



Impact Report 2024



Vision

To serve as a recognized leader and trusted partner in addressing issues, opportunities and industry practices that drive success and profitability in the production and distribution of blueberries in North America and around the world.

Mission

To be the united voice, advocate and resource serving the interests of the highbush blueberry industry.





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Leadership



“ In 2024, NABC’s advocacy efforts were taken to a new level – and drove impactful results! This report spells out the many ways our governmental affairs team elevated NABC’s profile in Washington, D.C., and nationwide, as well as how our efforts affected policy. As you read, you’ll also discover our myriad approaches to supporting members with data and insights, best practices and critical industry developments – all focused on our goal of uniting the blueberry industry.

Pat Goin

Pat Goin
NABC Chair



“ There’s a saying about ‘punching above your weight,’ and that metaphor truly applies to our advocacy efforts in 2024. As you spend some time with this report, I think you’ll be extremely impressed by our government affairs efforts and the level of visibility and influence we’ve achieved in a single year. I also think you’ll enjoy reading about our many other successes – all focused on providing members with the support, benefits and market intel they count on from NABC.

Kasey Cronquist

Kasey Cronquist
NABC President



NABC Committees

Board of Directors Officers

Pat Goin, **Chair**
Teddy Koukoulis, **Vice Chair**
Ellie Norris, **Secretary**
Tom Avinelis, **Treasurer**
Ken Patterson, **Past Chair**

Executive Committee

Pat Goin, **Chair**
Teddy Koukoulis, **Vice Chair**
Ellie Norris, **Secretary**
Tom Avinelis, **Treasurer**
Ryan Lockman, **Member at Large**
Ken Patterson, **Past Chair**

U.S. North American Grower (4)

Andy Brannen
Chelsea Consalo
David Jackson
Brittany Lee

Canadian North American Grower (1)

Jason Smith

Mexican North American Grower (1)

Cesar Ortiz Mendoza

North American Distributor (3)

Bo Slack
Ryan Lockman
Derek Eisele

Industry Trade Organization (1)

Todd Sanders, **California
Blueberry Commission**

Nominating Committee

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Teddy Koukoulis
Bo Slack
Neil Moore
Tom Bodtke
Ellie Norris
Pat Goin, NABC Chair (ex-officio)

Finance Committee

Tom Avinelis, **Chair**
Jason Smith
Ellie Norris
Tom Bodtke
Micah Weiss
Matt Macrie
Pat Goin, NABC Chair (ex-officio)

Bylaws Committee

Tom Bodtke, **Chair**
Ryan Lockman
Todd Sanders
Tom Avinelis
Andy Brannen
Teddy Koukoulis
Pat Goin, NABC Chair (ex-officio)

Government Affairs Committee

Teddy Koukoulis, **Chair**
Danny Weeden
Ernesto Diaz
Brittany Lee
Brandon Raso
Jason Smith
Ivan Maldonado
Brad Moorer
Ryan Lockman
Alex Cornelius
Cort Brazelton
Pat Goin, NABC Chair (ex-officio)

Awards Committee

Neil Moore, **Chair**
Cort Brazelton
Teddy Koukoulis
Mike Mainland
Chelsea Consalo
Matt McManus
Pat Goin, NABC Chair (ex-officio)

United Blueberry Advisory Committee

Joe Barsi, **Chair**
Juan Ignacio Allende
Tom Avinelis
Daniel Bustamante
Gonzalo Canessa
JC Clinard
Carlos Correa
Gonzalo de Elizalde
David Jackson
Steve Magami
Andrew Maiman
Nicholas Osmulski
Steve Phillips
Roberto Samano

Trade Task Force

Jeff Malensky, **Chair**
Christina Butler
Cristian Vivanco
Josh Scheel
Ellie Norris
John Duval

USDA Food Procurement Task Force

John Shelford, **Chair**
Haley Noonan
Josh Scheel
Jeff Malensky
David Zapf
Jake Johnson
Carina Chavez
Manuel Garibay
Elise Oliver

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Communications**, Kevin Hamilton
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Education**, Amanda Griffin
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Director of Government Affairs,
Alyssa Houtby
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Kristy Babb
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Andrea Walters
Director of Operations, Julie Fogarty
Director of Finance, Jared Ruggles
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**Communications and Digital Content
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Finance and Administrative Specialist,
Holly Leslie
Compliance Coordinator, Crystal Wills
Administrative Assistant,
Lisa Buckmaster

Uniting the Industry

MOU Funds Help the NABC Soar to New Heights

The blueberry industry Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is unprecedented in the ag industry, and proof of what an aspirational vision and innovative collaboration can achieve. In just three years, the MOU brought in almost \$9 million to support NABC and USHBC's efforts. For NABC, these funds help give our growers seats at tables they previously could not afford to join. It's like having a group of large investors volunteering to help supercharge the future health of an entire industry.

Which is why the NABC is exceedingly grateful to the organizations that see the vision, confidently contribute to the MOU and wholeheartedly commit to supporting efforts that help the industry thrive. From advocacy staff to data and insights efforts, MOU dollars are elevating the NABC to levels we've never achieved before.

It's exceptional to see. And it's an exceptional opportunity for additional thought leaders who want to be part of something big!

History of the MOU

In 2021, NABC organized the United Blueberry Task Force to facilitate a conversation about how to secure a prosperous future for the blueberry industry.

The collective vision was formalized under an MOU, and the United Blueberry Advisory Committee was formed to help continue to further grow and build upon that vision. In 2024, 13 companies were signatories of this MOU,



committing their time, knowledge, trust and additional resources to better ensure that the industry’s dreams are matched with the necessary means.

Since 2022, the MOU has raised \$8,932,636, which supports NABC and USHBC efforts.



MOU Funds Help the NABC Soar to New Heights

In 2024, MOU funds contributed to the following NABC achievements:

- ★ Creating the first-ever NABC U.S. Policy Platform.
- ★ Hosting a National Blueberry Month celebration on Capitol Hill.
- ★ Advocating for the passage of a new Farm Bill and ensuring the blueberry industry's priorities are included in the House and Senate versions introduced in the final days of 2024.
- ★ Advocating for legislative and regulatory changes that will modernize the H-2A program and address the rising cost of labor.
- ★ Serving as a co-plaintiff in a lawsuit challenging the Department of Labor's Farmworker Protection Rule.
- ★ Improving our growers' access to the Tree Assistance Program.
- ★ Having Director of Government Affairs Alyssa Houtby appointed to the Agricultural Technical Advisory Committees for Trade (ATAC).



Thank You to Our Generous MOU Participants!

MOU Signatory IMPORT Organizations



MOU Signatory EXPORT Organizations



MOU Signatory CANADIAN Organization



Country Partners



Programs and Events

The Blueberry Hill Climb

January 29-31, 2024, Washington, D.C.



The Blueberry Hill Climb

By the numbers:

- 43 attendees
- 47 congressional and senatorial meetings
- 26 member-level meetings
- 10 meetings with USDA, including the Office of the Secretary, Risk Management Agency (RMA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Farm Service Agency (FSA), Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) and Foreign Agriculture Service (FAS)
- 1 meeting with the Department of Labor
- 1 meeting with the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative

The Blueberry Hill Climb, our key advocacy event, included keynote addresses by USDA Deputy Secretary Xochitl Torres and Sen. Debbie Stabenow (D-MI), chair of the Senate Ag Committee, who was also the recipient of the inaugural Blueberry Pinnacle Award. Attendees were also briefed by preeminent agricultural labor attorney Kristi Boswell on regulatory actions by the Department of Labor and the Department of Homeland Security regarding the H-2A program and Adverse Effect Wage Rate.

Congressional Meetings:

States Represented	U.S. Senators	U.S. Representatives	Total	Member-Level Meetings
AL	2	0	2	1
CA	0	5	5	3
FL	2	2	4	1
GA	2	2	4	2
IN	1	1	2	2
MI	2	3	5	4
MS	1	0	1	1
NC	2	2	4	3
NJ	1	2	3	1
OR	2	4	6	3
WA	1	2	3	1
Committees	1	2	3	1
Other		5	5	3





Programs and Events

The Blueberry Convention

February 28-March 1, 2024, Tucson, Arizona

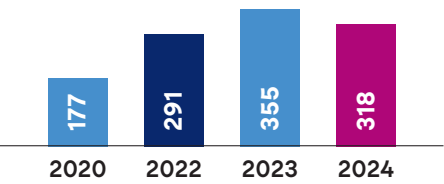
By the numbers:

- ★ 318 attendees
- ★ 27 exhibitors



The blueberry industry gathered at The 2024 Blueberry Convention in Tucson to connect, participate in critical professional learning and network during social events, including the Grab a Boost of Blue Golf Tournament. Dozens of educational sessions covered the hottest industry topics, including blueberry growth in retail, growing profitable demand and advancements in blueberry harvesting.

**Attendees
2020-2024:**



The Blueberry Summit

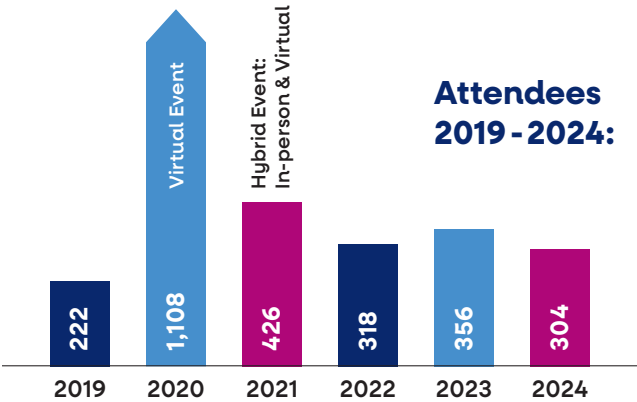
September 25-27, 2024, Denver, Colorado



By the numbers:

- 304 attendees
- 28 exhibitors

The 2024 Blueberry Summit brought the blueberry industry to Denver for knowledge building and networking. The event included deep dives into how blueberries can drive the retail basket, harnessing data to drive decision-making, blueberry health research and retailers’ requests of the blueberry industry. Plus, industry luminaries were honored during our NABC Awards ceremony and reception.



Government Affairs

U.S. Policy Platform

In 2024, the NABC Board of Directors approved our first U.S. Policy Platform that outlines the positions and beliefs of U.S. blueberry growers, handlers and marketers, and guides the policy actions of the NABC.

The overarching objective of the policy positions outlined in the platform – and NABC’s U.S. governmental affairs strategy – is to protect and enhance the competitiveness of the U.S. blueberry industry.

The U.S. Policy Platform will be updated annually by the NABC Government Affairs Committee and ratified by the NABC Board of Directors. It addresses the following issues (listed in no specific order) that are a priority for the blueberry industry:

- ★ The Farm Bill and agricultural policy
- ★ Agriculture workforce and labor policy
- ★ International trade and market access
- ★ Conservation and the environment
- ★ Food safety and labeling
- ★ Nutrition and consumption
- ★ Tax policy



National Blueberry Month

The NABC laid the groundwork to officially recognize July as National Blueberry Month through decades of work with the USDA. The first proclamation was issued by USDA in 1974, and in recent years, NABC has hosted unique events in our nation’s capital every July to commemorate National Blueberry Month and the incredible growth, value and impact our industry has on the economy and our communities.

In 2024, NABC brought the National Blueberry Month celebration to Capitol Hill with the inaugural Blueberry Ice Cream Social in the House Ag Committee room. NABC partnered with the National Milk Producers Federation to host the event, which drew a crowd of over 500 Hill staffers.

Guests enjoyed a bowl of Friendly’s ice cream topped with their choice of fresh, frozen or dried blueberries from the different production regions. The event was an excellent opportunity to showcase all forms of blueberries and the geographical diversity of the industry.

NABC also partnered with Mondelez International to hand out blueberry Clif bars and BelVita biscuits at the busy Cap South Metro Stop to congressional members and staff commuting to the Hill.

These events and strategic partnerships are an important part of NABC’s strategic plan to grow the profile of the blueberry industry in D.C., and position the organization to be an influential voice on the federal policies our members care about.



Government Affairs

The Farm Bill

Throughout 2024, NABC worked tirelessly to advocate for the passage of a new Farm Bill. While Congress ultimately punted to 2025 and instead passed yet another one-year extension of the 2018 Farm Bill, we made significant progress toward securing substantial funding and programmatic support for specialty crops.

NABC is an active member of the Specialty Crop Farm Bill Alliance (SCFBA), a national coalition of more than 200 organizations representing specialty crop commodities, and serves on the Steering Committee and Legislative Committee.

In May, the House Ag Committee passed a Farm Bill that included virtually all of the SCFBA's policy recommendations, including those that NABC actively lobbied for such as:

- ★ Improvements to the Tree Assistance Program.
- ★ Improvements to the crop insurance products for specialty crops.
- ★ Additional funding for the Specialty Crop Research Initiative and the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program.
- ★ New dedicated funding for mechanization automation research for specialty crops.

NABC was proud to support the House version of the Farm Bill, and likewise supported the Senate version when it was introduced in the final days of 2024.

Looking ahead to 2025, the blueberry industry is well positioned to ensure our priorities are included in the new Farm Bill.





Modernizing Labor Practices

Access to and the cost of agricultural labor is one of the greatest challenges affecting nearly all U.S. blueberry growers. NABC is working to address the rising cost of labor by advocating for legislative and regulatory changes that will modernize the H-2A program.

NABC participated in meetings with two cabinet-level secretaries, U.S. Department of Labor Acting Secretary Julie Su and USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack, on to push for substantive changes to the Adverse Effect Wage Rate calculation, and secured a commitment from USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) to amend the Farm Labor Survey.

We advocated for legislation to impose a two-year freeze on the Adverse Effect Wage Rates (AEWR), and submitted comments on proposed Department of Labor (DOL) regulations that will impact all agriculture employers.

NABC was one of 10 co-plaintiffs that filed a lawsuit in the U.S. District Court of the Southern District of Mississippi, Southern Division, challenging the DOL's Farmworker Protection Rule. The lawsuit argued that the Rule was a gross regulatory overreach by DOL, and limited the freedom of speech of agricultural employers.

In November, the court agreed with plaintiffs and granted a nationwide stay on parts of the Rule until the conclusion of proceedings in the case. Due to multiple legal challenges, as of December 2024, DOL indefinitely suspended implementation of the Rule.

“ The NABC listens intently to our members’ needs, which led to participation in our first lawsuit as an organization. Pushing back on regulatory overreach was important to our members because it costs them in the long run. So, we stepped up to represent that critical need – and we succeeded.

– Kasey Cronquist, NABC President

“ It’s efforts like this that put dollars back in growers’ pockets and mean a lot to our members’ bottom lines. This effort likely saved the blueberry community millions of dollars. That’s a member benefit that cannot be overstated.

– Pat Goin, NABC Chair



Government Affairs

Strategic Public Affairs on Major Issues

NABC raised its advocacy profile nationally and weighed in on critical news events affecting the blueberry industry through opinion pieces in important ag publications.

NABC President Kasey Cronquist discussed the impact of the International Longshoremen’s Association (ILA) port strike on blueberry growers and consumers in *AgriPulse*. And in *The Detroit News*, blueberry grower Chad Reenders explained how rising labor costs are hurting blueberry farmers in Michigan.



Advocacy Efforts That Made a Difference

In addition to the efforts mentioned, NABC's 2024 advocacy work included:

- ★ Securing a USDA purchase of 6.3 million pounds of frozen blueberries and 2.7 million pounds of dried blueberries.
- ★ Helping organize farm tours for members of Congress and USDA Leadership.
- ★ Meeting with USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack and DOL Acting Secretary Julie Su to advocate for changes in how the Adverse Effect Wage Rate is calculated.
- ★ Testifying at the first meeting of the new Bipartisan Congressional Ag Trade Caucus about global trade dynamics affecting the U.S. blueberry industry.
- ★ Participating in a roundtable meeting with the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) Chief Ag Negotiator about the industry's export market priorities.
- ★ Advocating for improvements to blueberry crop insurance.
- ★ Organizing a D.C. fly-in for NABC members to advocate for the elimination of Japan's tariff. Attendees met with representatives from the Japanese Embassy, Department of Commerce, USDA and USTR.
- ★ Advocating for and securing improvements to crop insurance products for growers.
- ★ Advocating for economic assistance funding that resulted in USDA's Market Assistance for Specialty Crops Program, and working with USDA to ensure payments will include post-harvest costs such as packing and cold storage fees.
- ★ Advocating for a new Farm Bill that supports specialty crop producers.
- ★ Advocating for important improvements to the Tree Assistance Program. In October, USDA-FSA announced that it was extending assistance to trees, bushes and vines that have not died but are no longer capable of production (not economically viable).
- ★ Advocating for agriculture disaster relief funding to support growers impacted by disasters in 2023 and 2024, which resulted in Congress including \$20 billion in for ag disaster relief in the year-end spending package.

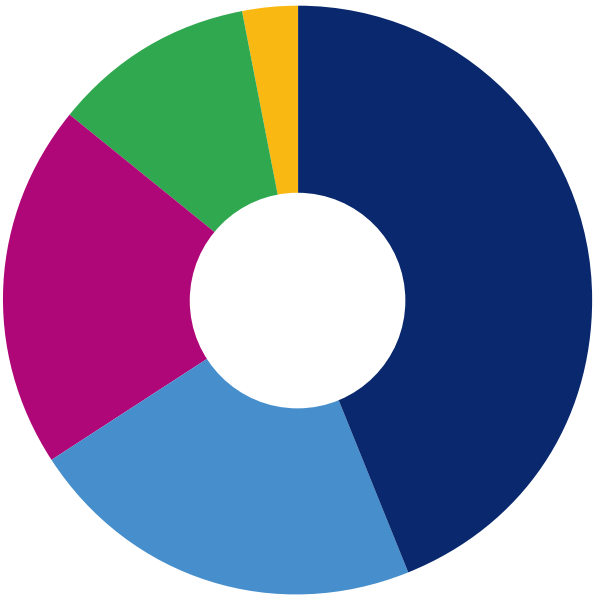


Membership

NABC members are thought leaders in the blueberry industry. Our powerful membership includes growers, fruit brokers, processors, food manufacturers and others connected to the blueberry community. In 2024, our membership grew to 192 active members, including 36 new members.

Throughout 2024, NABC staff participated in a series of industry engagement events in support of USHBC's assessment increase efforts.

Membership by Industry



Financial

Thanks to the financial contributions and resources, as well as the trust blueberry industry stakeholders put into the NABC in 2024, we're in the best financial position in our history. Not only do we have healthy reserves, we've strengthened our ability to grow our influence and impact in meaningful ways – and to keep building, keep growing and keep advancing the blueberry industry.

Company Contributions

NABC is grateful to the following companies for their continued support throughout the year. Through their support, we are better able to serve the blueberry community.

\$30,000+

MBG
Unitec

\$20,000+

Fall Creek
Naturipe
Driscoll's
TOMRA
WECO

\$10,000 - \$19,999

Ellips
California Giant Berry Farms
OzBlu/United Exports
Family Tree Farms
Wish Farms
North Bay Produce
BerryFresh
A&B Packing

\$5,000 - \$9,999

Koppert Biological Systems
NuBerry/Berry Bros.
BeeFlow
Consalo Family Farms
Thunderbird Plastics
Sonoco/Highland Packaging
RipeLocker
Pinion
Oxbo
Mastronardi
Finefield
Crawford Packaging
California Berry Genetics
BerryHill Foods
Always Fresh
AgroFresh

\$500 - \$4,999

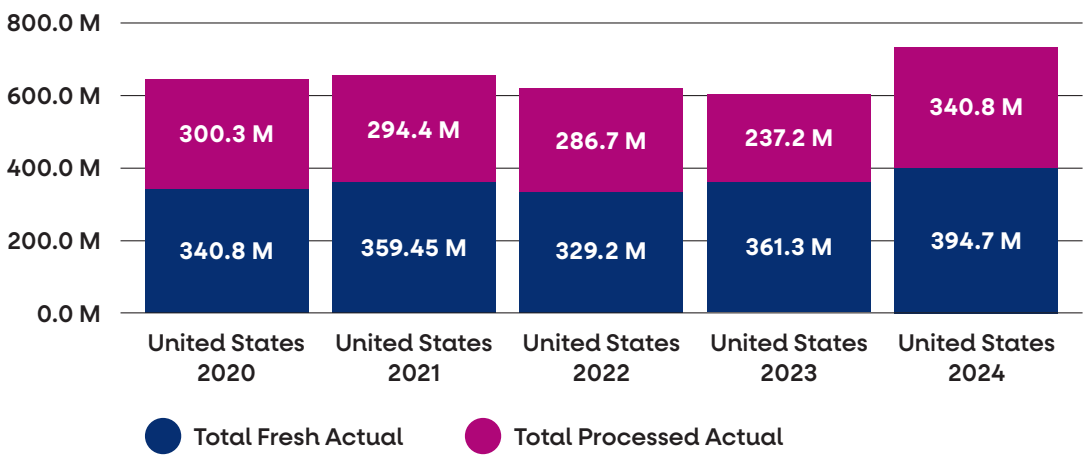
Z Group
Stevens Water Monitoring Systems Inc.
Persist Products
Netafim
Dash
Belmark
BeeWise
Agrauxine Corp
AgCode
2nd Sight
Yakima Label
Somerfield Farms
Monte Package Co.
Monarch Tractor
MAF Industries
Homegrown Organics
Giumarra
BirdGard
Bird Control Group
Bee Better Certified
AMVT
Burro
Blueline Manufacturing
Littau Harvester



Data and Insights

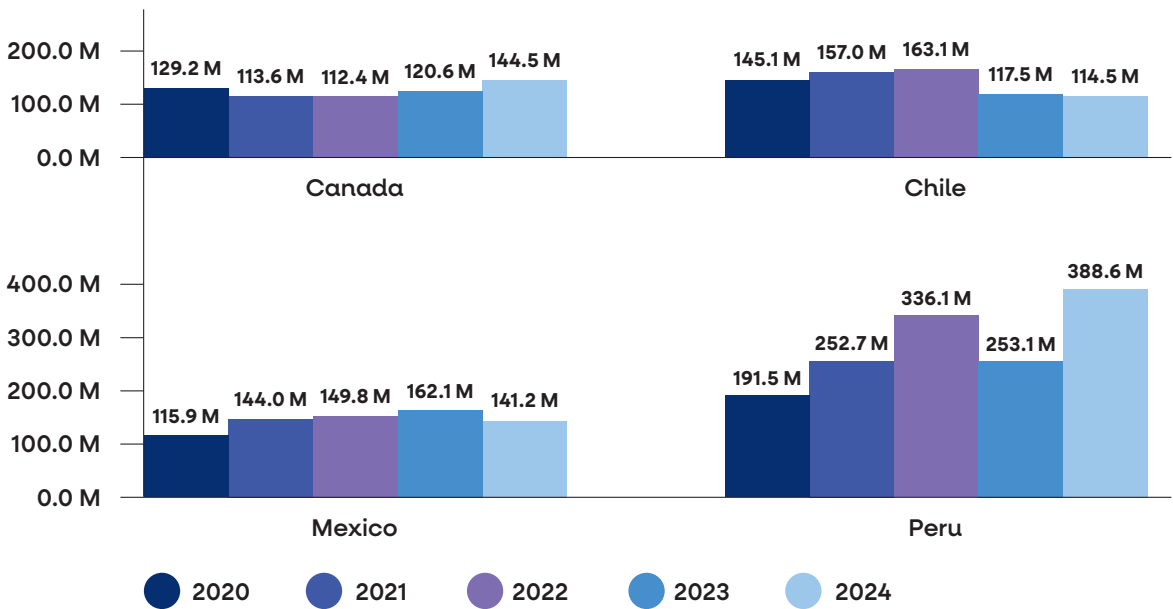
The profitability and success of the blueberry industry is our driving passion, and providing members with the metrics they need to make good decisions and stay competitive are front of mind for us 24/7. To support this goal, in 2024 we added a new member-only version of our weekly crop call and introduced a new and improved cold storage report.

United States Production Volumes (lbs) 2020-2024



Source: NABC Crop Report

Total Imported Blueberries (lbs) in the U.S. by Year



Source: USDA Foreign Agricultural Service Global Agricultural Trade System

Industry Recognition

The annual NABC Awards spotlight exceptional individuals whose long-standing career accomplishments have benefited the blueberry industry as a whole.

In 2024, we honored Gene J. Galletta, Ph.D., (posthumously) with the Duke Galletta Award, which recognizes excellence in blueberry horticultural research. And Andres Armstrong and Keith Mixon earned the Alex Wetherbee Award, which recognizes outstanding contributions to the blueberry industry in marketing and promotion

We also recognized Mark Villata, former executive director of USHBC and NABC, with the Blueberry Hall of Fame Award that celebrates blueberry leaders, growers and suppliers who have made a lasting impact on the blueberry industry in North America. This award is the council and industry's highest honor.



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