



TABLE OF CONTENTS

LEADERSHIP LETTERS	03
2021-2025 STRATEGIC PLAN	
EVENTS	05
CONSUMER PROMOTIONS	06
Grab a Boost of Blue and Power Periods	
Digital Advertising, Media Relations, Social Media and Influencers	07
Retail	
Health Professionals	09
HEALTH RESEARCH	10
FOODSERVICE	
INDUSTRY RELATIONS	13
EXPORT	
WHO WE ARE	15
Board & Staff	15
Committees	16
ORGANIZATIONAL OVERVIEW	17







If I had to pick a key word to describe 2021, it would be "momentum." After all, that's certainly what we saw at USHBC as we put a laser-like focus on our vision to make blueberries the world's favorite fruit and continued our demand-driving work through dozens of initiatives.

From an aspirational strategic plan, to a referendum supporting our work, to hundreds of consumer and foodservice activations, we were certainly on a roll!

That's why I'm excited to share with you what our 2021 efforts looked like, and how incredibly successful the USHBC was in uniting the industry and growing demand for blueberries.

I hope you'll spend some time with this report that's sure to make you proud – and motivate you to keep the momentum going. After all, the possibilities for blueberries abound!

Sincerely,

Shelly Hartmann USHBC Chair



When I reflect on USHBC's efforts in 2021, I can't help but feel proud of the way the blueberry industry united to make truly incredible progress – all made possible thanks to the thought leadership of so many dedicated visionaries in our industry.

In 2021, we introduced Grab a Boost of Blue, our inspirational consumer call to action, and watched as it took root with consumers, retailers and a growing group of industry licensees. Data and insights took center stage in 2021, with a suite of resources made available at USHBC.org/data. We reconnected in person again at our fall Innovate 2021 conference in Oregon. And the industry recommitted to the USHBC with the passage of the referendum that enjoyed recordbreaking participation.

Big moves all the way around! And big possibilities continue to unfold for the blueberry industry thanks to the demand-driving focus of our new strategic plan and vision for blueberries.

We hope you'll spend some time with this report that captures our myriad accomplishments in 2021. Then, we encourage you to continue to contribute to and support our work as – together – we make blueberries the world's favorite fruit!

Sincerely,

Kasey Cronquist
USHBC President

2021-2025 STRATEGIC PLAN

USHBC approved its 2021-2025 strategic plan that charts an ambitious course to exponentially grow the volume and value of blueberries domestically and across the globe. The comprehensive plan explains how USHBC will lead demand-driving programs based on shared resources, research and insights that inspire possibilities, and sustain the profitable growth of the blueberry industry – ultimately uniting industry stakeholders to work together toward making blueberries the world's favorite fruit.

The plan includes expanded, measurable programmatic goals and tactics for five strategic pillars: integrated marketing communications, health and nutrition, industry services, global business development, and innovation and technology.

USHBC embarked on this comprehensive strategic planning process in partnership with Rockland Dutton Research & Consulting. The work was the most robust planning process in USHBC's history, with significant internal and external input, including nearly 50 interviews of board members and industry leaders, a survey of 193 industry stakeholders, and discussions with USHBC staff and all partner agencies.

REFERENDUM PASSED

In November 2021, a majority of eligible producers and importers of record voted in favor of continuing USHBC's demand-driving work as part of a referendum vote. In fact, 84% of producers and importers voting in the referendum, who also represent 93% of the volume of participating in the vote, were in favor of continuing the program. This represents a 10% increase in support from producers and importers (and 13% more support by volume) voting in favor of USHBC as compared to the 2016 referendum. In fact, a record-breaking 523 million pounds participated in the 2021 referendum.

USHBC is using this new mandate of support to power the growth of the blueberry industry!



MOU FUNDING

The USHBC also benefited from the work of the NABC's United Blueberry Task Force in 2021, which included the creation of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to guide cross-industry incremental funding to support fresh and processed blueberry demand-driving activities across multiple channels. The MOU raised over \$2.7 million, with over \$2.5 million going to USHBC to increase marketing opportunities, advance nutrition affairs and improve our industry's data and analytics.



EVENTS









NABC/USHBC SPRING CONFERENCE + MEETINGS

In March 2021, the blueberry industry once again gathered online for a virtual conference as the pandemic continued to limit in-person events.

During the NABC/USHBC Spring Conference & Meetings, participants heard from inspiring keynotes, participated in professional learning sessions and tackled the latest council and committee business as part of virtual meetings.



USHBC + NABC Tech Symposium and Fall Meetings

USHBC + NABC TECH SYMPOSIUM AND FALL MEETINGS

By fall 2021, the industry was able to gather in person in Salem, Oregon, for a Tech Symposium, tour of regional blueberry operations, networking events, and committee and council meetings. By providing a hybrid format, those who chose to attend virtually were able to participate in presentations and meetings online.

Attendees were thrilled to reconnect as they focused on the latest technologies impacting the industry, heard from informative keynotes and visited area blueberry farms to see some of the latest ag tech in action.

GRAB A BOOST OF BLUE

In 2021, the total blueberry category and fresh segment volumes grew at a modest rate relative to strong sales in 2020.

- Retail volume was up only +1.3% in 2021 relative to a surge of +27.8% in 2020.
- Higher retail pricing in 2021 drove strong retail dollar sales growth for fresh blueberries, +7.3%.
- Though down vs. 2020, frozen blueberry retail volume and dollar sales saw double-digit increases vs. pre-pandemic levels, indicating a fundamental change in consumers' behaviors.







The strategic positioning and consumer call to action "Grab a Boost of Blue" and its corresponding logo were used cohesively in advertising, at point of sale, in social media channels and on packaging to remind consumers of the healthy boost they get from a handful of blueberries.

SEE MORE



USHBC attempted to beat the GUINNESS WORLD RECORD™ title for the tallest stack of pancakes ABC's "Good Morning America." Despite losing out on a record, blueberries gained top-tier exposure on one of the most popular morning shows in the U.S., garnering millions of views.

WATCH

DIGITAL ADVERTISING, MEDIA **RELATIONS, SOCIAL MEDIA AND INFLUENCERS**

An elevated paid search campaign, along with Grab a Boost of Blue digital ads, drove inspiration and purchase intent, while e-commerce partners Instacart and ShopKick drove sales. As a result, the USHBC saw \$2,065,184 in attributed sales of blueberries – double what was moved in 2020 – while the blueberry.org saw higher engagement and click-through rates.

Almost 400,000

units of blueberries moved through shopping apps (Shopkick, Instacart) – double what was moved in 2020!

7.75x return on ad spending

Nearly 6 million video ad completions

Over 360,000













THE MEDIA RELATIONS, **SOCIAL MEDIA AND INFLUENCER PROGRAMMING DROVE:**

1.59 billion

impressions (voice) in media coverage

25+ million engagements

18% growth in Instagram followers (20.7k)

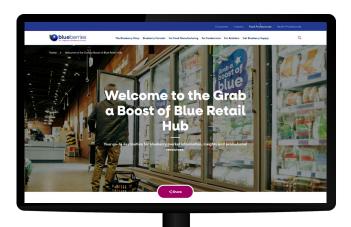
Increased engagement with Instagram Stories

A new presence on video platforms

TikTok and Instagram Reels

RETAIL

USHBC launched several test-and-learn opportunities to explore new ways of supporting retailers to drive blueberry demand, increasing household penetration and prioritizing the value of blueberries. The addition of the Retail Hub and toolkits on the USHBC website provides relevant content and compelling blueberry sales data for produce buyers, retail marketers and supermarket registered dietitians (RDs). In 2021, USHBC toolkits were downloaded more than 1,800 times.



In 2021, the distribution list for the USHBC's retail newsletter, Boosting Demand with Blues, increased over 240% in subscriptions and audience reach.



2021 RETAIL PARTNERSHIPS







USHBC and CA Walnut Board cross-promotion in celebration of Brain Health Month in June included several grocery stores:

GIANT EAGLE

Total blueberries sales equaled over \$540K+.

+23% dollar sales of blueberry vs. prior year.

WEIS MARKET

Sales totaled \$1.2M+ for conventional and organic blueberries.

+36.5% increase in sales.

Facebook Live reached 6.2K+.

TV segments reached 1.8M+ both live and online.

ROUSES MARKETS

\$231K+ and 86K+ units moved.

36% growth in sales and a 57% increase in units compared to June 2020.

Feature in the Registered Dietitian newsletter reached 7K+.

TV segments reached 1.6M+ both live and online.

Facebook Live reached 5.9K+.

65 in-store displays.

Check out all of USHBC's blueberry retail sales data here.















HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

Blue Crew Ambassadors and media registered dietitians far surpassed the voice, reach and engagement goals set in 2021 – by as much as 369%. The work of the USHBC health professionals increased recommendations to eat more blueberries, while bolstering trust in blueberry nutrition benefits as well as interest in incorporating blueberries into easy meals and snacks.





The Blue Crew activations encouraged consumers to include blueberries in their eating patterns and provided education on blueberries' nutrition and health benefits. Media RD partnerships built positive buzz for blueberries by using credentialed experts that encouraged increased consumption, while generating opportunities to secure research coverage in top-tier media outlets like VeryWell Health and Today.com, which alone generated over 5 million views.



A Produce for Better Health (PBH) Partnership provided a platform to amplify blueberry nutrition and health benefits messaging to consumers and health professionals, while leaning on PBH's Have A Plant® Ambassador Network for third-party credibility.



HEALTH RESEARCH

By educating and motivating health professionals to recommend blueberries, USHBC's health professional communication programs build credibility for and maintain high awareness of blueberries' health benefits.



An exciting evolution of the USHBC health research program was the October 2021 appointment of Leslie Wada, Ph.D., RD, a longtime research consultant for the council, as senior director of nutrition and health research. In this newly created role, Wada represents USHBC and NABC as an official spokesperson for both organizations, as well as the blueberry industry at large.

The research highlight in 2021 was the publication of a new research study in Clinical Nutrition (December 2021), which found that the equivalent of one cup of fresh blueberries, consumed as 26 g of freeze-dried blueberries, may reduce the acute cardiometabolic burden of energy-dense meals. Adding anthocyanin-rich blueberries (364 mg anthocyanin and 879 mg phenolics) to a high calorie, high-fat/high-sugar meal (969 kcal, 64.5g fat, 84 g carbohydrate) resulted in reduced insulin and glucose levels, lower total cholesterol, and improved good cholesterol (HDL-C) and its related lipoproteins (fractions of HDL-P and Apo-A1) in the 24 hours following the meal. Promotional efforts included proactive and reactive media outreach that generated a steady drumbeat of articles reaching consumers and health professionals with the blueberry message.

In 2021, 293 media placements referenced USHBC-funded emerging blueberry health research.



ScienceDirect



Clinical Nutrition
plume 41, Issue 1, January 2022, Pages 165-176



Randomized Control Trial

Blueberry anthocyanin intake attenuates the postprandial cardiometabolic effect of an energy-dense food challenge: Results from a double blind, randomized controlled trial in metabolic syndrome participants

HEALTH RESEARCH SNAPSHOT SINCE 2000

54 scientific publications

17 ongoing studies

\$11 million
invested in USHBC-supported research
\$41 million

invested in support of blueberry research

44
collaborations
with academic institutions in the
U.S. and internationally

HEALTH RESEARCH (cont.)

Additionally, four new human clinical studies were funded to expand knowledge on the effect of blueberry intake across the lifespan:

- 1. "The effect of blueberry consumption on brain health in older adults: in vivo measures of cerebral antioxidant and cerebral blood flow"
 - In-Young Choi, Ph.D., University of Kansas Medical Center
- 2. "Pilot Study: Blueberry supplementation effects in subjects at risk for Alzheimer's disease"
 - Murali Doraiswamy, MBBS, FRCP, Duke University School of Medicine
- 3. "The effects of blueberry intake on cerebrovascular and cognitive responses to exercise in low and high-fit young adults"
 - Catarina Rendeiro, Ph.D., University of Birmingham
- "Immune benefits of blueberry consumption and response to influenza vaccination in overweight older men and postmenopausal women"
 - Joan Sabate, M.D., Dr.PH., Loma Linda University

USHBC's comprehensive health research library can be found at <u>USHBC.org/Health</u>.





FOODSERVICE

The 2021 foodservice program focused on continuing efforts to build connections, momentum and volume-driving menu placements. Our efforts included:

HOSTING FOUR VIRTUAL CHEF ROUNDTABLES

- Topics included savory center-of-plate blueberry applications, easy solutions using frozen blueberries and a deep dive into our patron research.
- Yielded 14 new high-volume operator leads.

PILOTING A PROGRAM TO REACH OVER 700 K-12 SCHOOL DISTRICTS

- Blueberry orders up 10% year over year.
- Up to 400% increase in blueberry items menued.
- Increase in orders of blueberry packaged items (frozen waffles/pancakes, cereal bars, etc.).

SPECIFIC PROMOTIONAL EFFORT ON FROZEN BLUEBERRIES

Yielded 30 leads and several immediate menu placements.

CUSTOM MENU INNOVATION SUPPORT FOR VIP CHEF PARTNERS

 Supported eight high-volume operators, leading to at least 11 new menu placements, which resulted in moving an incremental ~500K lbs. of blueberries.



FIELDED A PATRON STUDY THAT GATHERED INSIGHTS FROM OVER 1,000 CONSUMERS ON WHEN, HOW AND WHY THEY'D LIKE TO SEE BLUEBERRIES MENUED

73% said blueberries add to the appeal of a dish.

72% said blueberries make a dish healthier.

70% will pay more for a dish that includes blueberries.

59% wish there were more exciting and adventurous applications for blueberries.

56% wish blueberries were offered on more lunch and dinner menus.

The results of this study make a powerful case for foodservice operators to include more blueberries on menus. After all, consumers are clamoring for them!

INDUSTRY RELATIONS

USHBC's Industry Relations (IR) program engaged blueberry growers and industry stakeholders, and provided valuable content across a variety of communications channels. In 2021, the IR program:

Sent 48 issues of the **Behind the Blue newsletter** and improved the open rate to an average of 28.5%, up from 26.3% in August 2020.



Promoted industry adoption of the **Grab a Boost of Blue** call to action, with blueberry brands leveraging resources on social media, using it in retail packaging and billboards!

Subscribe to

The Business of Blueberries

U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council



Steadily grew "The Business of Blueberries"

podcast, which garnered 21,000 downloads in 2021 to
push the podcast to over 30,000 total lifetime downloads.

The most popular of the 54 total episodes were on topics
related to mechanical harvesting and blueberry genetics.

70% of respondents in a listener survey say that the
podcast has helped their business/operation.



Launched the **new industry site**, <u>ushbc.blueberry.org</u>, as the premier online hub for free marketing resources, industry education and data and insights. The site garnered 15,500+ visitors, with an average of 3.99 pageviews per visitor and average engagement time of nearly 3 minutes.



Secured consistent **earned trade media coverage** across initiatives at a steady increase compared to previous years, totaling 130 placements and 4.2M impressions.

EXPORT

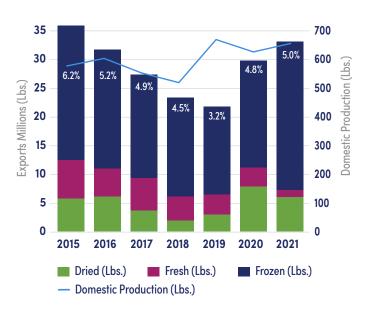


The USHBC export program made great strides on behalf of the industry by opening new international markets for U.S. highbush blueberries and increasing consumer demand overseas.

In 2021, the council's export efforts achieved the following on behalf of the industry:

- Launched the USA Blueberries program, with corresponding promotional content, to present a unified brand that better identifies and exemplifies the quality retailers and consumers can expect from U.S. blueberries.
- Initiated China Foreign NGO on behalf of the industry and established in-country representation to increase awareness of the availability and profitability of USA Blueberries.
- Undertook a global program evaluation to gather data on consumers in key markets to inform strategic decision-making and serve as a benchmark for measuring the growth and success of future programming.

Global USA Blueberry Exports vs. Domestic Production (Excludes Canada)



GLOBAL FOOD MANUFACTURING

The global food manufacturing program focused its efforts on reaching R&D product developers to educate and inspire them on the possibilities for using blueberry ingredients. The program accomplished the following in 2021:

Product Innovation

Developed 15 inspirational new food products to illustrate the versatility of blueberries across both sweet and savory applications, and in categories including dairy, beverage, bakery, meats, sauces and snacks.

New Marketing Materials

Highlighted new product innovations and data to support consumer demand for products featuring blueberries.

Established the USHBC R&D Advisory Board, comprised of 12 R&D product developers and industry leaders in the ingredient space to serve as program advisers and on-call experts to think creatively about development challenges to help drive big volume opportunities.

Provided Customized R&D Support

Supported individual product developers to increase their likelihood of blueberry use and speed the process of bringing a new product to market.

Launched The Blueberry Bootcamp

In partnership with Culinex, USHBC launched an annual educational program for product developers to immerse in the functionality of different blueberry ingredients and get bespoke support in developing new products featuring blueberries.



BOARD & STAFF

STATES

California: Bill Steed, Secretary

Florida: Bill Braswell (alternate: Brittany Lee) Georgia: John Bennett (alternate: Michael Railey)

Michigan: George Fritz Jr., Treasurer

(alternate: Bob Carini) New Jersey: Paul Macrie III (alternate: Matthew Macrie) North Carolina: Neil Moore Oregon: Doug Krahmer

Washington: Bryan Sakuma, Vice Chair

(alternate: Brenton Roy)

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Western: Verne Gingerich (alternate: Ellie Norris)

Midwest: Shelly Hartmann, Chair

(alternate: Patricia Goin) Northeast: Dave Arena

(alternate: Art Galletta, Past Chair)

South: Ryan Atwood (alternate: Stacy Spivey)

HANDLER, IMPORTERS, **EXPORTERS & PUBLIC MEMBERS**

Handler: Risa Bakker Importer #1: John Johnston (alternate: Bonnie Lundblad) Importer #2: |C Clinard |r. (alternate: Guy Cotton)

Importer #3: Janice Honigberg (alternate: Ryan Lockman) Importer #4: Tom Bodtke

Exporter #1, Chile: Jorge Andrés Varela

(alternate: Carlos Abujatum) Exporter #2, Canada: Ray Biln

(alternate: Jesse Brar) Public Member: Amy Howell

(alternate: Bill Cline)

USHBC STAFF

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Kasey Cronquist

Vice President of Global Business Development:

Alicia Adler

Vice President of Engagement and Education:

Amanda Griffin

Global Business Manager:

Renata Dalton

Vice President of Marketing and

Communications: Jennifer Sparks

Senior Director of Nutrition and Health

Research: Leslie Wada, Ph.D.

Director of Operations:

Julie Fogarty

Executive Liaison:

Andrea Walters

Financial Controller:

Adam Winland

Meetings & Events Coordinator:

Mandy Boarman



COMMITTEES

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Chair: Shelly Hartmann
Vice Chair: Bryan Sakuma
Treasurer: George Fritz Jr.
Secretary: Bill Steed
Past Chair: Art Galletta

FINANCE

Chair: George Fritz Jr.
Art Galletta
John Bennett
Mark Hurst
Doug Krahmer
Neil Moore
Brenton Roy
Bill Steed

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HEALTH RESEARCH

Chair: Dave Brazelton Mark Sweeney Amy Howell Mike Mainland Dave Trinka

USHBC BLUEBERRY INNOVATION & TECHNOLOGY

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Andrés Armstrong
Christy Butler
Chad Hansen
Mark Hurst
Mike Mainland
Noel Sakuma
Rex Schultz

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Chair: Bo Slack
Ryan Atwood
Risa Bakker
Tom Bodtke
Jesse Brar
Guy Cotton
Jerod Gross
Ryan Lockman
Andrew Maiman
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Jorge Andrés Varela

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Denny Doyle
Janice Honigberg
John Johnston
Bonnie Lundblad
Ken Patterson
Nathan Sakuma
John Shelford
Amanda Steele

EXPORT

Chair: Dave Arena

Mario Flores
Bob Carini
Elizabeth Carranza
Ryan Gentel
Jeff Malensky
Ellie Norris
Nathan Sakuma
Stacy Spivey
Don Van de Werken



ORGANIZATIONAL OVERVIEW

Established in 2000, The U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council (USHBC) is a federal agriculture research and promotion program with independent oversight from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). USHBC represents blueberry growers and packers in North and South America who market their blueberries in the United States and overseas, and works to promote the growth and well-being of the entire blueberry industry. USHBC was established by blueberry growers and currently has 2,500 growers, packers and importers. USHBC is committed to providing blueberries that are grown, harvested, packed and shipped in clean, safe environments.

VISION: USHBC empowers the industry to make blueberries the world's favorite fruit.

MISSION: To grow consumer demand for blueberries by uniting industry stakeholders through research, promotions and resources that strengthen their ability to compete in the global marketplace.



