

The Council Letter

A Confidential Report to Directors, Members and Chairperson of Council
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WEEKLY Highbush BLUEBERRY CROP REPORT April 24, 2019

MISSISSIPPI/LOUISIANA – *Eric Stafne*: Weather in Mississippi has been cool, which has slowed the progression of ripening. Color is just starting to show on early Rabbiteye varieties. Rain along with severe weather has been a significant issue in some parts of the state with more in the forecast tomorrow. The northern half of the state has received record amounts of rainfall this spring that may affect management. The primary blueberry growing region of the state has not been as wet, but rainfall has been adequate to date. The timing of first harvest looks to be on average. Crop loads look light to moderate on early Rabbiteye varieties like Premier, Climax, Alapaha and Austin. Later ripening varieties such as Brightwell have good to heavy loads.

GEORGIA – *Alex Cornelius*: George's production continues to increase this week with quality being excellent. Most all highbush varieties are being harvested with the exception of Camillia and Legacy. A strong storm front came through last Friday causing a small amount of fruit loss. Since then, harvest conditions have been excellent. Most people feel like the peak for Georgia high bush will happen around the first and second week of May. The USDA is reporting 6,760,000 pounds of conventional and 60,000 pounds of organic for a total of 6,820,000 pounds shipped as of April 23rd.

FLORIDA – *Ken Patterson*: Florida is now on the backside of their harvest with the southern regions 3/4 or more done at this point. A few varieties like Arcadia, Emerald and Jewel still have fruit but some varieties are completely picked out in the south. In the northern regions Emerald and Farthing are still producing but in general the crop is close to three-quarters done. Due to low pricing some growers have opted to stop harvesting which will impact Florida's final production numbers. The weather remains warm and the harvest will likely wrap up within the next 2 to 3 weeks. Labor has not been a real issue this year and SWDs have not been a problem. The USDA is reporting that as of April 22nd that 15, 655,779 pounds of conventional and 466,166 pounds of organic for a total of 16,121,945 pounds ship so far out of Florida.

NORTH CAROLINA – *Neil Moore*: North Carolina has had favorable weather this past week, with rain across most areas on Friday followed by warm temperatures. Fruit is sizing nicely, and pollination looks to be good to fair depending on variety and location. Duke is still blooming, and all other varieties are finished including Rabbiteye's. Harvest start now looks to be around May 10th. This is a normal timing for harvest.

NEW JERSEY – *Denny Doyle*: New Jersey has most of the bees in the fields now. We should be at full bloom next week. Field operations on going at this time.

INDIANA – *Pat Goin*: Early varieties are in the early pink bud stage. Fungicides are being applied. The weather is typical for early spring. Daytime temperatures are forecasted to be upper 50's to lower 60's, nighttime temperatures in the mid to low 40's. A rainy pattern seems to be headed our way by the weekend.

Blueberries

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MICHIGAN – *Dave Trinka*: Blueberry leaf buds are at various stages of green tip. Individual flowers can be seen in some fields as flower buds expand. GDD totals are close to the five-year average and higher than 2018 levels. After a warm and sunny weekend, it looks like the week ahead may bring cooler than average temperatures and good chances of rain over the weekend are in the forecast.

BRITISH COLUMBIA – *Anju Gill*: Cool and wet conditions continue, slowing down bloom development. However, there has been sufficient bloom opening on a daily basis in Reka and Duke fields, but the weather conditions could potentially impact pollination, particularly with wind and temperatures barely reaching 15 °C (59°F). The weather is expected to improve over the next couple of weeks, flower development should speed up. Most growers have finished prebloom crop protection activities and fertilizer applications continue. Shock symptoms have been observed in some fields. So far, minimum winter damage has been reported. Harvesting is expected to start early to mid-July.

WASHINGTON – *Alan Schreiber*: Across the state blueberries are delayed by a week or so. But there is plenty of time for the crop to gain some degree days. Western Washington – In Whatcom County bloom is starting in the earlier varieties like Reka, Duke and Legacy with bees in those fields. Later varieties are getting clean up sprays and getting ready for bee placement. Reports of winter damage range from none in some fields to moderate amount in the worst hit fields. Some growers are projecting reduced yields in 2019 due to winter injury. In Skagit County, the first bloom for the early varieties are starting to open and bees are going in soon. Growers are concerned about bee availability due to the late cherry harvest. Beekeepers service cherries in eastern Washington and then move to berries in Western Washington. This year cherries are later than usual threatening bee availability to blueberries. In Eastern Washington – First report of bloom starting in Duke, but some growers have yet to see first bloom in that variety. Draper is lined up to bloom right behind Duke. Bees are just starting to go in to the fields. There is no evidence of winter injury.

OREGON – *Doug Kraemer*: Oregon is finally getting weather that looks like spring. Most varieties have some bloom now and many have a lot of bloom opening. Fungicides and fertilizer are going on at most farms. We are still about a week later than last year at this time.

CALIFORNIA – *Todd Sanders*: The California blueberry harvest is running about 10-15 days behind the normal schedule. The crop is being reported as good size and color to date. Harvest has begun in some of the Coastal regions of the state and for earlier varieties in certain parts of the Central Valley as well. With the weather warming up quickly and above average temperatures thus far, we anticipate most of California's volume will come online all at once. The peak of California's harvest is expected to occur in the second or third week of May. The USDA reported California shipped 540,000 pounds of conventional fresh and 4,880,000 pounds of organic fresh blueberries this season so far.

MEXICO – The USDA reported that the U.S. imported a total this season through April 23rd, 2019 of 55,160,000 pounds of conventional fresh from Mexico.

CHILE - The USDA reported that the U.S. imported a total this season through April 23rd, 2019 of 100,330,000 pounds of conventional fresh from Chile.

ARGENTINA - The USDA reported that the U.S. imported a total this season through April 23rd, 2019 of 16,580,000 pounds of conventional fresh from Argentina.

PERU - The USDA reported that the U.S. imported a total this season through April 23rd, 2019 of 51,940,000 pounds of conventional fresh from Peru.

URUGUAY - The USDA reported that the U.S. imported a total this season through April 23rd, 2019 of 1,470,000 pounds of conventional fresh from Uruguay.

GUATEMALA - The USDA reported that the U.S. imported a total this season through April 23rd, 2019 of 40,000 pounds of conventional fresh from Guatemala