

2021 ANNUAL REPORT

Wild Blueberry Commission of Maine



MISSION

The Wild Blueberry Commission of Maine is dedicated to conserving and promoting the prosperity and welfare of this State and of the wild blueberry industry of this State by fostering research and extension programs, by supporting the development of promotional opportunities and other activities related to the wild blueberry industry.

COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE STATEMENT

The Wild Blueberry Commission of Maine is a diverse group of wild blueberry growers and processors created by Maine statute. The Commission's work is executed using grower and processor tax dollars and allocated to support the industry by the Commission. One of the Commission's great strengths is the fruit itself. The wild blueberry is a globally unique healthful wild food, indigenous to our region, with a rich cultural history of management and harvest. In a rapidly changing world that poses many obstacles to the social, economic, and environmental sustainability of our farms and businesses, we represent the sole entity with a clear mission to support the future of our industry.



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A NOTE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Dear Maine Wild Blueberry Producers,

This past year brought opportunity *and* challenges. We again faced COVID-19, causing us to (e.g.) cancel attendance at the [Big E](#) (Eastern States Exposition). We pivoted in response to COVID, but also had a short budget and supply challenges, often keeping a “lights on” approach (e.g., School Nutrition Program), while striving to maximize the benefit to you.

Since 2017 this industry has been climbing back steadily. In fact, over those five years wild blueberry sales in the US have grown by 78%, compared to 15% growth of cultivated sales over the same period. Today we are facing an incredibly strong market with steadily increasing demand (up 19.5% YoY for wild frozen retail). Why? This industry has invested heavily over the years in educating consumers about the health benefits, the unique history and culture, and the provenance of wild blueberries. Those investments are paying off. Faced with a global health crisis, shortages at the grocery store, and uncertainty, consumers pick wild—a healthy staple that stores well. New consumers across the country experienced the taste of Maine wild blueberries for the first time, significantly growing our market potential.

The global cultivated blueberry industry, our primary competitor, is also growing. As they invest in opening new markets and increasing the importance of blueberries in the diets of global consumers, we must convince those same consumers that Maine wild blueberries are the best blueberries money can buy. As the number of blueberry consumers grows, the number of potential wild blueberry consumers grows. The growth of the cultivated industry is an opportunity for us to grow the premium blueberry market, and we do not intend to pass it up.

Thank you for your dedication to this industry and your passion for growing the best blueberries in the world, the Maine wild blueberry. As Executive Director of the Commission I strive to serve you and am always open and available to you. What are we doing well? What can we improve? How can we better serve your needs as a wild blueberry producer? Pick up the phone and let us know.

I am excited to offer you this Annual Report, which summarizes our work and use of your taxes in 2021. I hope you enjoy it.

Sincerely,
Eric Venturini

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eric Venturini".

Executive Director

WHO WE ARE



Commissioners (2021)

David Bell, Chair

Cherryfield Foods, Inc.
Cherryfield, ME

Simeon Allen, Vice Chair

WR Allen, Inc.
Orland, ME

Roy Allen (resigned mid-year)

Allen's Blueberry Freezer
Ellsworth, ME

Marie Emerson

Wescogus Wild Blueberries
Addison, ME

Darin Hammond

Jasper Wyman & Son
Milbridge, ME

Lisa Hanscom

Welch Farm
Roque Bluffs, ME

Nicolas Lindholm

Blue Hill Berry Company
Penobscot, ME

William (Bill) Mallar

Pumpkin Ridge Farm
Marshfield, ME

Todd Merrill

Merrill Blueberry Farms
Ellsworth, ME

Darren Paul

Passamaquoddy Wild Blueberry Co.
Columbia Falls, ME

Advisory Committee Members (2021)

Bruce Hall, Chair

Jasper Wyman & Son
Milbridge, ME

Ron Howard, Vice Chair

Brodie Blueberries
Hope, ME

Denise Alexander

Alexander's Wild Maine Blueberries
Greenfield, ME

JD Newell

Passamaquoddy Wild Blueberry Co.
Columbia Falls, ME

James Presley

The By "Us" Company
Jonesboro, ME

Paul Sweetland

Coastal Blueberry Service
Union, ME

Katy Yeatts

Cherryfield Foods, Inc.
Cherryfield, ME

Interested in serving on the Commission, one of our Committees? Contact us to ask how!
wbcm@maine.edu
(207)581-1475

WHO WE ARE



Fresh Pack and Value-Added Committee

Courtney Hammond, Chair
Lynch Hill Farms
Columbia Falls, ME

Greg Bridges, Vice Chair
Bridges Wild Blueberry Company, Inc.
Calais, ME

Marie Emerson
Wescogus Wild Blueberries
Addison, ME

Lisa Hanscom
Welch Farm
Roque Bluffs, ME

Ron Howard
Brodus Blueberries
Hope, ME

Jacob Lennon
Swans Honey
Albion, ME

Lynn Thurston
Blue Sky Produce
Scarborough, ME

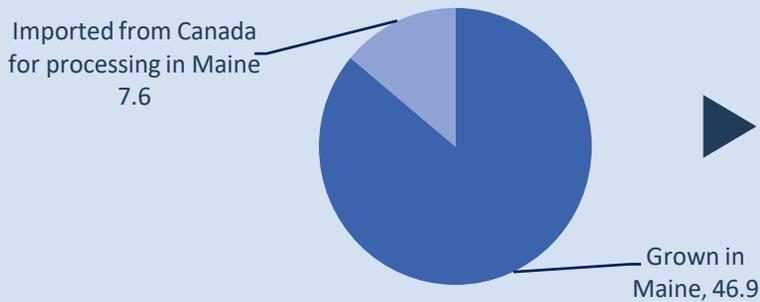


Interested in serving
on the Commission,
one of our
Committees? Contact
us to ask how!
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(207)581-1475

YEAR END FINANCIALS



2020 WILD BLUEBERRY PRODUCTION (MILLIONS OF POUNDS)

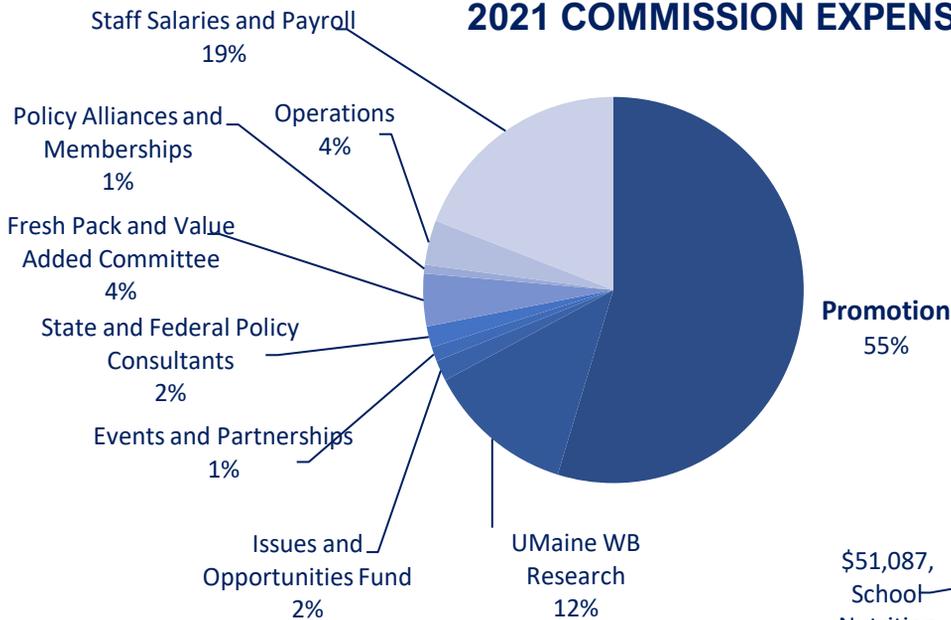


1.5 cents/lb tax allocation
for use in 2021 budget



2020 Blueberry
Tax Income
\$809,393

2021 COMMISSION EXPENSES



PROMOTION BREAKOUT



STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



In the fall of 2020, the Commission initiated a strategic planning process. Through a facilitated process of discussion and compromise, we identified these shared industry priorities and principles to guide funding allocations and efforts in 2021.

Guiding Principles

Diversify allocations to ensure programs support the depth and breadth of the industry

Do not, either intentionally or unintentionally, **do harm** to any part of the industry.

2021 Priorities

1. Address 2021 Global Safeguards Investigation
2. Improve wild blueberry differentiation strategy (Maine vs. Canada and wild vs. cultivated)
3. Evaluate programs and promotional work for deliverables
4. Develop bylaws and institute them
5. Increase transparency and trust
6. Allocate funds for research and climate change challenges
7. Work with WBANA to continue health research, but take a more focused approach
8. Pursue grants and opportunities and deliver on existing grants and activities
9. Stop the loss of small growers and acreage

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Did we address the 2021 priorities?



2021 SHORT TERM PRIORITIES

DID WE DELIVER?

Address 2021 Global Safeguards Investigation

Successfully advocated to expand investigation to include frozen. Remained neutral during investigation. USITC found no cause.

Improve wild blueberry differentiation strategy (Maine vs. Canada and wild vs. cultivated)

Launched Wild Blueberry Weekend bringing the Maine story to a national audience of 3.5 million (see page 15). Ongoing engagement with Wild Blueberry Association of North America – US (WBANA-US) to improve differentiation strategies (see page 15).

Evaluate programs and promotional work for deliverables

Created this Annual Report (first ever), which includes program metrics, to help the Commission and the broader industry evaluate the uses of the industry tax dollars.

Develop bylaws and institute them

We dedicated significant meeting time in 2021 to bylaws and are considering a final draft for incorporation in January 2022.

Increase transparency and trust

WILD BLUE subscribers grew 30% in 2021. This Annual Report, 2022 grower listening sessions, and a soon to be released Commission website will all help to grow transparency and trust.

Allocate funds for research and climate change challenges

The Advisory Committee allocated \$24,703 (29% of their annual allocation of \$85,000) to climate change research, leveraged by faculty to secure an additional \$152,443 climate change research dollars.

Work with WBANA to continue health research, but take a more focused approach

Commission staff provided organizational support as WBANA-US's Health Research Committee developed a more focused approach to health research to strategically identify the health benefits of wild blueberry consumption and leverage dollars to greatest effect.

Pursue grants and opportunities and deliver on existing grants and activities

The Commission submitted 2 grants in 2021, both to fund Maine Wild Blueberry Weekend. One was not selected for funding; the second was conditionally awarded in Jan. 2022. To learn about our ongoing grant-funded web-based marketing project, see page 23.

Stop the loss of small growers and acreage

We are driving demand through promotional investments, fostering grant programs to spur innovation and develop infrastructure, and funding and collaborating with UMaine Extension to educate producers. 2021 acreage statistics will be available in 2022.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Long-Term Shared Priorities



IMPROVE THE ECONOMIC VIABILITY OF MAINE WILD BLUEBERRY PRODUCTION

- Grow demand for wild blueberries
- Build and promote the Maine wild blueberry brand through differentiation (Maine and wild) and diversification
- Stop the loss of small farms and acreage

CONSERVE AND PRESERVE MAINE WILD BLUEBERRY LAND AND ITS HUMAN AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES

- Support environmental sustainability of wild blueberry farms, land, and ecosystems
- Protect social and cultural resources surrounding wild blueberry production

SUPPORT UNIVERSITY OF MAINE WILD BLUEBERRY RESEARCH AND EXTENSION

- Communicate industry priorities to the research and extension team
- Allocate funding to research and extension priorities
- Increase research and extension capacity

IDENTIFY AND RESPOND TO OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS

- Address climate change issues
- Increase resiliency to climate change threats
- Keep Maine farms and businesses apprised of national and international market trends, and determine strategies that align with industry needs
- Keep Maine farms and businesses apprised of changing rules and regulations, and engage in policy to represent the voice of our farms and businesses

STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

Improving Industry Communications through our Strategic Planning Process



ODD YEARS



June

ASSESS PROGRESS towards goals and **REFINE** strategies as needed

Nov. – Dec.

Present **ANNUAL REPORT**. Develop next year's plan of work to **BUILD UPON SUCCESS** and **CORRECT SHORTCOMINGS**.

EVEN YEARS



June

ASSESS PROGRESS towards goals and **REFINE** strategies as needed

July

Staff carries out region-by-region **GROWER LISTENING SESSIONS** across Maine.



REPORT findings to Commission

Nov.

ASSESS PROGRESS on priorities. Consider listening sessions findings. **REFINE** priorities.

Dec.

Facilitated **STRATEGIC PLANNING** meeting to reassess long-term priorities. Present **ANNUAL REPORT**. **BUILD UPON SUCCESS** and **CORRECT SHORTCOMINGS**.

Do you want to help us develop priorities? Do you want to **HAVE A SAY** in how your tax dollars are spent? **ATTEND** our meetings! **SUBSCRIBE** to our emailed newsletter, **WILD BLUE**, to be kept abreast of upcoming meetings and industry happenings! Email wbcm@maine.edu.

INDUSTRY COMMUNICATIONS



Special Notice | July 7, 2021

Wild Blue Special Notice

from the Wild Blueberry Commission of Maine

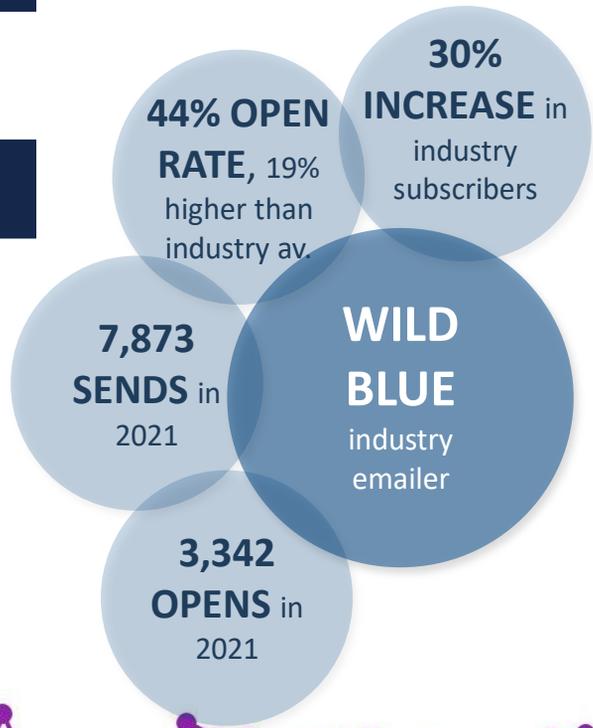
Extension's Blueberry Hill Farm Field Day is TOMORROW



Blueberry Hill Farm Field Day is **NOW ON ONE DAY ONLY: THURSDAY JULY 8, 2021** from 8:45-1:00, rain or shine.

NEXT STEPS IN INDUSTRY COMMUNICATIONS?

- 2022 Grower Listening Sessions
- 2022 Commission Website Release
- This Annual Report
- Continued outreach via **WILD BLUE** emailer



● Open Rate ◆ Click Rate
— Avg. Industry Open Rate — Avg. Industry Click Rate

FOSTERING RESEARCH: ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Advises and works with the University of Maine System to develop and approve a plan of work and budgets for research and extension programs related to the production of wild blueberries.

INVESTED
\$126,352

Awarded \$126,352 in 2021 to University of Maine researchers to improve our understanding of wild blueberries



To Support:

10

research and
Extension funding
requests

5

UMaine wild
blueberry
researchers

7

UMaine
graduate
students

5

UMaine
undergraduate
students

In 2021 the University of Maine's research faculty and staff leveraged industry tax dollars and industry research priorities to **PROCURE AN ADDITIONAL \$781,239** in external, non-industry funds to carry out 8 different projects.



"The industry's tax dollars are supporting a growing team of University of Maine wild blueberry researchers and faculty. There are now 7 researchers whose programs regularly include wild blueberry research, and as Chair I am excited to witness growth in the quality and utility of their research proposals. This year has seen multiple Advisory Committee-funded projects garner national media attention, and several others with promising implications for reducing production variability, enhancing productivity, and improving marketable fruit quality. Our committee is currently setting the industry's research priorities, a process that occurs on a two-year cycle. Our 2022-2023 research priorities will be a shorter, more focused list intended to help our researchers refine their focus and continue to increase the application and value of their research to all of the wild blueberry industry."

Bruce Hall, Wyman's Agronomist
Advisory Committee Chair

FOSTERING RESEARCH: ADVISORY COMMITTEE

2021 RESEARCH PROJECTS FUNDED

Photo Credit: UMaine Extension



Dr. John Zhang awarded **\$14,865** to study fertilizer and temperature effects on wild blueberry physiology and production.

Dr. Seanna Annis awarded **\$4,718** to study beneficial mycorrhizal fungi in wild blueberry grown under different management systems

Dr. Seanna Annis awarded **\$24,071** to improve the mummy berry germination predictive model.

Dr. Lily Calderwood awarded **\$22,936** to support several projects including post-harvest cooling (cool-bot project), and foliar applied nutrient trials.

Dr. John Zhang awarded **\$9,838** to study the effect of biochar on wild blueberry drought resistance.

Dr. Phil Fanning awarded **\$7,085** to study blueberry leaf tier and red-striped fireworm phenology to inform management decisions.

Drs. Lily Calderwood and John Zhang were awarded **\$17,832** to improve IPM and carry out Extension activities

Drs. John Zhang and Lily Calderwood were awarded **\$18,650** to conduct foliar fertility and soil amendment trials.

Dr. Jennifer Perry was awarded **\$3,000** to assess the levels of food born pathogens in wild blueberries.

Dr. Jennifer Perry was awarded **\$3,357** to survey producers about fresh wild blueberry food safety.

PROMOTION: FRESH PACK AND VALUE-ADDED COMMITTEE

Focused efforts in 2021 to launch its inaugural Maine Wild Blueberry Weekend (WBW) – the industry’s entry into the world of agritourism.



The work that we did on promotion for WBW had a real measurable impact. We were able to generate 3.5 M impressions with an investment of less than \$50,000, helping to educate both farm visitors and the broader public about what makes a wild blueberry better than an ordinary blueberry. Personally, 300 people visited our farm and it was apparent that they had learned about the event and about wild blueberries through our promotional activities.
– Courtney Hammond

Courtney Hammond,
Committee
Chair

*“Absolutely fabulous!...
Breathtaking, stunning. Families
are out having a great time.
Awesome.” – Farm Visitor*

*“For most of our visitors, it was
their first time seeing a wild
blueberry production field.” –
Participating Farmer*

*“We loved it! This is the first time I
have ever been to a blueberry farm
and I loved getting a tour and
learning about wild blueberries. I
didn’t know there were high and
low blueberries, or the differences
between them. We loved it. – Farm
Visitor*

14
Farms

– 14 farms opened their doors to visitors.

60 breweries,
restaurants, and other
establishments offered
wild blueberry dishes
and events.

60
Partners

~6,000
Visitors

– Farmers estimate that 6,000 people visited wild blueberry farms during the weekend. 44% hailing from outside of the State.

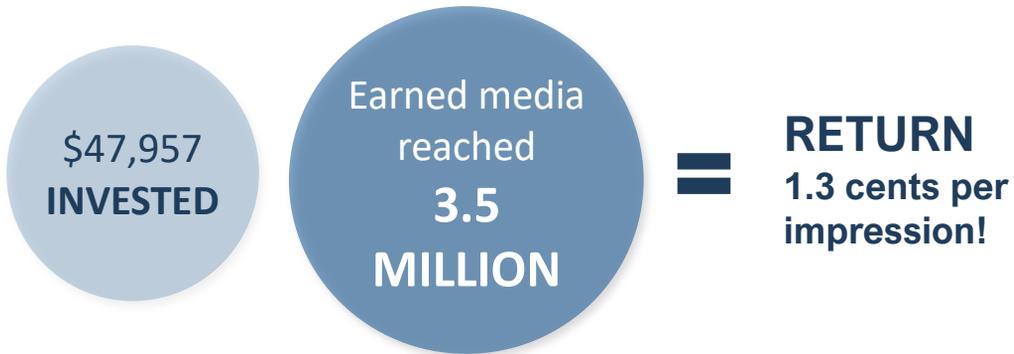
PROMOTION: FRESH PACK AND VALUE-ADDED COMMITTEE

WILD BLUEBERRY WEEKEND

wildblueberryweekend.com



Left to right: Trish Kontur (WBC Director of Programs), Amanda Beal (ME Commissioner of Ag., Cons. and Forestry), Governor Janet Mills, Nancy McBrady (Director, ME Bureau of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Resources).



Generated national media coverage in **89 outlets**

Some farms received as many as **1,000 visitors**

82% of visitors “very likely to purchase wild blueberries in the future”

Announced as a Proclamation by **Gov. Janet Mills**

Comprised **11.4% of traffic** to industry website in 2021.

90% of visitors Purchased wild blueberries or a wild blueberry product”

PROMOTION: INVESTMENT IN WBANA-US

The Commission annually invests in the Wild Blueberry Association of North America–US (WBANA-US) to fund promotion and health research.



GROWN IN THE *wild* BARRENS OF MAINE

Only grown wild in the cold, harsh climates of Maine and eastern Canada, tiny wild blueberries are loaded with healthy deep blue anthocyanins that healthy bodies and brains crave.

\$540,000
INVESTED
in 2021

HEALTH RESEARCH

PROMOTION

HEALTH RESEARCH

10 WILD blueberry health studies either recently completed, in progress, or recently awarded

These studies resulted in the **PUBLICATION OF 10 SCIENTIFIC ARTICLES** on the health benefits of wild blueberry consumption in 2021

Maine's health research investment is **MATCHED** by WBANA-Canada each year, leveraging Maine dollars for an outsized impact.

Supporting research on effects of wild blueberry consumption on cognition, blood pressure, metabolic syndromes, inflammation, and more.



a healthy scoop of

GOODNESS

EVERY DAY

PROMOTION: INVESTMENT IN WBANA-US

www.wildblueberries.com



WILD VS ORDINARY: HOW ARE THEY different?

The ultimate antioxidant superfruit – 10,000 years in the making. Discover why wild is simply better.

WHY WILD

PROMOTION

24K VISITS PER MONTH

24K visits per month to the WBANA-US promotional website in 2021.

BRAIN HEALTH

Since the launch of the **BRAIN HEALTH CONTENT HUB**, 49% increase in brain health impressions and clicks!

Published **COGNITION KITCHEN**

Downloaded >1,000 times in 3 months

Generated >756K impressions so far

Featured in podcasts downloaded 4,200 times

DRIVING TRAFFIC

Hosting Wild Blueberry Weekend drove >18K visits to the industry website



PROMOTION: INVESTMENT IN WBANA-US



It's working...

DRIVING DEMAND

Market share
UP 7.9%

In 5 years, we have gained 7.9% of the frozen blueberry market (while cultivated has lost 7.9%).

Wild sales
UP 9.8% YoY

Wild blueberry sales are up 9.8% in 2021 vs. 2020, while cultivated only grew by 0.3%.

Wild sales
UP 78% over
5 years

Wild retail frozen sales have grown by 78% over the last 5 years.

YoY demand
UP 19.6%

Frozen retail demand for wild blueberries is up 19.6% over last year!

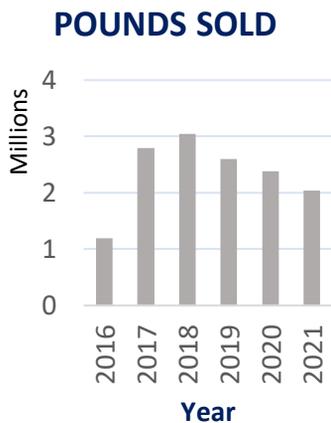
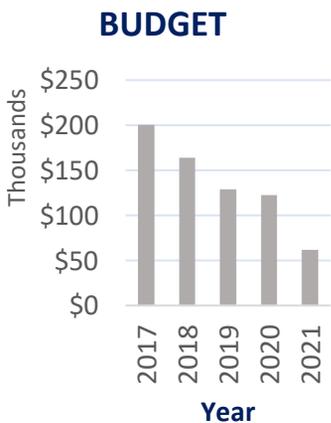


AC Nielsen Frozen Fruit Data (does NOT include Costco or Trader Joes; only straight WBB's and Cultivated; no berry blends)

PROMOTION: SCHOOL NUTRITION PROGRAM

Converting the next generation to the taste of WILD!

Creating opportunities for Maine producers to supply Maine wild blueberries to schools through the USDA since 2017.

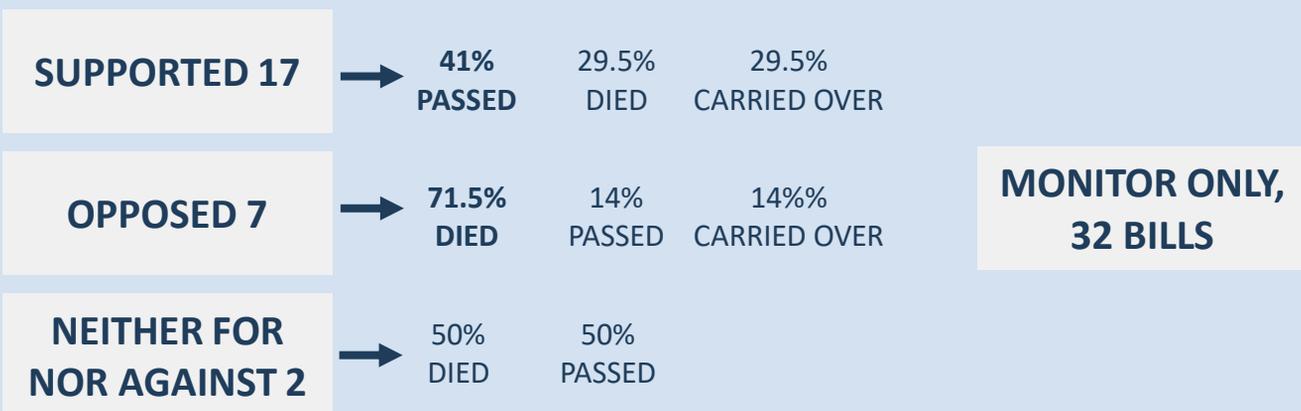


PUBLIC POLICY: STATE

Striving to represent the voice of Maine’s wild blueberry farms and businesses in State policy



TRACKED 58 BILLS, GAVE TESTIMONY ON 26



2021 KEY ENGAGEMENTS

With the help of the Washington County delegation, especially **Rep. Anne Perry** and **Sen. Marianne Moore**, the Commission was central to the defeat of LD 1022 (farmworker wage and hour bill) which would have exacerbated existing labor problems, while also decreasing per worker earnings.

We advocated for industry needs as the legislature and the Mills Administration considered key agricultural investments. These efforts contributed to a **historic \$20 million investment** in agricultural and food infrastructure which will be made available to farms and food processors in December 2021.

Want to hear more about our policy work? Email Eric.Venturini@maine.edu to join our policy “opt-in” mailing list and be kept up to date on all state efforts when the legislature is in session.

PUBLIC POLICY: STATE

Representing the voice of Maine's wild blueberry farms and businesses in State policy



What did we support? – 2021 highlights

Broadband infrastructure for rural Maine. We supported two bills (LD 80, and LD 1235) to increase access to high quality internet for rural Mainers.

Programs that use local foods in State and Federal food programs. We supported LD 174 to increase State participation in food purchasing programs and LD 636 to provide support to Maine schools for purchasing Maine grown food.

Grants and financial support for Maine farmers. We supported LD 1475, and LD 1733. One of these bills led to a historic \$20M investment in farm and food processing infrastructure.

Climate change adaptation and mitigation. We supported LD 937 and advocated to

consider the potential for soil carbon storage incentives for wild blueberries.

Development of the immigrant workforce and community integration programs (LD 832) to help build a strong agricultural workforce and (LD 1684) expand workforce training programs.

Farmland access and protection. We advocated for a permanent farm access and protection fund enabling the Land for Maine's Future Program to better support Maine farmers.

We also advocated for increased funding support for the Maine State Apiculturist program, landowner's rights to control wildlife, and the elimination of burn permit fees.

What did we oppose? – 2021 highlights

Limiting signage, including farm and market signs on public roads by opposing LD 186 and 395.

Restricting the rights of farm businesses in the form of mandatory indoor workplace temperatures (LD 358) and required overtime pay for farmworkers (LD 1022).

Additional demands on farmers time by opposing LD 1599, which would have required weekly reporting by pesticide applicators.

Increased costs to pack and sell Maine grown food by opposing the Pack Tax bill, LD 1541.

PUBLIC POLICY: FEDERAL

Representing the voice of Maine's wild blueberry farms and businesses in Washington, DC



FARM WORKFORCE MODERNIZATION ACT

The Farm Workforce Modernization Act will:

- Ensure that farmers can meet labor needs well into the future
- Establishes a program for farmworkers to earn legal status through continued agricultural employment
- Streamlines H2-A process, increasing employer flexibility and stabilizes wages.
- Provides critical farmworker housing infrastructure.

In support of this bill we:

- Joined the Maine Business Immigrant Coalition in public press-releases, letter-writing campaigns, meetings with our Congressional Delegation, and general advocacy of the bill.
- Supported the stance of United Fresh Produce Association
- Independently met with, and wrote letters to our Congressional Delegation and their staff

July as "NATIONAL BLUEBERRY MONTH"

What is National Blueberry Month?

The US cultivated blueberry industry 'climbed the steps' in DC in a concerted effort to get the Senate to designate July as National Blueberry Month. The language of the original resolution did not include wild blueberries, recognizing only the importance of the cultivated industry and its history.

With key support from Senators Collins and

King, we added language to this resolution that highlights the economic and cultural importance of wild blueberries from Maine and calls out the key contribution of the Wabanaki as the first people to manage and harvest wild blueberries, and who continue to do so today.

With key support from Representative Pingree, the resolution with the added language was also passed in the House of Representatives.

PUBLIC POLICY: FOOD SAFETY WORKING GROUP

We convened industry experts to engage with regulators, providing practical input on food safety to facilitate compliance and ensure the industry's continued ability to produce a safe and healthy product.

Want to learn more about the activities of this group? Give us a call!

Call the Wild Blueberry Commission Office at 581-1475 and ask for Eric.

GROUP MEMBERSHIP

Marie Emerson

*Wescogus Wild Blueberries
Addison, Maine*

Brandon Allen

*W.R. Allen, Inc
Orland, Maine*

David Bell

*Cherryfield Foods and Maine Wild
Blueberry Company
Cherryfield, Maine*

Holli Francis

*Passamaquoddy Wild Blueberry
Company
Columbia Falls, Maine*

Ron Howard

*Brodus Blueberries
Hope, Maine*

Shannon Fickett

*Wymans
Deblois, Maine*

Trish Kontur

*Director of Programs
The Wild Blueberry Commission of
Maine*

Eric Venturini

*Executive Director
The Wild Blueberry Commission of
Maine*

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES: INNOVATION WORKING GROUP

This Commission group has been working throughout the year to identify opportunities for innovation within the wild blueberry industry and facilitate funding support to make those innovations a reality.

STEP 1
Jan. '21

From a group of experts in business, innovation, and the wild blueberry industry.

STEP 2
Feb-Aug '21

Brainstorm innovations that could drive growth and opportunity for Maine wild blueberry farms and businesses.

STEP 3
Oct. '21

Narrow focus to identify and develop the two best innovation concepts.



1.
Reduce harvest and post-harvest waste

2.
Expand opportunities for value-added production and diversify uses

STEP 4
Jan. '22

Create concept drafts and provide to funders to create opportunities to fund concepts and **make innovations a reality**



Holli Francis
Value-added Production Manager



Eric Martin
Co-Owner



Dr. Lily Calderwood
Extension Wild Blueberry Specialist



Nicolas Lindholm
Co-Owner and Farmer



Bruce Hall
Agronomist



Claire Eaton
Director, Natural Resource Markets and Economic Development



Elisa O'Donnel
Ecosystem Builder



Kimberly Hamilton
President



Simeon Allen
General Manager



Charles Rudelitch, esq.
Executive Director



Renee Kelly
Foster Center for Innovation VP for Innovation and Economic Development

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES: WEB-BASED MARKET ACCESS PROJECT

Striving to create opportunities for growth

In June of 2020, The Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry awarded the Commission a grant to increase web-based market access for wild blueberry producers. This is an ongoing project that we expect to complete in 2022.

Interested in learning more about this project? Email Eric.Venturini@maine.edu.



GROW web-based market access for Maine wild blueberry producers

Direct Sales



LOCAL FOOD MARKETPLACE

Provided 6 Maine wild blueberry producers so far with an online storefront, a total value of over \$12,000.

Wholesale



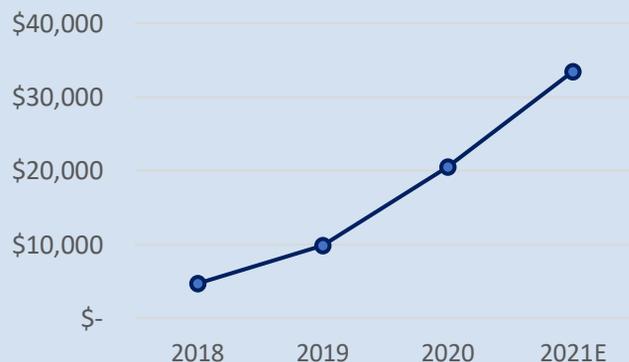
Changing the way we source our food

FORAGER

Doubled the number of wild blueberry producers selling through the Forager platform.

Increased annual sales by more than 300% in 2 years (up to projected \$33,456 by EOY 2021).

Annual Wild Blueberry Sales on Forager



**2021E extrapolates to EOY based on prior 10-month average

COMMISSION STAFF



Executive Director

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Director of Programs

Patricia (Trish) Kontur

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Administrative Specialist

Ginger Hansen

wbcm@maine.edu

(207) 581-1475

STAFF ANNOUNCEMENTS

Well Wishes and Welcomes...



Thank You Nancy!

The Commission expresses gratitude to Nancy England, Commission Administrative Specialist, for 33 years of dedication and service to this industry. We have honored her with an Excellence Award (pictured) in recognition of her 33 years of excellence, a custom engraved wild blueberry pie plate, and a homemade Maine wild blueberry pie!

Welcome our New Admin. Specialist, Ginger...

“As a recently retired Science and Social Studies teacher, I look forward to using my efforts to help the Commission and the amazing people of the State of Maine as they work to bring the world’s best food to the country and the global marketplace. As a recent transplant to Maine, my family and I are thrilled to be here and work together with you to make great things happen for all of our stakeholders.”

– **Ginger Hansen**



Farewell and Good Luck Alex!

Alex Pesiri worked for the Commission as a student employee this year. He was our first “*Student Communications and Administrative Specialist.*” Alex has been instrumental in the crafting of the industry newsletter, *WILD BLUE*, and has created a Commission website that we hope will be live very soon!

Alex has graduated college and is headed off to start a career that we are sure will be impactful. Thank you!

THANK YOU!

Want to get involved?

Want to learn more?

CONTACT US!

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