



## North American Blueberry Council

To: Kit Batten PhD., Legislative Assistant, US Senator Diane Feinstein, California  
FR: Thomas J. Payne, Export Director, NABC  
RE: Blueberry Market Access Issues

My name is Tom Payne and I am export marketing director for the US Highbush Blueberry Council, an organization that represents 3,000 growers in 38 states. As a representative of a blueberry growing state, we are appealing to you for assistance on a matter of urgency to our growers.

The USDA-APHIS, is about to pass new rules which will allow fresh blueberries from Uruguay, Argentina and South Africa into the USA.

- Normally rule changes like these take years, and remarkably these rules have been rushed. Our industry--which has some of the leading experts in the world on blueberries – has not been consulted in any way. We feel the effort was politically motivated and conveniently occurred just months after a presidential visit to Uruguay where our leader assured the Uruguayans of market entry for their blueberries into the USA.
- Southern Hemispherical countries have pests which can place our industry in peril, and we feel that the evidence provided in the rushed Pest Risk Analysis conducted by the Uruguayan government are not valid or convincing to us.
- Fresh Blueberries from the USA are not allowed into Uruguay, Argentina or South Africa. No efforts have been initiated to open these markets, despite a great demand in South Africa for our product. In fact, a major South African importer who contacted APHIS in Pretoria, was told that any request to bring US blueberries into South Africa would not be considered for at least two years. They are now buying a substantial amount of blueberries from Poland instead.
- The rush to open the market for South Hemisphere blueberries is an insult to our US growers, who have been neglected by APHIS on market access issues. In 2000 the state of Oregon department of Agriculture requested that APHIS work on opening the massive and lucrative South Korean Market where there is a big demand. Seven years later we have seen no action, no paperwork and have been told by the APHIS person in charge of this “mission,” that they are still awaiting a reply from the Korean Government. After seven years, fresh blueberries have been neglected in all discussions, talks and Free Trade Agreements. APHIS refuses to keep us informed or work on our behalf.

Can we please request that your office immediately contact the Administrator of the USDA on our behalf and express the outrage that we feel. We want assurance that the current rule for importation of Southern Hemisphere blueberries are stopped immediately. Furthermore we want our government to ensure that we do not allow imports of blueberries from countries that restrict our exports. Finally we would request that your office contact the US Ambassador in Seoul and formally request that we receive an immediate report on the status of fresh blueberries into Korea. We want assurance that fresh blueberries are a top priority for all trade negotiations and discussions with the Korean Government in the current Free Trade Agreement and bilateral discussions. (a complete brief on these issues will be sent to your office on request).

Thank you very much for your continued support.

Thomas J. Payne

**North American Blueberry Council – Export Office** – 865 Woodside Way, San Mateo, CA 94401-1661  
USA – tel: 60-340-8563 fax: 650-340-8568 – cell: 650-219-9695 <http://www.nabcblues.org>  
[tpayne@tjpmc.com](mailto:tpayne@tjpmc.com)