s Directors and Executive Director. Some producers have expressed concerns that this process is too informal and does not give adequate voice to their concerns. Here is a possible option to remedy concerns, improve information flow and help producers become more engaged in their industry.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>CURRENT</th>
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<tr>
<td>- Issues and concerns are brought forward by Directors and the Executive Director</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Information may be incomplete and true level of producer concern may be unclear</td>
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<tr>
<th>OPTION: ESTABLISH LOCAL PRODUCER COMMITTEES IN EACH DISTRICT WITH A MANDATE TO:</th>
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<tr>
<td>- Meet regularly with local producers</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Bring local problems or issues to attention of the Board</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Serve as a forum to discuss new ideas and policies</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Pass resolutions for consideration at the AGM or by the Board</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Elect delegates to the AGM</td>
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Local Producer Committees operate very successfully today in the Dairy sector. They have a very clear mandate and well-defined rules. They are allocated a budget to support their activities, and are required to maintain a record of meeting minutes.

**Next Steps**
Do you have comments or additional options to suggest? Are there other governance issues you would like to bring forward? If so, please email Executive Director Monique Mills at bnbb@nbwildblue.ca or our consultant Carl Duivenvoorden at info@changeyourcorner.com. And please plan to attend upcoming Annual District Meetings, where the above information will be presented for discussion.
**MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR John Schenkels**

By now I am sure we have come to realize that 2016 was a very difficult and challenging year in our industry. Record crops and low prices have no doubt put a financial strain on all of us that will be felt for some time to come. As we begin to plan for 2017 we face the very real prospect that this year may be every bit as difficult as the past one. Each one of us will need to carefully plan how we will face this challenge.

At BNBB we will be focusing on issues where we can help to address our situation.

We have increased our contribution to WBANA to $0.005 (half cent) per pound. This is more than half of your levy to BNBB. Oversupply of berries seems to be at the heart of our issues. This is not only limited to wild blueberries, where we have dramatically increased both yields and land base over the last few years, but also in the larger berry market where we face competition. WBANA’s role is to promote wild blueberries worldwide on our behalf. We hope our increased contribution can add to their success. We are encouraging our members to sign up for Agristability and AgriInvest. These federal/provincial programs offer some stability in your farm incomes. In years such as 2016 and very possibly 2017 they could provide revenue to your farm. They do require some additional paperwork but in years such as this we will need to make sure we look at all sources of revenue. This newsletter will contain some information on accessing these programs. Please look into applying. The Next Policy Framework is being developed by the federal and provincial governments. This is a funding program that replaces our current one that ends in 2018. We use this funding in much of what BNBB does, from research to promotion. We have been active in making sure our needs get addressed in this 5 year plan.

The last issue I wish to address with you is BNBB’s governance structure. Your board is developing a plan for some changes to your organization so it can operate properly and with support of its producers. I will be presenting these proposed changes at the regional and annual meetings. It is important that you come and give feedback to us so we know our changes will make a difference to you. Please come and give your input at these meetings. As board members we need your input to make good decisions on your behalf. I look forward to seeing you soon.

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**Register to Vote at Upcoming Annual District Meetings**

**Important information for all producers**

Annual District Meetings are scheduled for later this month, and one of the items on the agenda will be electing one new Director in each District. All producers cultivating at least two hectares of blueberries are eligible to vote – but in accordance with Provincial Regulations, you must be registered on BNBB’s list of Eligible Producers.

There are two ways to register:
1. Complete the Blueberry Producer Registration Form enclosed with this newsletter, date and sign, and scan/email/fax or mail it to BNBB.
2. Plan to arrive early at your Annual District Meeting so that you can complete, date and sign a Blueberry Producer Registration Form on site before the meeting.

Provincial regulations (Blueberry Plan Administration Regulation – Natural Products Act) specify that only eligible producers (or their designated representatives) whose names appear on BNBB’s list of eligible producers are entitled to vote at an Annual District Meeting. So – if you cultivate two or more hectares of blueberries, please register to secure your right to vote at upcoming Annual District Meetings.

Note: BNBB’s eligible producer list is maintained by BNBB staff for BNBB purposes only and is not shared.
Business Risk Management Program Information Session

Not familiar with the AgriStability, Agrilnvest and/or the AgrilInsurance Programs? Would you like to know how to further take advantage of these programs? Want the opportunity to ask questions to government staff?

Then these sessions are for you!

Please select the session you are registering for or call the Alliance office at (506) 452-8101 to let us know:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Time (will be based on demand)</th>
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<tr>
<td>March 10th</td>
<td>Moncton (specific location to be determined)</td>
<td>9 am-11 am (French)</td>
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<td>1 pm- 3 pm (English)</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 13th</td>
<td>St-André (specific location to be determined)</td>
<td>9 am-11 am (French)</td>
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<td>1 pm- 3 pm (English)</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 15th</td>
<td>Wicklow (specific location to be determined)</td>
<td>9 am-11 am (French)</td>
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<td>1 pm- 3 pm (English)</td>
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<td>March 17th</td>
<td>Fredericton (specific location to be determined)</td>
<td>9 am-11 am (French)</td>
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<td>1 pm- 3 pm (English)</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 20th</td>
<td>Tracadie (specific location to be determined)</td>
<td>9 am-11 am (French)</td>
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<td>1 pm- 3 pm (English)</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 23rd</td>
<td>Sussex (specific location to be determined)</td>
<td>9 am-11 am (French)</td>
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<td>1 pm- 3 pm (English)</td>
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PLEASE PRINT

Name:___________________________________  Farm name: _____________________________
Address:__________________________________________________________________________
City: __________________ Province:__________________   Postal Code:____________________
Phone: (      ) _____________ Fax: (        ) ________________
RPAP member # _________________    Email:  __________________________________________

There is no cost to attend the sessions. Please register before March 9th 2017

Sponsored by:
Advance Payments Program
Change of Administrator for NB Wild Blueberry Growers

The Advance Payments Program (APP) is a federal loan guarantee program which provides agricultural producers with easy access to low interest cash advances.

Under the program, producers can access up to $400,000 per program year in advances based on the value of their agricultural product, with the Government of Canada paying the interest on the first $100,000 advanced to a producer. Advances are repaid as the producer sells their agricultural product, with up to 18 months to fully repay the advance for most commodities (up to 24 months for cattle and bison).

As a producer, an APP advance can help you to meet your financial needs, such as farm input costs, immediate financial obligations, and product marketing costs. It can also allow you to make the decision to sell your agricultural products based on market conditions rather than the need for cash flow.

APP advances are available through more than 40 participating Producer Organizations, that is, APP Administrators, across Canada.

For the last 5 years, BNBB has been an APP Administrator for Wild Blueberry (WB) Growers in NB. For production year 2017-2018, the Board of Directors of BNBB has decided to ask the Agri-Commodity Management Association (ACMA) of Nova Scotia to be the Administrator for NB WB Producers.

ACMA is already an Administrator for WB in NS as well as for many other sectors such as Mink, Christmas Trees, Cattle, Hogs, Maple Syrup, Grains, Cranberries, Greenhouse, Apples, Sheep, Honey, Oil Seeds and other productions. They are experts in the matter and have dedicated staff assigned only to the APP. They are also an Administrator for many of those sectors in NB.

ACMA does charge a higher administration fee than BNBB did to administer the program. Therefore, for this year, given growers’ situation with the low field price and to help with the transition, BNBB will reimburse the administration fee directly to ACMA for WB producers who are on the BNBB eligible producers list for 2017 (see page 4 for details on how to register to be on the list).

If you are interested in participating in the APP program for production year 2017-2018 or if you want more information, please contact Kara Saville: ksaville@agricommodity.ca or Beate Acker: backer@agricommodity.ca at the ACMA or you can call their office at 1-902-895-0581.

Here is the breakdown on how advances work for WB producers with ACMA:

- Advances available April 1st through August 1st yearly.
- Final repayment for fresh berries is December 31st of the same year.
- Final repayment for frozen berries is September 30th of the following year.
- Repayments are made within 30 days of selling the berries, or within 60 days of shipping the berries, whichever is earlier.
- AgriStability Enrollment is required to participate in the Advance Payments Program.
Blueberries NB Needs Producer Input on AgriStability Program

By Trudy Kelly Forsythe

The chair of Bleuets NB Blueberries is calling on wild blueberry producers to tell the organization what they think about the federally administered AgriStability program. “Only 10 to 20 per cent of our members are enrolled,” says John Schenkels. “We want to know what is holding people back.”

The Program

Available to agricultural producers who have farmed for at least six straight months during the program year, AgriStability is a business risk management program based on margins – specifically, on allowable income minus allowable expenses in a given year, with adjustments for changes in receivables, payables and inventory.

The adjustments are made based on information submitted by the agricultural producer on the AgriStability harmonized form, which is available online. Agricultural producers are required to pay a fee and submit their income tax and supplementary forms according to predetermined deadline dates. The AgriStability enrollment deadline for the 2017 production year is slated for April 30, 2017.

If the administrator determines the producer’s farming operation experienced a program year margin decline greater than 30 per cent relative to their reference margin, the producer will be eligible to receive benefits. Program costs are shared between the federal and provincial governments.

As well as farming for at least six straight months during the program year, producers can take part in the program if they reported their farming income, or loss, to the Canada Revenue Agency for tax purposes and completed, or attempted to complete, a production cycle during the program year.

Producers Speak Out

Producers enrolled in AgriStability have mixed opinions about it, but generally agree that while the program could be improved, it is worth participating in.

Bernard Savoie owns and operates a wild blueberry farm, Services Agricoles Savoie, in Neguac, near Miramichi. Each year, the farm has 250 of its 500 acres in production. They also rent bees and manage 500 acres for clients.

Savoie joined the family’s wild blueberries farm in 2004 and enrolled in the federal business risk management program available at that time. When it changed to AgriStability in 2007, he stayed with it, explaining it met his needs better than the provincial program that offered crop insurance on yields.

“Our management gives us much greater yields than the provincial average; we’re always too high to get crop insurance,” says Savoie. “AgriStability is based on revenue so it made sense to us.”

Overall, participation has paid off. “Our first experience was in 2009 when the price for blueberries was 30 cents per pound,” says Savoie. “Our crop was good with good yield and with AgriStability we received another 25 cents.”

There’s also the added bonus of being enrolled in other business risk management programs once producers register with AgriStability, namely AgrilInvest and the Advanced Payment Program. AgrilInvest allows producers to make a deposit into an account and receive a matching contribution from the federal and provincial governments.

“This is the one that pays me the most and you’re eligible once you apply for AgriStability,” says Savoie. “It’s not based on the bottom line; it’s based on sales. The cost for us averages $800 a year [to register for AgriStability] and every year we get 10 to 12 times that.”

The Advanced Payment Program is a federal loan guarantee program that provides agricultural producers with easy access to low-interest cash advances, including interest free on the first $100,000.

Murray Tweedie operates two blueberry farms – M&S Wild Blueberry Farm and MHT Wild Blueberry Farm – in the Kouchibouguac area with fields scattered around Kent County. Of those, 575 acres are in production and 125 in development. Like Savoie, Tweedie was involved in the early generation federal business risk management programs but he finds the inconsistencies of his returns frustrating.

Using his numbers from 2008 to 2014, Tweedie says AgriStability formulas arrived at production margins of only 42 per cent of the actual margin for the MHT farm and 41 per cent for M&S.

Continued on page 8
“This misrepresentation of the farms financials is having a dramatic negative effect on the stability of the farms moving forward,” he says, pointing out that with the wild blueberry industry in a price downturn that some experts say could last three to five years, AgriStability’s year-to-year calculations could see many wild blueberry farmers go out of business before the industry moves into a profitable position.

The result will be a huge blow to the industry, he says. To fix it, Tweedie says, all Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada needs to do is examine and analyze the figures.

He would also like to see the return of the AgriStability formula used in Growing Forward 1, where two-tiered income stabilization payments kicked in when margins dropped to 85 per cent, rather than the 70 per cent, one-tier system used in Growing Forward 2. In order for that to be viable, though, he feels there needs to be a fair evaluation to establish a margin and not the wild swings he’s seen to date.

“There’s no transparency or accountability,” says Tweedie. “This system needs a complete overhaul. Industry people need to sit down with the AgriStability people to hash that out and it has to be sorted out soon since Growing Forward 3 is out in a year’s time.”

**Advice to Producers**

Savoie says to get the most out of AgriStability, producers need to understand what triggers it and how that helps in their farm management.

“Salaries of family members, or farms-length employee, are not an eligible expense,” says Savoie, who employs a lot of outside help. “Adding new land can affect negatively on AgriStability; we avoid that and buy land already in blueberry operation.

“AgriStability is focused on the bottom line,” says Savoie, adding that farmers do a lot to reduce their bottom line for income tax purposes but that can impact AgriStability. “Crop insurance is good for newcomers or the low-income producer. AgriStability is for the high-input producer, strengthening their business and not trying to reduce income tax.”

The application process can be cumbersome, but all agree it is worth taking the time to do it, even if other producers say it didn’t work for them. “Every farm is different,” says Savoie, admitting that while the AgriStability program is not perfect, AgriInvest and the Advanced Payment Program make it worth applying.

“So many are not stepping up and getting into the program and are losing thousands of dollars,” says Tweedie. Savoie says applying gets easier once the initial forms are completed.

“Initially, it took me one day to fill out application. Now it takes two to three hours.”

**Time for Change**

While Savoie says AgriStability is a good program, he also believes it needs adjusting.

Tweedie agrees and would also like to see a study done on past records of all the AgriStability files to determine if they were given accurate representations of the margins.

Schenkels says it’s important to ensure calculations are being done correctly.

“Blueberry is a two-year crop and the program is focused on annual crops,” he says. “There are some issues they’re not doing a good job recognizing. New acres coming into production seems to cause problems and changes margins. We want to be able to limit that.”

And that is why Schenkels says it’s important for BNBB members to attend the upcoming regional meetings and tell them what the issues are.

“We want to hear all the problems and good things from blueberry farmers ourselves so we know where the problems are and how to make it stronger,” he says. “The next rollout is 2018 so if we want to make changes we need to know now. We would like AgriStability to be a program that works for blueberry producers and we’d like to work with the government to make AgriStability better.”
Increased production: challenge or opportunity?

By Allison Finnamore

High production of New Brunswick wild blueberries in 2016 resulted in price-drops for producers and for many it was a deep blow. But, looking at the big picture of the wild blueberry industry, is increased production a challenge or an opportunity? It depends on how you look at it.

Brian Leblanc, who operates Premier Blueberries with his wife Joline in the Memramcook area, isn’t happy about the 2016 prices, but at the same time, sees this as a time for industry to expand its markets.

“The most important thing we need to do as an industry is find new markets,” Leblanc says. “There is a potential to do a lot more with production, but we have to sell it.” It’s also an opportunity for the entire supply chain of the industry to work together to strengthen and grow, he says.

As a farmer, Leblanc points out he can’t open foreign markets – that’s a job better left to processors and marketers. Leblanc considers it his job to focus on the work that needs to happen in the field, so once new markets are secured, there’s enough product to supply it.

“On the farm, we do what we need to do as farmers. You produce good quality fruit that the processors can work with. Then it’s the processors’ job or marketers’ job to get it out there,” Leblanc says.

Three Generations In

Leblanc operates Premier Blueberries with his wife Joline, a third generation wild blueberry farmer. Her grandfather Lawrence Leblanc and his brother Adelard Leblanc started the farm. Then, in 1991, her father Amédée and Gloria Leblanc bought the farm. Unfortunately, he died two years later when he was struck by lightening while working in the blueberry field.

From 1993 to 2004, Joline’s mother Gloria ran the operation. “Gloria had to fly on her own – her husband had died and she had to get the crop in,” recalls Brian. “The friends and family rallied together and everybody pitched in.” The business continued to operate that way up to 2004 when Gloria decided it was time to retire. The opportunity for Joline and Brian to purchase the farm was there and they welcomed it.

Wild blueberry farming is another way Brian weaves his love of agriculture into his life.

Continued on page 10
“I was raised on a beef farm and farming was always a passion of mine,” Brian says. He also worked as a teenager at Belliveau Orchards in Memramcook, pruning trees, picking apples... whatever chores needed to be done. Although he went on to pursue a career outside of agriculture, the farm wasn’t far from his heart.

**Expanding Markets**

That love of farming leads Brian to work hard in the fields to optimize production. Since he and Joline took over the farm in 2004, they’ve worked to implement efficiencies in the field with the help of researchers. Fertilizer application rates and timing, as well as increased pollination, for example, are a major change at Premier Blueberries. The result has been increased yield and consistent production. Leblanc says when they purchased the farm, production was at around 1,500 pounds per acre. Now, the average is around 6,000 pounds per acre.

Following expert advice also means yields are more reliable and therefore, predictable – an element essential when looking at expanded, foreign markets.

“We’ve been more consistent the last few years than ever,” Leblanc says. Increased yields happened across the province, he says, which means the industry is now poised and primed for expanded markets.

In many ways, the wild blueberry industry faced the classic scenario of which comes first, the chicken or the egg? Do they seek new markets without a consistent, new supply of product or do they increase production before securing new markets? Production increased before new markets were secured, leading to the 2016 price drop.

“We’re prepared to supply that market where we weren’t three years ago,” Leblanc says. “Even three to four years ago, the industry could not get another customer without saying ‘no’ to an old customer. As an industry, we need to be able to show new markets that they have a good quality, steady supply chain.”

On the production end of the supply chain, Leblanc says it may mean that he and other producers will need to consider taking lower yielding fields out of production, especially when higher producing fields can be operated more efficiently.

Leblanc sees the opportunity for growth in the industry, and combined with his love of farming, it’s what keeps him going back into the field. Premier Blueberries’ 300 acres located in Memramcook, Sackville and in the Moncton area, are his favourite places to unwind.

“For me to go to the field and disconnect – you’re in nature, you’re outside and you’re proud of what you achieve at the end of the season. I find it’s a sense of accomplishment,” Leblanc says.

Brian and Joline aren’t sure yet if their children, nine-year-old Kaleb and eight-year-old Lucas, are future farmers, although they do enjoy doing some field work with their father. Premier Farms Inc. also employs two full-time staff and several seasonal workers during harvest.

Until Kaleb and Lucas decide whether they’ll take over the farm, Brian and Joline are focused on the opportunities for growth in New Brunswick’s wild blueberry industry.
Blueberry Production Management in Periods of Low Prices

By Gaëtan Chiasson, Agronomist

The recent fall in blueberry prices and the expectation that these low prices will continue through the next harvest are leading blueberry farmers to wonder what measures they can take to decrease their expenses. Receiving reasonably good prices over the last several years has meant that many producers were more inclined to make management decisions to maximize their yields rather than to optimize their profits.

It is a mistake to believe there is only one way to lower expenses. In fact, there are nearly as many solutions as there are producers. To decide which approach to adopt, each producer must analyze his or her practices, and then decide what changes can be made without significantly affecting the potential yield or productivity.

There are several different management options used in the industry that should be considered when analyzing production components. Here are some thoughts that I hope will help you decide what changes you could make to increase the financial returns of your business.

1. The management approach I call JUST IN CASE. In this option, fields are managed by choosing to proceed in certain ways “just in case” certain problems occur, without researching whether the problems are prevalent. By going back to the basics and applying concrete knowledge about fertilizers and pest prevention, substantial savings can be made. With this type of management, savings come mainly from the control of pests and from fertilization.

2. The management approach I call DO WHAT EVERYONE ELSE IS DOING. In this option, fields are managed by copying exactly what other producers are doing. These decisions often do not hold up against the reality of the individual producer’s situation, and can lead to additional costs for inputs that are unnecessary. This type of management often incurs unjustified expenses in many aspects of production. Normally, each decision should be justified in order to minimize production costs. Analyzing operations would no doubt reveal several aspects of production which could be done differently and lead to savings.

3. The management approach I call THE PACKAGE DEAL. In this option, responsibility is turned over to a third person who looks after the production aspect of the operations. With this type of management, it is possible that the decisions are based on analyses and justifications. However, if you are not sure this is the case, it is your responsibility to discuss your concerns with your service provider and to determine the basis for deciding what procedures to follow. This way, you will decrease the risk of unnecessary expenditures.

4. The management approach I call RATIONAL. In this option, all decisions and actions are normally justified and necessary. An analysis of operations will no doubt allow the producer to make certain savings, but to a lesser degree than would be the case otherwise, since each decision is already based on an analysis of the actual situation.

The crisis we are experiencing in our industry is certainly not an ideal situation for producers to be in, but it does provide an opportunity to think about all the parameters that may affect profitability. Here is a list of questions all producers should ask themselves and try to answer.

• Are there sections of my fields where the density and distribution is too low to ensure good returns on my investments? What should I do with these sections?
• Can I decrease the cost of my fertilizer by changing the formulation, the quantity, or the sources of nutrients? For example, can urea replace some or all of my current source of nitrogen? The same question applies for other major elements.
• Can I change my mowing technique to increase my speed?

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• Are all of the products or combinations of products I use to control pests justified?
• Is it possible to save money by starting detection procedures again?
• Can I save money by changing the way I manage diseases?
• Can I decrease the amount I spend on outside labour?
• Can I save money by sharing in group purchases?
• Is the timing right to start new developments?

Some tools are necessary in order to arrive at a useful analysis, answer the questions above, and make the right decisions. Among the tools available are statistics on productivity. Producers who have this information have an advantage over others, and if the statistics are specific to each production unit, their advantages are even greater. For those who do not have the information, decision-making will definitely be more difficult, but the current crisis will help them realize what management aspects can be improved... and that is a step in the right direction.

In a short while, all producers will no doubt have to make important decisions concerning the management of their blueberry operations. These decisions should be based on an objective analysis, so that the savings that are made will have a substantial impact on the profitability of their business without seriously affecting productivity. It is particularly important to avoid limiting the analysis to certain major expenses (e.g. pollination). Sometimes smaller savings can be made in a series of procedures and actions, and the same objectives will be reached.
Bringing out the best in bees for your blueberries

By Brady Code, Technical Lead East, Syngenta Canada Inc.

Bees can do a lot for your low bush blueberries. The question is – what can you do for the bees in your fields? The short answer: Quite a bit. But first, let’s look at how managed and wild bees fit within your operation.

Low bush blueberries need to be cross-pollinated – an essential service that several different types of pollinators provide.

Fortunately, there are a variety of commercially-available managed bees – including honey bees, bumble bees and leafcutter bees – as well as over 60 documented species of wild bees.

Managed and wild bees can provide complementary pollination services, and when both groups thrive in blueberry fields, the result is a positive impact on blueberry pollination and the subsequent fruit set.

To maximize the pollination strengths each species of bees can offer, it’s important to first understand their basic biology and behaviour, as well as what can be done to promote pollination.

Make the most of managed bees

Renting hives will likely be one of your top input decisions and investments this season. So, how do you ensure you’re optimizing your investment in managed bees and pollination services?

Start by building strong relationships with beekeepers and other managed bee providers. Make sure you’re receiving the most up-to-date information about the size and strength of honeybee colonies (including any inspection reports), the status of the queens, and information on disease and pest management in the hives. These are all important factors that will help ensure the hives are healthy for pollination.

Next, create a plan that covers many of the logistics, including pollination rental fees, which fields require bees and where access roads are located. Be sure to discuss what’s needed to transport, unload and locate hives safely.

Remember: Having a clear, written agreement is very important before entering into any commercial pollination arrangement.

It’s best to have these conversations earlier rather than later (i.e. in the autumn). That way, managed bee providers can plan accordingly for their bee colonies with a view to ensuring that honey bee hives, bumblebee quads or leafcutter bee domes are strong enough (and can be delivered) for blueberry bloom in the spring.

Managed bees are typically moved into the field at 10-25 per cent blueberry bloom, or when there are enough flowers to support the bees so that they become flower-constant to the blueberry crops. If they’re moved in too early, they’ll likely find a good cherry or apple tree to forage on before your blueberries are in bloom.

According to Atlantic Tech Transfer Team Apiculturist, Robyn McCallum, it’s important to consider how many hives you’re using (stocking rate) and where you’re placing them in and around fields.

Your main goal with respect to the crop is to have pollination occur evenly and during a short concentrated time period so that blueberries ripen and develop to be at the same, general crop stage for harvest.

Surrounding field landscapes and field size can influence the impact of your managed bee stocking rates. In smaller fields (less than 10 hectares), two to continued on page 14
four honey bee hives is typical within the industry. In larger fields, the stocking rate may increase.

Good communication with your pollination services provider about your pollination and fruit set goals is important for maximizing pollination while still being mindful of the most suitable stocking rates for your fields.

**Field Notes**

**Feed the wild bees**

One of the biggest advantages with wild bees is the fact that they’ve evolved over time with the blueberry crop and climate. Certain species – such as bumblebees, for example – have longer tongues that allow them to reach further into blueberry flowers for nectar. Other wild bee species are able to buzz pollinate, where they vibrate their flight muscles to “shake” pollen out of deeper-set flowers.

Wild bees also come out and forage for pollen at lower temperatures, in wet, rainy conditions, and even in fairly mountainous areas with higher crosswinds, where managed bees may struggle.

While managed bees are in fields for a short, finite time period, wild bees are there for the whole season, with different species present at various points throughout the year. Among other things, this highlights the importance of providing a good habitat and strong food supply for the months and weeks both before and after blueberry bloom. If wild bees don’t have other food sources after blueberry bloom, it is challenging for them to successfully remain in the area and support subsequent generations of the crop.

Walking blueberry fields and the surrounding areas can help determine the best places to plant wildflowers that provide food sources for wild bees. Poorly producing or fallow land where crops aren’t being grown, ditches and road edges, are all examples of such places.

Research supported by the Syngenta Operation Pollinator program has shown that a number of native flowers provide a great forage source for bees and a viable habitat for native pollinators. Several examples of wildflower food sources include rhododendron, fireweed, clover, asters, and chokecherries. Maple and willow trees along field edges are also good for bees after blueberry bloom.

To ensure even pollination and fruit development, managed and wild bees need to be moving pollen around among the different blueberry clones. This is where a diverse pollinating force comes in handy, as different bees can move among different clones to promote cross-pollination.

**Give managed and wild bees a (wind) break**

Wild bees generally tend to thrive in smaller-sized fields of around 10 acres or less, where they can readily reach the centre of the field to pollinate, and the field edge for alternative flowering resources before and after blueberry bloom.

One thing to keep in mind is a bee’s foraging range, or how far they’ll travel for food. For some smaller wild bee species, flying 200 metres from their nests to a nectar source is a huge journey. If these bees can’t reach the centre of the field, there won’t be proper pollen movement between clones.

Some blueberry producers are working around the issue of larger fields by putting in natural windbreaks made up of trees or shrubs. These windbreaks help split up large fields into smaller sections and create undisturbed soil environments that are perfect for solitary, soil-nesting bee species. Reducing wind flow also helps managed honey bees forage more often during blueberry bloom.

Wild bees, and to a lesser extent, managed bees, depend on the landscape to thrive and perform their pollination work effectively. The Maritimes are home to a tremendous diversity of pollinators and with the help of blueberry producers, there’s an opportunity to further enhance the environment for these bees in a way that will also help optimize pollination and set the stage for a strong, healthy, productive blueberry crop.
Hawkweeds (Hieracium sp., épervière) are becoming a larger weed problem in some regions. There are many different species of hawkweed, but the most common plants in wild blueberry fields include H. caespitosum, H. floribundum, H. aurantiacum and H. pilosella. These species can be hard to tell apart, so in most cases we refer to all species as hawkweeds.

Hawkweeds are low-growing, perennials. They can spread by rhizomes, runners and by seed. They typically form patches and are adapted to poor, dry sites. Leaves are usually formed at the base of the plant and are typically hairy. The flowers normally form on tall stalks and are similar to dandelion in appearance, but usually a bit smaller. Most plant parts commonly produce a milky sap when broken. The seed that forms can be blown by the wind.

As the weeds are low growing, hand weeding and wiping treatments are generally not effective. Discouraging bare spots in the field can help reduce the spread, but this approach can be hard to do in a wild blueberry field. On its own, hexazinone (Velpar) has not been providing adequate control. Numerous herbicide trials have been performed over the past field seasons with promising results. Support from these trials was provided by local growers, BNBB and Growing Forward 2.

Clopyralid (Lontrel) has consistently provided the best control of hawkweeds. When applied alone, it provided 60-80% control of hawkweeds from applications before or after blueberry emergence or in the fall following crop harvest. Clopyralid applications made after blueberry emergence have a higher risk of crop injury. Clopyralid is only registered for the control of tufted vetch in June of the sprout year. We are hoping to expand this label in the future to include hawkweed control and broaden the application window.

When applied alone, terbacil (Sinbar) has suppressed hawkweeds. Higher application rates have improved control, and fall treatments were not as effective as spring treatments. Glufosinate (Ignite) will burn-off any green growth of hawkweeds in either the fall or the early spring. The plants will recover from this early control, so glufosinate is best used in combination with another treatment, like terbacil. Other fall treatments, like glyphosate and dicamba, may be too risky for crop injury to recommend in productive fields.

Results from treatments with mesotrione (Callisto), foramsulfuron (Option) and nicosulfuron/rimsulfuron (Ultim) have been inconsistent, both in research and in grower use. When they are applied alone, only expect slight suppression of hawkweeds. These treatments may be more effective when combined with other control measures.

Through the research trials, we have found that using herbicides in combination either as split applications or as tank mixes, can improve the final level of weed control. Applications of terbacil with clopyralid or terbacil with glufosinate consistently provided the highest level of control.
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of hawkweed control in multiple trials. In 2016, we established a large research trial with many of the effective herbicides, used in combination, to try and determine the best sequence of treatments to use for hawkweed management.

Evaluation of this trial will continue through the 2017 field season. Hawkweed can be a difficult to control perennial weed. We have several herbicide tools that can help with management, but they are best used in combination with each other over multiple application timings. Control should be focused in the sprout year. Many herbicide programs can be effective depending on individual field conditions.

More information weed control methods can be found in the Wild Blueberry IPM Weed Management Guide or the Weed Control Selection Guide, from NBDAAF.

Sclerotinia berry drop status in wild blueberry fields in New Brunswick

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New and existing diseases of blueberry continue to be a limiting factor in wild blueberry production. When plant diseases are not identified in a timely manner and controlled, they may result in complete crop loss. A new disease, sclerotinia berry drop, caused by a fungal pathogen Sclerotinia sclerotiorum, has been reported in wild blueberry fields in Prince Edward Island, Quebec and northern Ontario. Sclerotinia sclerotiorum has also been reported to infect high bush blueberries in southern Ontario and different parts of the world.

Sclerotinia sclerotiorum is a fungal pathogen with a wide range of hosts and is one of the most damaging plant pathogens. Sclerotinia sclerotiorum causes white mould in various kinds of crops. Among the crops grown in New Brunswick that are affected by this pathogen are carrots, beans, canola, soy beans, potato, tomato, various vegetable crops and weed hosts The pathogen survives by producing solid mass structures (sclerotia) that remain dormant during adverse conditions. Sclerotia of S. sclerotiorum commonly produce stalked mushroom-like structures (apothecia), which release spores (ascospores) that infect the areal part (mainly flowers) of the host plant.

The New Brunswick Department of Agriculture, Aquaculture and Fisheries conducted a survey of sclerotinia berry drop in 2015 and 2016 to determine the status of the disease in wild blueberry fields in New Brunswick. The fields were at the fruiting phase of development. The first sampling was conducted around 7-10 days after bloom stage and the second sampling was conducted 2-3 weeks after initial sampling. Plant samples included blueberry stems with leaves and flowers or leaves and berries depending on the growth stage of the crop at the time of sampling.

In 2015, of the surveyed fields (10 wild blueberry and 2 highbush blueberry fields), S. sclerotiorum was isolated from one wild blueberry field with (2% incidence). In the second year (2016) of the survey, sprig samples were collected from 10 wild blueberry fields in different production areas of New Brunswick. No S. sclerotiorum was isolated from any of the samples collected during the first (early to mid-June) and the second (end of June) sampling periods. The low incidence during 2015 or absence of the disease in 2016 survey indicated that the presence of sclerotinia berry drop in New Brunswick wild blueberry fields is minimal or absent in most fields. This could be associated with low S. sclerotiorum inoculum in most wild blueberry fields. Sutton and Mason, who first detected and identified Sclerotinia in wild blueberries, suspected most or all of berries that are infected by Sclerotinia dropped off in the field. Unlike symptoms of white mould on other crops, there is no description of visual symptoms of the disease on wild blueberries. Other fungal pathogens were also isolated from the wild blueberry plant tissue samples collected during the two year survey. The fungal pathogens isolated included Botrytis sp., Colletotrichum spp., Alternaria spp., Fusarium spp. and Pestalotiopsis sp.

This is the summary of the survey conducted in 2015 and 2016. For the complete version, please contact BNBB.

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Bleuets NB Blueberries