
NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
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Ministry of Agriculture

B.C. blueberries picked to receive Buy Local funding

MAPLE RIDGE – Summer once again brings sweet, juicy treats – B.C. blueberries!

Agriculture Minister Norm Letnick joined in the fun at the Blueberry Festival at Country Fest today and announced the BC Blueberry Council is receiving \$50,000 from the provincial government's Buy Local Program.

The Buy Local funding will be used to introduce a traditional advertising campaign with eye-catching signs and displays as well as in-store sampling for shoppers. Promotional flyers for customers will advertise the arrival of B.C. blueberries on grocery store websites and e-newsletters. Social media and radio ads – including a marketing campaign on BCLiving.ca – will encourage British Columbians to buy their blueberries locally.

The BC Blueberry Council resides in Abbotsford and is a not-for-profit umbrella organization representing close to 800 blueberry growers in the province. B.C. blueberry season runs July through early October, and are available frozen year-round. The Buy Local program supports B.C. blueberry farmers by offering an opportunity to grow and thrive in the competitive blueberry market.

The Buy Local program has received \$6 million in B.C. government funding since 2012 to increase sales of locally grown and processed agrifood and seafood products within the province.

Building the local market for B.C. foods is a key commitment of government's Agrifoods Strategy, a component of the BC Jobs Plan, to lead the agrifoods sector growth into a \$14-billion-a-year industry by 2017.

The provincial government's Buy Local program is administered by the Investment Agriculture Foundation of British Columbia. Applications are available at: <http://iafbc.ca/>

Quotes:

Minister of Agriculture Norm Letnick –

“When you buy fresh B.C. blueberries, you are supporting local agriculture and local famers. The funding from the Buy Local program will help the BC Blueberry Council thrive in a highly competitive market and put dollars back in to the economy, while supporting communities and families in the industry.”

Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows MLA Doug Bing –

“The B.C. blueberry industry is booming. With in-store promotion and online advertising,

blueberry farmers will have their products in the homes of British Columbians all over the province. Local blueberries highlight the fresh flavours we grow right here in our backyards.”

Debbie Etsell, BC Blueberry Council –

“The BC Blueberry Council is grateful of the support the Buy Local Program is providing to our blueberry farmers. The blueberry season is a wonderful time of year to celebrate the efforts and hard work of our growers and enjoy all the benefits of these tasty treats.”

Quick Facts:

- Currently there are over 11,300 hectares (28,000 acres) of the richest fertile farmland nestled between the Pacific Ocean and the coastal mountains devoted to growing upwards of 54 million kilograms (120 million pounds) of blueberries with production increasing steadily.
- British Columbia is one of the largest highbush blueberry-growing regions in the world, with Canada the third top-producing country, and still growing.
- British Columbia produces about 95% of the Canadian production of cultivated blueberries.
- About 95% of B.C.’s berry production occurs in the Fraser Valley. The rest are grown in the North Okanagan and on Vancouver Island.
- One large handful (250 ml) of farm fresh and juicy B.C. blueberries is just 80 calories and contains 3.6 grams of dietary fibre.
- Blueberries are ranked number one in antioxidant health benefits in a comparison with more than 40 fresh fruits and vegetables.

Learn More:

BC Blueberry Council: <http://www.bcblueberry.com/>

B.C. Buy Local program:

<http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/agriculture-seafood/agriculture-business-and-economy/programs/bc-buy-local-program>

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