

# The Council Letter

A Confidential Report to Directors, Members and Chairperson of Council  
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## WEEKLY Highbush BLUEBERRY CROP REPORT May 29, 2019

**MISSISSIPPI/LOUISIANA** – *No report available this week:*

**GEORGIA** – *Alex Cornelius:* The biggest obstacle to report on for the Georgia Blueberry Growers this week is the extremely hot and dry conditions. It has been reported from the Booth Weather Station with the University of Georgia in Homerville that four of the last seven days have been 99 degrees or higher. The next 7-day forecast calls for highs of 95-100 degrees. Fields with drip irrigation are maintaining the bush, but it is not enough to help size the blueberries adequately. Most Georgia farms have drip irrigation, with a substantial amount with overhead that can help supplement the irrigation at this time of year. Farmers are finishing up the highbush harvest, with quality remaining good. Rabbiteye harvest is coming on fast with volumes not meeting expectations of forecasts. The early Rabbiteye varieties are in their second and third round of picking. Brightwell is starting its first (occasionally second) picking. The Rabbiteye crop is mimicking the highbush crop on how it is coming off; fast, early, with a short tail on the end. The USDA reported Georgia shipped 26,190,000 pounds of conventional fresh and 1,970,000 pounds of organic fresh blueberries this season so far.

**FLORIDA** – *Florida's harvest is officially over.*

**NORTH CAROLINA** – *Neil Moore:* Hot and Dry weather are the story in North Carolina. Temperatures have been in the upper 90's to 100 degrees this week and this pattern is forecasted to last this next week with some relief and chances of rain this weekend. Irrigation is being applied on regular intervals. The hot dry conditions have ripening on a faster pace. Early cultivars will finish this weekend and some midseason cultivars like New Hanover are third pick already. Legacy the predominate later season Highbush variety has already started harvest. Quality has been good so far this season. Hand harvest is continuing where labor is available as well as machine harvest for fresh. Growers are keeping up with harvest and are packing fresh, very little fruit is going to process. The USDA reported North Carolina has shipped 8,270,000 pounds of conventional fresh and 10,000 pounds of organic fresh blueberries this season so far.

**NEW JERSEY** – *Denny Doyle:* New Jersey crop is advancing well at this time. All bees are removed and berry size looks good. New start date now is June 12th. New Jersey is moving crop projection up to 45 million pounds. Growers are reporting that the labor crews are calling in to check on the New Jersey crop.

**INDIANA** – *Pat Goin:* The rain continues to be the story. This has been the wettest spring in the last 40 years. Field conditions are problematic. Water standing in the fields is making it difficult for weed control and fungicide applications. Rain is in the forecast for the remainder of the week. Berries are sizing nicely

*Blueberries*

NORTH AMERICAN BLUEBERRY COUNCIL

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**MICHIGAN** – *Dave Trinka*: Michigan blueberry plant development remains behind normal. Most areas of the state have received some rainfall six out of the last seven days. Fields remain wet. The forecast holds a glimmer of hope; we may begin to see temperatures closer to normal as we move into the an important pollination period. Luckily, we have had intermittent periods of favorable weather for bee activity over the past week. Duke fields in inland sites are at about 75 percent petal fall with Bluecrop not too far behind. Elliott fields are at 50 percent bloom in the southern part of the state. Many acres in the northern half of the production area are just now getting into bloom. Fruit sizing is very good at this early stage and the cool weather has allowed for very good foliage development. Hard to imagine we will have any berries until after July 4<sup>th</sup>.

**BRITISH COLUMBIA** – *Anju Gill*: The weather has been favourable for crop development, mix of clouds, rain and sun. Pollination appears to have been quite good on the early and mid-season crops. Most varieties are past bloom, well into green fruit development. Fruit set looks very good. Warmer temperature bouts continue to advance crop development, however cooler weather is in the forecast for the next few weeks. Growers continue with 2<sup>nd</sup> fertilizer application and fruit rot sprays. Once bees come out of the fields, insecticides for aphids (also to limit scorch spread) will commence. Harvest is likely to start around first week of July in some areas.

**WASHINGTON** – *Alan Schreiber*: Virtually all varieties are post bloom across the state. Plants are in late fruit set or are sizing up in all growing regions. Fruit size on early varieties appear to average to above average. Growing conditions seem to be near optimum. Plants appear to be accumulating degree days rapidly, particularly in western Washington. One grower in Whatcom County predicts first picking for fresh fruit on June 28<sup>th</sup>, which would be very early. Harvest in western Washington is expected to start a little before June 15<sup>th</sup>.

**OREGON** – *Doug Krahmer*: Oregon has experienced very nice weather for fruit sizing. Showery and cool with some nice sun thrown in. Fruit is maturing nicely with one grower reporting sighting a blue berry in Duke today. Harvest timing is anticipated around June 20 - June 25.

**CALIFORNIA** – *Todd Sanders*: California received significant amounts of rain this past weekend, up to an inch in some locations, but we are still unaware of how this will affect our production. Some growers have reported 5-10% damage in some locations, depending on variety. Mold may also be a concern as well, however, we are still unsure at this point how or if it will affect production levels. We are still keeping our initial crop estimate the same but will likely have more information after our Board crop forecast meeting tomorrow morning. The USDA reported California shipped 6,510,000 pounds of conventional fresh and 11,000,000 pounds of organic fresh blueberries this season so far.

**MEXICO** – The USDA reported that the U.S. imported a total this season through May 29, 2019 of 67,160,000 pounds of conventional fresh from Mexico.

**CHILE** - The USDA reported that the U.S. imported a total this season through May 29, 2019 of 100,650,000 pounds of conventional fresh from Chile.

**ARGENTINA** - The USDA reported that the U.S. imported a total this season through May 29, 2019 of 19,190,000 pounds of conventional fresh from Argentina.

**PERU** - The USDA reported that the U.S. imported a total this season through May 29, 2019 of 67,660,000 pounds of conventional fresh from Peru.

**URUGUAY** - The USDA reported that the U.S. imported a total this season through May 29, 2019 of 1,500,000 pounds of conventional fresh from Uruguay.

**GUATEMALA** - The USDA reported that the U.S. imported a total this season through May 29, 2019 of 40,000 pounds of conventional fresh from Guatemala