



USHBC Referendum FAQ

The U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council (USHBC) was established in 2000 as a Research and Promotion Program under the U.S. Department of Agriculture. **For over 20 years, the USHBC has helped grow the value of and sell more blueberries to people in the U.S. and around the world.** Since its launch, the USHBC has been required to hold a referendum every five years, in which eligible producers are asked to vote to determine the continuation of the USHBC. The next referendum is slated for October 2021, and this FAQ details the process and how members of the blueberry industry can participate.

When is the referendum held?

The referendum is scheduled for October 8-22, 2021. All eligible producers and importers will receive a ballot from the USDA via FedEx or Express Mail beginning October 1, and ballots can be returned within the voting window by mail or electronically.

Who votes on the referendum?

Eligible producers who produce 2,000 pounds or more of highbush blueberries domestically, or eligible importers who import 2,000 pounds or more of fresh or processed blueberries, are able to vote on the referendum.

How is the outcome determined?

As stated in the Blueberry Promotion, Research, and Information Order, the referendum passes "if it is favored by a majority of producers and importers voting for approval who *also* represent a majority of the volume of blueberries represented in the referendum." This two-part test means that both the number of votes and the majority of the volume must approve the continuation of the USHBC.

The exact timeframe for reporting on the results is dependent on and determined by USDA, but results are typically announced within two weeks.

What is voting turnout expected to be?

Based on the past four referendums, average voting participation was approximately 450 voters representing 175 million pounds. Past referendums have averaged a 79.8% vote of support, ranging from 67.8% (2000) and as high as 88% (2011). Referendums have also passed with an average of 86% of the volume in support, ranging between 73% (2000) and 98% (2011). The USDA will send out approximately 1,850 ballots in the 2021 referendum.

Who can I contact at USDA/AMS for more information about the referendum?

More background information on the USHBC referendum is available on the [Federal Register here](#). For inquiries, you can contact Jeanette Palmer, Marketing Specialist, PED, SCP, AMS, USDA, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Room 1406-S, Stop 0244, Washington, DC 20250-0244; telephone: (202) 720-5976; or email: Jeanette.Palmer@usda.gov.