



Request for Proposal - Market Development Feasibility Study for Frozen and Further Processed Highbush Blueberries to South America June 6, 2022

I. Purpose

The U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council (USHBC), representing the U.S. highbush blueberry industry, requests proposals from research agencies to represent USHBC and manage its market development feasibility study in South America (Mexico, Colombia, and Brazil). The chosen agency will enter into a contract with USHBC from July 18 through project completion.

All proposals are due by June 30, 2022, at 5 p.m. Pacific Time.

II. Background Information

The U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council (USHBC) is a federal research and promotion program located in Folsom, California. USHBC, established in 2000, is directed by a 20-member Council which includes elected grower representatives from each of four U.S. regions (West, Midwest, East, and South), eight elected state grower representatives from the top eight highbush blueberry production states (Michigan, New Jersey, Oregon, California, Washington, Florida, North Carolina, and Georgia) as well as eight additional Council members (one handler representative, four importer representatives, two exporter representatives, and one public member). Information on the U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council (USHBC) can be accessed at our website: <http://www.blueberry.org>

The U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council (USHBC) has been allocated federal funds under the Emerging Markets Program (EMP) to conduct a market assessment of South America (Mexico, Colombia, and Brazil) that will document the trade structure for imported blueberry ingredients, make recommendations, and identify opportunities and projects to enhance the market for U.S. blueberries. The market assessment will also help identify importers, distributors, and potential end-users of dairy products, baked goods, snacks, and beverages containing blueberries.

Blueberry production has grown exponentially in Mexico and South America (mainly Peru) in recent years, however most of the volume is exported to the United States. As such, several countries in South America have shown promise as a potential market to develop the ingredient use of USA processed blueberries: frozen, dried, liquid, and other further processed products. It is important to note that most blueberries produced in Mexico and South America are sold fresh at retail. Therefore, there is a lack of distribution of frozen and further processed blueberries in this region. As the largest supplier of processed blueberry products, the USA has an advantage over other producing regions (including domestic producers in South America) to supply the market. The leading countries in South America target through the EMP-funded market assessment are Mexico, Colombia, and Brazil.

In addition to a market assessment, the selected agency's research will include government statistics and documents on the blueberry industry, industry sector reports, and analysis from industry experts. Retail distribution for frozen polybags will also be explored.

III. Agency Responsibilities

The selected agency will be responsible for developing and executing an approved market development feasibility study in South America for the 2022 marketing year. The agency will assess the trade structure for imported blueberry ingredients by identifying importers, distributors, and potential end-users of dairy products, baked goods, snacks, and beverages. They will interview key companies and individuals in the value chain, project future export volumes of U.S. blueberry products, and include recommendations for follow-up with industry members and strategies to develop the market. Agency responsibilities will include, but may not be limited to, the following:

- Collect background research from valid secondary sources to describe the food industry value chain. This will include collecting historic statistics, food industry categories, import procedures, and practices. This research will result in a pro forma roadmap of the food industry, providing hypothetical conclusions.
- Conduct primary research in Mexico, Colombia, and Brazil to validate the secondary background research. This will include meetings with the government, importers, distributors, and end-users. The research will also include analysis of multiple food industry product segments as well as interviews specialized staff at companies to determine product needs, opportunities, and constraints to be overcome. This will result in a comprehensive

- preliminary assessment, including key companies to target, opportunities for export expansion, and strategies to develop the market.
- Facilitate USHBC's visit to the region to meet companies and inquire for further information and opportunities.
 - Submit monthly reports detailing activities undertaken on USHBC's behalf.
 - Submit a final assessment report of the market according to EMP format and guidelines, which includes recommendations for future market development for industry feedback and assist companies wishing to proceed to market development in these countries.

IV. Proposal Objectives

This request for proposal seeks a qualified agency to implement a 2022 EMP market assessment of South America (Mexico, Colombia, and Brazil). The selected firm will be expected to produce a market development feasibility study for highbush blueberries in South America. **Please provide specific strategies and tactics along with a detailed proposed budget of \$135,000, laying out retainer fees and activity expenses.**

V. Required Information

In addition to the retainer fee and activity proposal outlined in section IV, please provide the following information in your submission:

- Please provide a detailed overview of your recommended strategy to conduct the South America market development feasibility study
- Please identify a potential food technologist to work with on this project and include their fees in the budget proposal
- History of your work with agricultural organizations or other food organizations or companies
- Company information including prior experience with comparable projects, as well as staff capabilities/backgrounds
- Experience, knowledge, and contacts in the South American (Mexico, Colombia, and Brazil) fresh produce trade and industrial ingredients manufacturing sectors.
- Experience conducting market development feasibility studies.
- Knowledge of USDA's Emerging Market Program and regulations.

This proposal should be limited to 10 pages.

VI. Authority

The agency will work under the direct supervision of USHBC for all program activities. All expenditures must fall within the program budget and must be pre-approved by USHBC.

VII. Non-Discrimination Clause

USHBC does not discriminate based on race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, and marital or familial status.

VIII. Instructions for Submitting Proposals

Proposals should be submitted electronically to:
Shelby Sackett, USHBC Export Program Consultant
shelby.sackett@bryantchristie.com

All proposals are due June 30, 2022, at 5 p.m. Pacific Time. Interested candidates should plan to be available for a virtual interview by USHBC representatives, likely during the week of July 4, 2022. USHBC anticipates making a final decision on a contractor by July 15, 2022, but reserves the right to reach a decision and/or notify applicants of the USHBC's selection at a later date.

Questions regarding this RFP or USHBC's activities in South America should be directed to Shelby Sackett by email.

Thank you very much for your interest in working with the U.S. blueberry industry.