



The Blueberry Hill Climb 2025



KEY ISSUES AT A GLANCE

Top Five Farm Bill Priorities

The NABC supports improvements to existing Farm Bill programs and the creation of new programs that enhance the competitiveness of U.S. blueberry growers.

Research

NABC recommends significantly increasing funding for all research programs that support the specialty crop industry, including the Specialty Crop Research Initiative, IR-4, and the National Clean Plant Network. NABC urges Congress to include new dedicated funding for mechanization and automation research.

Trade Development

The blueberry industry has benefited tremendously from the Market Access Program, the Technical Assistance for Specialty Crops, and other trade facilitation programs funded through the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC). NABC supports the doubling of funding for the MAP from \$200 million to \$400 million.

Crop Insurance

To ensure blueberry growers have access to effective crop insurance products, NABC supports the creation of a Specialty Crop Advisory Committee within the Risk Management Agency, added flexibility in the 508(h) standards for specialty crops, enhanced data collection, and codifying administrative improvements to the Whole Farm Revenue Insurance Program. Additionally, NABC requests language that directs RMA to research and develop a Production Revenue History (PRH) policy for blueberries.

Nutrition

NABC supports continued investment in the Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP), the only dedicated program to increase participants' buying power for fruits and vegetables, including through Produce Prescriptions.

Tree Assistance Program

The Tree Assistance Program (TAP) provides financial assistance to eligible orchardists and nursery tree growers to replant or rehabilitate eligible trees, bushes, and vines lost by natural disasters.

Policy Recommendations

- **Eliminate** the 15% mortality threshold for assistance and bring the program in line with the livestock indemnity program.
- **Extend** assistance to trees, bushes and vines that have not died but are no longer capable of production (not economically viable).
- **Increase** the cost-share rate for rehabilitation from the current 50% to 65% to match the cost-share rate for replanting.
- **Extend** the period of time to carry out replacement and rehabilitation activities from the current 12 months to 2 years or more as determined by the Secretary.
- **Eliminate** the Adjusted Gross Income and Payment Attribution limitations.
- **Allow** for growers to replant using an alternative variety.
- **Allow** for growers to replant using an alternative stand density.
- **Require** FSA to respond to an application for assistance within 120 days.

The Agriculture Workforce and Blueberry Industry

The greatest challenge facing U.S. blueberry growers today is labor availability. With a declining domestic agricultural workforce, growers increasingly rely on the H-2A Visa Program. However, rising costs, including those driven by the Adverse Effect Wage Rate (AEWR), are making the program unworkable and unsustainable.

Adverse Effect Wage Rate

Each year, the Department of Labor sets the Adverse Effect Wage Rate, or AEWR, based on the previous year's average wage rate, as determined by the USDA Farm Labor Survey. In effect, last year's average wage becomes next year's minimum wage, driving artificial inflation in agricultural wages unlike any other industry. Additionally, growers shoulder the added costs of transportation and housing, as well as administrative costs of using the H-2A program.

The United States' high wage rates is the single greatest factor impeding American farmers' competitiveness.

For blueberry-producing states, the AEWR has increased year after year, reaching an average of \$17.86 in 2025. By comparison, growers pay approximately \$11 per hour in Canada and just \$1.50 per hour in Mexico.

With labor making up over 40% of a blueberry producer's total farm expenses, these rising costs pose a significant challenge.

AEWR Increases in Blueberry Producing States

State	2023 AEWR	2024 AEWR	2025 AEWR	Percent Change 2023 to 2025
California	\$18.65	\$19.75	\$19.97	7.08%
Florida	\$14.33	\$14.77	\$16.23	13.26%
Georgia	\$13.67	\$14.68	\$16.08	17.63%
Indiana	\$17.17	\$18.18	\$19.57	13.98%
Michigan	\$17.34	\$18.50	\$18.15	4.67%
Mississippi	\$13.67	\$14.53	\$14.83	8.49%
New Jersey	\$16.55	\$17.20	\$17.96	8.52%
North Carolina	\$14.91	\$15.81	\$16.16	8.38%
Oregon	\$17.97	\$19.25	\$19.82	10.29%
Washington	\$17.97	\$19.25	\$19.82	10.29%

Congress must act to halt the current AEWR and work with DOL and USDA to develop an alternative that eliminates artificial inflation.

NABC urges Congress to support the Supporting Farm Operation Act, which would freeze the AEWR at the 2024 rate through the end of 2026. This would provide much-needed relief for farmers and allow time for the DOL and USDA to implement long-term administrative reforms to the H-2A program.

Tax Policies that Support U.S. Blueberry Growers

NABC supports targeted tax policies that strengthen the U.S. blueberry industry by fostering innovation, encouraging capital investment and sustaining domestic production. These policies are essential to ensuring the industry's global competitiveness, while supporting American farmers and rural economies.

NABC Farm Bill Policy Recommendations

- **Support Section 199A and 199A(g) tax deductions for farmers and farm cooperatives**
Section 199A and 199A(g) deductions provide financial certainty to family farmers and agricultural cooperatives in the U.S. blueberry industry. Section 199A allows family farms operating as pass-through entities to reduce their tax burden while Section 199A(g) ensures agricultural cooperatives can continue to deliver valuable tax benefits to their members.
- **Support Bonus Depreciation**
Bonus depreciation enables farmers to invest in equipment and infrastructure by allowing immediate deductions on qualified assets.
- **Support Estate Tax Exemption and Stepped-Up Basis**
These provisions help farmers avoid excessive tax burdens when transferring land and equipment to heirs, preserving the economic viability of family-owned farms.
- **Support New Tax Policies that Address Increasing Labor Costs**
Rising labor costs, including higher H-2A wage rates and processing fees, and state agriculture overtime laws, present significant challenges for U.S. blueberry farmers. NABC supports tax policies that offset these costs.
- **Support a New Tax Credit for Investments in Agriculture Technology**
This would help farmers innovate, improve productivity and stay competitive, while addressing challenges and meeting consumer demand for sustainable practices.
- **Support Tax Deductions for Agricultural Practices**
NABC supports tax deductions for certain agricultural practices, including organic certification, conservation, energy-efficient equipment, and renewable energy systems.

Support the Supporting Innovation in Agriculture Act

NABC endorses the "Supporting Innovation in Agriculture Act" which provides a 30% refundable investment tax credit to encourage the adoption of advanced agricultural technologies. This legislation helps farmers innovate, improve productivity, and stay competitive.

Trade and U.S. Competitiveness

The success of the U.S. blueberry industry is built upon market stability, which is made possible by trade agreements that are fair and enhance U.S. competitiveness. For blueberry growers, this means access to export markets and maintaining a steady, year-round supply to meet the demands of U.S. consumers, who make up the world's most valuable market for blueberries.

Counterseasonal imports play an important role in ensuring a consistent, year-round supply which has fueled significant growth in consumer demand for blueberries.

Over the past decade, there has been an exponential rise in consumer demand for blueberries. According to USDA, there was a 97% increase in per capita blueberry consumption between 2011-2021.

The Role of Imports

Both domestic production and imports from Canada, Chile, Mexico, and Peru ensure a reliable, year-round supply of fresh blueberries for American consumers.

- Year-round supply ensures fresh blueberries remain a household staple.
- Consistent supply drives consumer demand, which benefits U.S. blueberry growers.
- Blueberry imports from key trade partners contribute over \$2.4 billion in annual economic impact to the U.S., complementing the significant economic contributions of U.S. growers.

Annual U.S. Economic Impact	Domestic	Imports	Total
Output	\$6.6 B	\$2.4 B	\$9 B
Jobs	49,262	12,414	61,767
Labor Income	\$2.4 B	\$876 M	\$3.3 B
Business Taxes	\$193 M	\$84.8 M	\$278 M

The North American Blueberry Industry: U.S., Canada, and Mexico

The U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) has helped drive growth of the U.S. blueberry industry.

- More than half of all U.S. blueberry exports go to Canada.
- The U.S. is the largest export market for both Mexican and Canadian blueberries.
- A recent Euromonitor study identified Canada and Mexico as the top two export opportunities for our U.S. blueberry growers.
- U.S. blueberry companies have expanded their operations to Mexico to meet consumer demand when U.S. production is out of season.
- U.S. growers ship their blueberries to Canada for freezing and storage, oftentimes returning to the U.S. market after processing.

Strengthening U.S. Growers' Global Competitiveness

The government can support U.S. growers by:

Passing a Farm Bill

A strong Farm Bill is essential to ensuring U.S. growers have the tools and resources they need to remain competitive in a global market.

Investments in Innovation

New plant varieties and advanced genetics are critical for U.S. growers to compete for market share. The Tree Assistance Program provides assistance for producers to replant to new varieties following a natural disaster.

Leveling the Playing Field

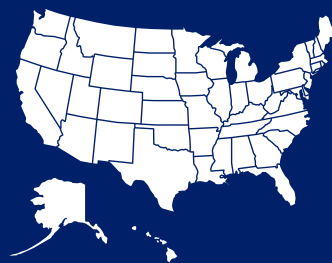
U.S. growers face some of the highest regulatory and labor costs in the world. Policies that reduce unnecessary burdens and provide targeted support will ensure growers can remain in business.



ECONOMIC IMPACT REPORT



2025
UNITED STATES



Highlights of the economic
impact from U.S. highbush
blueberry grower spending

About the Study

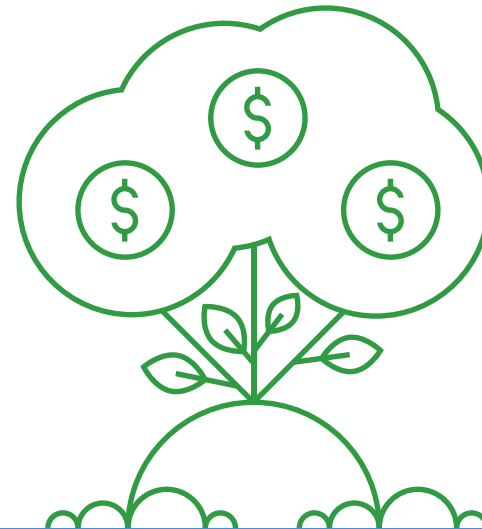
The economic impact study was commissioned by the U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council and conducted in February 2025 by Dennis Tootelian, Ph.D., Emeritus Professor at California State University, Sacramento. The analysis is based on U.S. highbush blueberry acres in production and in development. Projections are based on annual average expenditures, which means that this impact is expected to occur each year that such spending occurs. Acreage statistics were secured from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. A prior economic impact study, also conducted by Dr. Tootelian, was conducted in 2020 and is used as the basis for the growth indicators depicted above. The full economic impact study and analysis is available at www.usbbc.org.



IMPACT

Annual economic impact
generated by grower spending:

**~\$6.7
billion**
(\$18.3 million/day)



JOBS

Full-time equivalent jobs
created and sustained by
grower spending each year:

49,260



FOOTPRINT

National highbush
blueberry acreage*:

130,683

*Bearing and nonbearing acres

INDIRECT BUSINESS TAXES

Indirect business
taxes generated by
grower spending:
(not including income taxes)

**~\$193.1
million**
(\$529,000/day)

“The U.S. highbush blueberry industry is a powerful financial force. Behind every farm are growers who not only tend a truly remarkable superfruit, but also stimulate business activity, create thousands of jobs and contribute mightily to the economy and their communities.”

— Kasey Cronquist | President
U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council

LABOR INCOME

Labor income generated
by the business activities
related to grower spending:

**~\$2.4
billion**
(\$6.7 million/day)



These dollars go into wages and salaries for new employment, as well as expanded incomes to those already in the labor force for activities such as overtime pay. The dollars are then diffused throughout the economy as the funds are spent on crucial goods and services such as food, housing, transportation and health care.

A Growing and Dynamic Industry

According to economic impact reports published in 2020 and 2025, the U.S. highbush blueberry industry thrived on all key economic impact indicators:

43% ↗
(7.4% per year)
Economic impact

35% ↗
(6.2% per year)
Labor income

33% ↗
(5.9% per year)
Indirect business taxes

10% ↗
(2.0% per year)
Employment

109,584 to 130,683 ↗
(+19.3% per year)
Bearing and non-bearing acreage





2025
CALIFORNIA



Highlights of the economic impact
from U.S. highbush blueberry
grower spending in California

About the Study

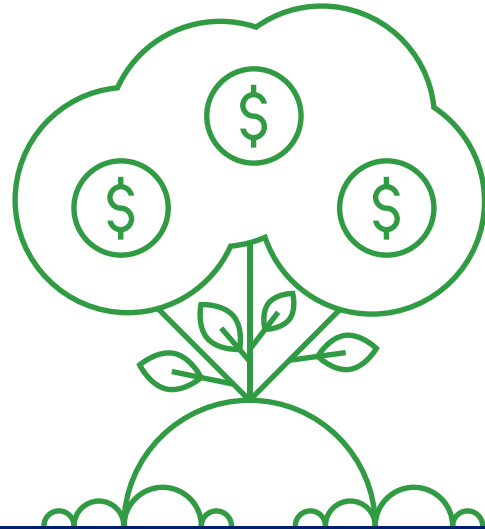
The economic impact study was commissioned by the U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council and conducted in February 2025 by Dennis Tootelian, Ph.D., Emeritus Professor at California State University, Sacramento. The analysis is based on U.S. highbush blueberry acres in production and in development. Projections are based on annual average expenditures, which means that this impact is expected to occur each year that such spending occurs. Acreage statistics were secured from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. A prior economic impact study, also conducted by Dr. Tootelian, was conducted in 2020 and is used as the basis for the growth indicators depicted above. The full economic impact study and analysis is available at www.usbbc.org.



IMPACT

Annual economic impact
generated by grower spending:

**~\$564.2
million**
(\$1.5 million/day)



JOBS

Full-time equivalent jobs
created and sustained by
grower spending each year:

3,850



FOOTPRINT

California highbush
blueberry acreage*:

8,886

*Bearing and non-bearing acreage, 3 yr. avg.

INDIRECT BUSINESS TAXES

Indirect business
taxes generated by
grower spending:
(not including income taxes)

**~\$16.6
million**
(\$45,600/day)

“The U.S. highbush blueberry industry is a powerful financial force. Behind every farm are growers who not only tend a truly remarkable superfruit, but also stimulate business activity, create thousands of jobs and contribute mightily to the economy and their communities.”

— Kasey Cronquist | President
U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council

LABOR INCOME

Labor income generated
by the business activities
related to grower spending:

**~\$228.7
million**
(\$626,470/day)



These dollars go into wages and salaries for new employment, as well as expanded incomes to those already in the labor force for activities such as overtime pay. The dollars are then diffused throughout the state's economy as the funds are spent by households for an array of goods and services.

A Growing and Dynamic Industry

According to economic impact reports published in 2020 and 2025, the U.S. highbush blueberry industry thrived in California on four key economic impact indicators:

23% ↗
Economic impact

18% ↗
Labor income

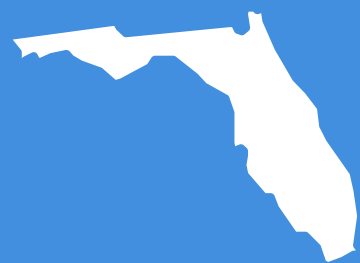
39.5% ↗
Indirect business taxes

7,769 to 8,886 ↗
Bearing and non-bearing acreage





2025
FLORIDA



Highlights of the economic impact
from U.S. highbush blueberry grower
spending in Florida

About the Study

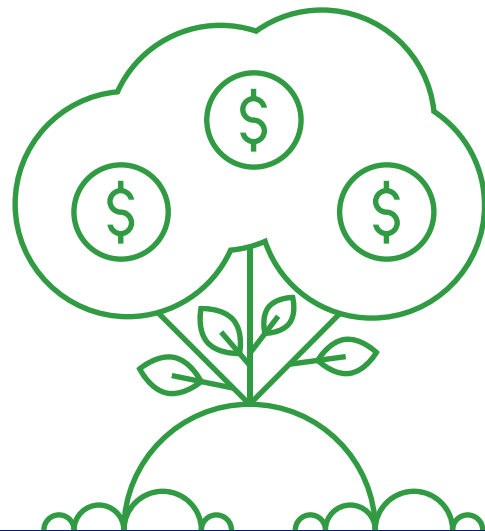
The economic impact study was commissioned by the U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council and conducted in February 2025 by Dennis Tootelian, Ph.D., Emeritus Professor at California State University, Sacramento. The analysis is based on U.S. highbush blueberry acres in production and in development. Projections are based on annual average expenditures, which means that this impact is expected to occur each year that such spending occurs. Acreage statistics were secured from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. A prior economic impact study, also conducted by Dr. Tootelian, was conducted in 2020 and is used as the basis for the growth indicators depicted above. The full economic impact study and analysis is available at www.usbbc.org.



IMPACT

Annual economic impact
generated by grower spending:

**~\$414.9
million**
(\$1.1 million/day)



JOBS

Full-time equivalent jobs
created and sustained by
grower spending each year:

3,100



FOOTPRINT

Florida highbush
blueberry acreage*:

7,895

*Bearing and non-bearing acreage, 3 yr. avg.

INDIRECT BUSINESS TAXES

Indirect business
taxes generated by
grower spending:
(not including income taxes)

**~\$9.7
million**
(\$26,600/day)

“The U.S. highbush blueberry industry is a powerful financial force. Behind every farm are growers who not only tend a truly remarkable superfruit, but also stimulate business activity, create thousands of jobs and contribute mightily to the economy and their communities.”

— Kasey Cronquist | President
U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council

LABOR INCOME

Labor income generated
by the business activities
related to grower spending:

**~\$149.5
million**
(\$409,500/day)



These dollars go into wages and salaries for new employment, as well as expanded incomes to those already in the labor force for activities such as overtime pay. The dollars are then diffused throughout the state's economy as the funds are spent by households for an array of goods and services.

A Growing and Dynamic Industry

According to economic impact reports published in 2020 and 2025, the U.S. highbush blueberry industry in Florida thrived on all key economic impact indicators:

40.5% ↗
Economic impact

33% ↗
Labor income

39% ↗
Indirect business taxes

22% ↗
Employment

6,686 to 7,895 ↗
Bearing and non-bearing acreage





2025
GEORGIA



Highlights of the economic impact
from U.S. highbush blueberry grower
spending in Georgia

About the Study

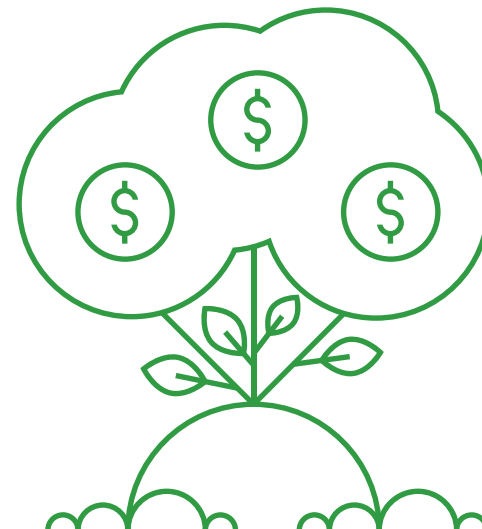
The economic impact study was commissioned by the U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council and conducted in February 2025 by Dennis Tootelian, Ph.D., Emeritus Professor at California State University, Sacramento. The analysis is based on U.S. highbush blueberry acres in production and in development. Projections are based on annual average expenditures, which means that this impact is expected to occur each year that such spending occurs. Acreage statistics were secured from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. A prior economic impact study, also conducted by Dr. Tootelian, was conducted in 2020 and is used as the basis for the growth indicators depicted above. The full economic impact study and analysis is available at www.usbbc.org.



IMPACT

Annual economic impact
generated by grower spending:

**~\$917.3
million**
(\$2.5 million/day)



JOBS

Full-time equivalent jobs
created and sustained by
grower spending each year:

6,840



FOOTPRINT

Georgia highbush
blueberry acreage*:

25,416

*Bearing and non-bearing acreage, 3 yr. avg.

INDIRECT BUSINESS TAXES

Indirect business
taxes generated by
grower spending:
(not including income taxes)

**~\$20.7
million**
(\$56,600/day)

“The U.S. highbush blueberry industry is a powerful financial force. Behind every farm are growers who not only tend a truly remarkable superfruit, but also stimulate business activity, create thousands of jobs and contribute mightily to the economy and their communities.”

— Kasey Cronquist | President
U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council

LABOR INCOME

Labor income generated
by the business activities
related to grower spending:

**~\$318.1
million**
(\$871,500/day)



These dollars go into wages and salaries for new employment, as well as expanded incomes to those already in the labor force for activities such as overtime pay. The dollars are then diffused throughout the state's economy as the funds are spent by households for an array of goods and services.

A Growing and Dynamic Industry

According to economic impact reports published in 2020 and 2025, the U.S. highbush blueberry industry in Georgia thrived on all key economic impact indicators:



76% ↗
Economic impact

83% ↗
Labor income

83% ↗
Indirect business taxes

65% ↗
Employment

16,624 to 25,416 ↗
Bearing and non-bearing acreage



2025
MICHIGAN



Highlights of the economic impact
from U.S. highbush blueberry grower
spending in Michigan

About the Study

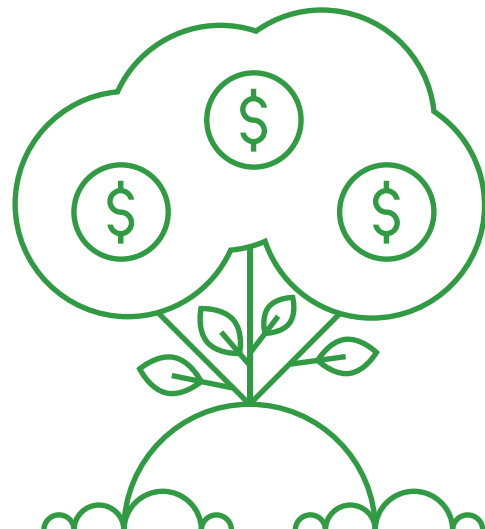
The economic impact study was commissioned by the U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council and conducted in February 2025 by Dennis Tootelian, Ph.D., Emeritus Professor at California State University, Sacramento. The analysis is based on U.S. highbush blueberry acres in production and in development. Projections are based on annual average expenditures, which means that this impact is expected to occur each year that such spending occurs. Acreage statistics were secured from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. A prior economic impact study, also conducted by Dr. Tootelian, was conducted in 2020 and is used as the basis for the growth indicators depicted above. The full economic impact study and analysis is available at www.usshbc.org.



IMPACT

Annual economic impact
generated by grower spending:

**~\$529.4
million**
(\$1.5 million/day)



JOBS

Full-time equivalent jobs
created and sustained by
grower spending each year:

6,100



FOOTPRINT

Michigan highbush
blueberry acreage*:

19,975

*Bearing and non-bearing acreage, 3 yr. avg.

INDIRECT BUSINESS TAXES

Indirect business taxes generated by grower spending:
(not including income taxes)

**~\$10.8
million** (\$29,500/day)



LABOR INCOME

Labor income generated
by the business activities
related to grower spending:

**~\$108.9
million**
(\$298,400/day)



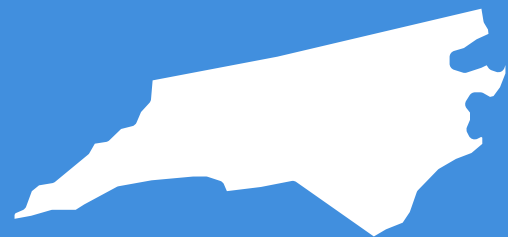
These dollars go into wages and salaries for new employment, as well as expanded incomes to those already in the labor force for activities such as overtime pay. The dollars are then diffused throughout the state's economy as the funds are spent by households for an array of goods and services.

“The U.S. highbush blueberry industry is a powerful financial force. Behind every farm are growers who not only tend a truly remarkable superfruit, but also stimulate business activity, create thousands of jobs and contribute mightily to the economy and their communities.”

— Kasey Cronquist | President
U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council



2025 NORTH CAROLINA



Highlights of the economic impact
from U.S. highbush blueberry grower
spending in North Carolina

About the Study

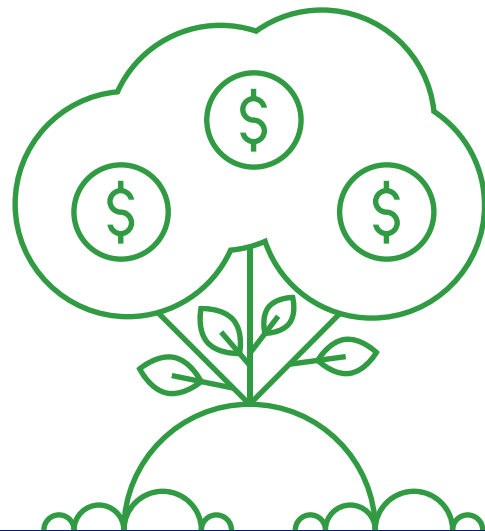
The economic impact study was commissioned by the U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council and conducted in February 2025 by Dennis Tootelian, Ph.D., Emeritus Professor at California State University, Sacramento. The analysis is based on U.S. highbush blueberry acres in production and in development. Projections are based on annual average expenditures, which means that this impact is expected to occur each year that such spending occurs. Acreage statistics were secured from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. A prior economic impact study, also conducted by Dr. Tootelian, was conducted in 2020 and is used as the basis for the growth indicators depicted above. The full economic impact study and analysis is available at www.usbbc.org.



IMPACT

Annual economic impact
generated by grower spending:

**~\$164.5
million**
(\$450,700/day)



JOBS

Full-time equivalent jobs
created and sustained by
grower spending each year:

1,225



FOOTPRINT

North Carolina highbush
blueberry acreage*:

9,854

*Bearing and non-bearing acreage, 3 yr. avg.

INDIRECT BUSINESS TAXES

Indirect business
taxes generated by
grower spending:
(not including income taxes)

**~\$3.6
million**
(\$10,000/day)

“The U.S. highbush blueberry industry is a powerful financial force. Behind every farm are growers who not only tend a truly remarkable superfruit, but also stimulate business activity, create thousands of jobs and contribute mightily to the economy and their communities.”

— Kasey Cronquist | President
U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council

LABOR INCOME

Labor income generated
by the business activities
related to grower spending:

**~\$56
million**
(\$153,400/day)



These dollars go into wages and salaries for new employment, as well as expanded incomes to those already in the labor force for activities such as overtime pay. The dollars are then diffused throughout the state's economy as the funds are spent by households for an array of goods and services.

A Growing and Dynamic Industry

According to economic impact reports published in 2020 and 2025, the U.S. highbush blueberry industry in North Carolina thrived on all key economic impact indicators:



31% ↗
Economic impact

38% ↗
Labor income

38% ↗
Indirect business taxes

24% ↗
Employment

8,842 to 9,854 ↗
Bearing and non-bearing acreage



2025
NEW JERSEY



Highlights of the economic impact
from U.S. highbush blueberry grower
spending in New Jersey

About the Study

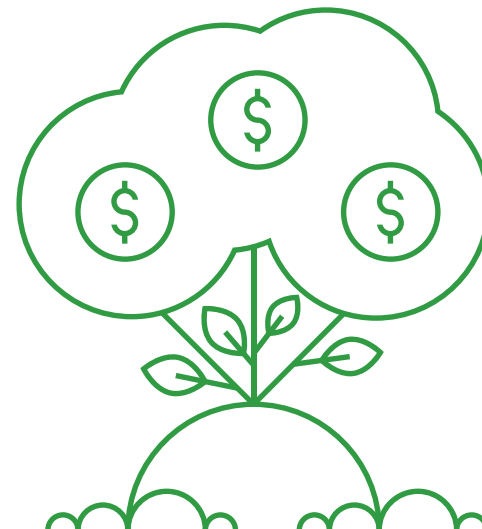
The economic impact study was commissioned by the U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council and conducted in February 2025 by Dennis Tootelian, Ph.D., Emeritus Professor at California State University, Sacramento. The analysis is based on U.S. highbush blueberry acres in production and in development. Projections are based on annual average expenditures, which means that this impact is expected to occur each year that such spending occurs. Acreage statistics were secured from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. A prior economic impact study, also conducted by Dr. Tootelian, was conducted in 2020 and is used as the basis for the growth indicators depicted above. The full economic impact study and analysis is available at www.usbbc.org.



IMPACT

Annual economic impact
generated by grower spending:

**~\$215.8
million**
(\$591,400/day)



JOBS

Full-time equivalent jobs
created and sustained by
grower spending each year:

2,425



FOOTPRINT

New Jersey highbush
blueberry acreage*:

12,369

*Bearing and non-bearing acreage, 3 yr. avg.

INDIRECT BUSINESS TAXES

Indirect business
taxes generated by
grower spending:
(not including income taxes)

**~\$4.7
million**
(\$12,800/day)

“The U.S. highbush blueberry industry is a powerful financial force. Behind every farm are growers who not only tend a truly remarkable superfruit, but also stimulate business activity, create thousands of jobs and contribute mightily to the economy and their communities.”

— Kasey Cronquist | President
U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council

LABOR INCOME

Labor income generated
by the business activities
related to grower spending:

**~\$47.3
million**
(\$129,550/day)



These dollars go into wages and salaries for new employment, as well as expanded incomes to those already in the labor force for activities such as overtime pay. The dollars are then diffused throughout the state's economy as the funds are spent by households for an array of goods and services.

A Growing and Dynamic Industry

According to economic impact reports published in 2020 and 2025, the U.S. highbush blueberry industry in New Jersey thrived on all key economic impact indicators:



45% ↗
Economic impact

63% ↗
Labor income

62% ↗
Indirect business taxes

30% ↗
Employment

10,149 to 12,369 ↗
Bearing and non-bearing acreage



2025
OREGON



Highlights of the economic impact
from U.S. highbush blueberry
grower spending in Oregon

About the Study

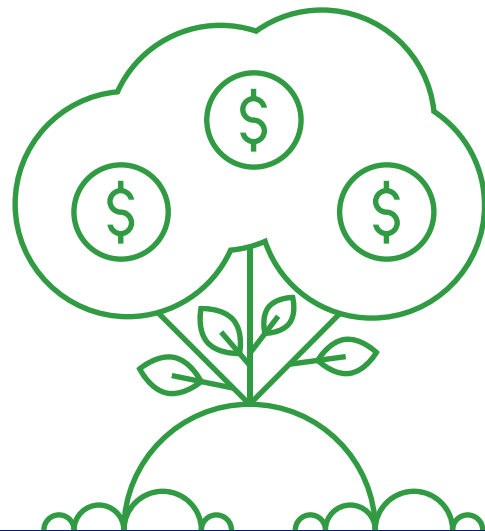
The economic impact study was commissioned by the U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council and conducted in February 2025 by Dennis Tootelian, Ph.D., Emeritus Professor at California State University, Sacramento. The analysis is based on U.S. highbush blueberry acres in production and in development. Projections are based on annual average expenditures, which means that this impact is expected to occur each year that such spending occurs. Acreage statistics were secured from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. A prior economic impact study, also conducted by Dr. Tootelian, was conducted in 2020 and is used as the basis for the growth indicators depicted above. The full economic impact study and analysis is available at www.usbbc.org.



IMPACT

Annual economic impact
generated by grower spending:

**~\$467.6
million**
(\$1.3 million/day)



JOBS

Full-time equivalent jobs
created and sustained by
grower spending each year:

4,330



FOOTPRINT

Oregon highbush
blueberry acreage*:

15,926

*Bearing and non-bearing acreage, 3 yr. avg.

INDIRECT BUSINESS TAXES

Indirect business
taxes generated by
grower spending:
(not including income taxes)

**~\$9.2
million**
(\$25,100/day)

“The U.S. highbush blueberry industry is a powerful financial force. Behind every farm are growers who not only tend a truly remarkable superfruit, but also stimulate business activity, create thousands of jobs and contribute mightily to the economy and their communities.”

— Kasey Cronquist | President
U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council

LABOR INCOME

Labor income generated
by the business activities
related to grower spending:

**~\$168
million**
(\$460,200/day)



These dollars go into wages and salaries for new employment, as well as expanded incomes to those already in the labor force for activities such as overtime pay. The dollars are then diffused throughout the state's economy as the funds are spent by households for an array of goods and services.

A Growing and Dynamic Industry

According to economic impact reports published in 2020 and 2025, the U.S. highbush blueberry industry in Oregon thrived on all key economic impact indicators:

32% ↗
Economic impact

38% ↗
Labor income

39% ↗
Indirect business taxes

24% ↗
Employment

14,050 to 15,926 ↗
Bearing and non-bearing acreage





2025 WASHINGTON



Highlights of the economic impact
from U.S. highbush blueberry grower
spending in Washington

About the Study

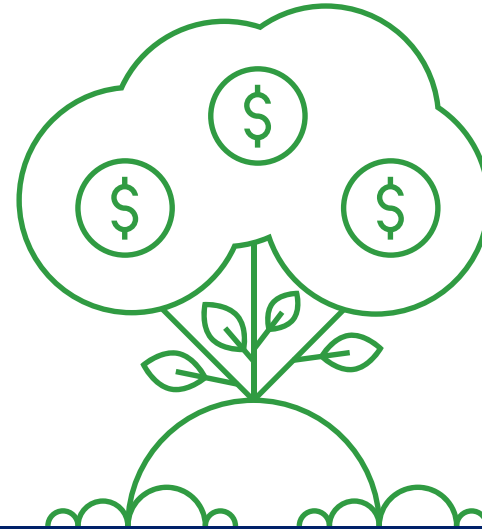
The economic impact study was commissioned by the U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council and conducted in February 2025 by Dennis Tootelian, Ph.D., Emeritus Professor at California State University, Sacramento. The analysis is based on U.S. highbush blueberry acres in production and in development. Projections are based on annual average expenditures, which means that this impact is expected to occur each year that such spending occurs. Acreage statistics were secured from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. A prior economic impact study, also conducted by Dr. Tootelian, was conducted in 2020 and is used as the basis for the growth indicators depicted above. The full economic impact study and analysis is available at www.usbbc.org.



IMPACT

Annual economic impact
generated by grower spending:

**~\$710.6
million**
(\$1.9 million/day)



JOBS

Full-time equivalent jobs
created and sustained by
grower spending each year:

9,500



FOOTPRINT

Washington highbush
blueberry acreage*:

20,891

*Bearing and non-bearing acreage, 3 yr. avg.

INDIRECT BUSINESS TAXES

Indirect business
taxes generated by
grower spending:
(not including income taxes)

**~\$14.8
million**
(\$40,545/day)

“The U.S. highbush blueberry industry is a powerful financial force. Behind every farm are growers who not only tend a truly remarkable superfruit, but also stimulate business activity, create thousands of jobs and contribute mightily to the economy and their communities.”

— Kasey Cronquist | President
U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council

LABOR INCOME

Labor income generated
by the business activities
related to grower spending:

**~\$149.8
million**
(\$410,350/day)



These dollars go into wages and salaries for new employment, as well as expanded incomes to those already in the labor force for activities such as overtime pay. The dollars are then diffused throughout the state's economy as the funds are spent by households for an array of goods and services.

A Growing and Dynamic Industry

According to economic impact reports published in 2020 and 2025, the U.S. highbush blueberry industry in Washington thrived on four key economic impact indicators:

53% ↗
Economic impact

15,528 to 20,891 ↗
Bearing and non-bearing acreage

113% ↗
Employment

42% ↗
Indirect business taxes





U.S. Policy Platform



Vision Statement

The North American Blueberry Council (NABC) is a recognized 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.



The Blueberry Hill Climb



Introduction

The NABC U.S. Policy Platform represents the collective positions and priorities of U.S. blueberry growers, handlers and marketers, serving as a strategic guide for NABC's policy initiatives.

NABC advocates for the U.S. blueberry industry's interests before Congress, the administration and regulatory agencies to ensure its value and contributions are recognized.

Updated annually by the NABC Government Affairs Committee and approved by the NABC Board of Directors, this Policy Platform addresses key issues critical to the industry, including:

- ★ 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

The primary goal of these policy positions – and NABC's overall governmental affairs strategy – is to strengthen the competitiveness of the U.S. blueberry industry.



Farm Bill and Agriculture Policy

NABC supports the timely passage of a comprehensive Farm Bill that meets the needs of U.S. producers and ensures the long-term viability, health and competitiveness of U.S. agriculture.

NABC is a member of the Specialty Crop Farm Bill Alliance, a national coalition of more than 120 organizations representing growers of fruits, vegetables, dried fruit, tree nuts, nursery plants and other products. The alliance seeks to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crop agriculture and improve the health of Americans by broadening the scope of U.S. agricultural public policy.

Additionally, NABC closely follows the appropriations process in Congress. Programs that are authorized but never funded are of no help. Likewise, programs that are deprived during the appropriations process never reach their full potential.



Policy Positions

- ★ Support annual mandatory funding for research and development of mechanization and automation technologies within specialty crops that reduce growers' manual labor requirements and increase the efficiency of crop production, improve resource management and support harvest and post-harvest processes.
- ★ Support improvements to risk management tools, including the Federal Crop Insurance program and disaster assistance programs like the Tree Assistance Program.
- ★ Create a permanent disaster assistance program that ensures appropriated funds are swiftly distributed to producers who have been affected by natural disasters.
- ★ Support the Specialty Crop Block Grant program, which focuses on food safety, plant pests and diseases, research and crop-specific projects to benefit specialty crops.
- ★ Support the Specialty Crop Research Initiative, which addresses critical needs of the specialty crop industry by awarding competitive grants to support research and extension services to help solve challenges of national, regional and multistate importance.
- ★ Support funding for pest and disease research, exclusion and eradication programs.
 - Support funding for the IR-4 Project, which was established by USDA and land grant universities to ensure that specialty crop farmers have legal access to safe and effective crop protection products.
 - Support USDA-APHIS' Agricultural Quarantine and Inspection Program, which protects the U.S. agriculture industry against the introduction of pests and pathogens at ports of entry.
- ★ Support federally authorized and producer-supported research and promotion programs, commonly known as checkoffs, that are established and approved in referenda by producers who fund the programs through mandatory assessments.
- ★ Support USDA programs that promote the consumption of specialty crop products in all forms.
 - Support funding for the Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP).
 - Support modernization of USDA's procurement programs to support grower resiliency and ensure recipients have access to produce.
- ★ Support funding for USDA-FAS Trade programs like the Market Access Program (MAP), Technical Assistance for Specialty Crops (TASC), Emerging Markets Program (EMP) and Quality Samples Program.



Agriculture Workforce and Labor Policy

The agriculture industry faces unique employment needs and challenges. The H-2A guest worker program in its current form is not structured to meet these needs. Production agriculture requires sufficient skilled and capable farm labor resources to continue to supply the nation and the world with high-quality, nutritious food.

Farmers must be supported by federal policies and programs that allow for labor needs to be met affordably and efficiently. Federal policies must recognize the unique nature of agricultural work and the need for a flexible workforce to remain competitive globally. Additionally, farm safety is of the highest importance.

Policy Positions

- ★ Support legislation that provides meaningful reforms to the H-2A program, such as:
 - Eliminating agency redundancies.
 - Reducing program costs and administrative requirements.
 - Updating the methodology for establishing the Adverse Effect Wage Rate.
 - Limiting the amount by which the Adverse Effect Wage Rate may increase year to year.
- ★ Support expanding the H-2A program, or creation of a new visa program, to allow employers to bring foreign workers to the U.S. to fill year-round agricultural jobs that cannot be filled by U.S. workers.
- ★ Support an earned pathway to legal status for undocumented people currently working in agriculture.
- ★ Oppose mandatory E-verify unless tied to a pathway for legal status for people currently working in agriculture.
- ★ Support legislation that is consistent with the House-passed 2021 Farm Workforce Modernization Act.
- ★ Support freezing the Adverse Effect Wage Rate.
- ★ Support any effort to improve the methodology by which the Department of Labor establishes the Adverse Effect Wage Rate, including, but not limited to, updating the Farm Labor Survey or the creation of an alternative survey instrument.
- ★ Support efforts to repeal the Department of Labor's 2023 H-2A Adverse Effect Wage Rate (AEWR) Final Rule.
- ★ Oppose any law or regulation that undermines the right of farm workers to decline union membership or in any way empowers union representatives to coerce, intimidate or exploit workers.
- ★ Oppose any law or regulation that grants union representatives access to a farm, agricultural business or employer-provided housing without express permission by the property owner or their designee.
- ★ Support reasonable and practical health and safety protection standards for all farm workers.



International Trade and Market Access

NABC seeks a fair and level playing field for U.S. blueberries in the domestic and global marketplace. USDA Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) market development and promotion programs are vital to maintaining and expanding U.S. agricultural exports, countering subsidized foreign competition, protecting American jobs and strengthening farm income. Accordingly, NABC supports strong market development and promotion programs in pursuit of increased agricultural exports and the farm-level benefits they generate.

Over the past decade, funding for both the FAS and Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) have come under significant pressure due to budget constraints. At the same time, competition in key foreign markets has increased. FAS and APHIS programs are extremely valuable in ensuring that overseas markets remain open and accessible for U.S. agricultural exports.

While we recognize the benefits of multilateral negotiations, the U.S. should continue to engage in bilateral and regional negotiations to improve foreign market access for U.S. agricultural products and reduce tariffs on fresh, frozen, dried and further processed blueberries.

Policy Positions

- ★ Any renegotiation or modernization of existing trade agreements should maintain or expand upon previous gains in agricultural market access, while also making improvements to trade rules that provide for a fair competition with trading partners.
- ★ Support the negotiation of new, comprehensive trade agreements that are beneficial to U.S. farmers and address tariffs, sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) and other non-tariff trade barriers, including geographic indicators.
- ★ Support Congressional renewal of the Trade Promotion Authority (TPA), which enables Congress to define U.S. negotiating objectives and creates an oversight and consultation process so that the administration can pursue trade agreements that help American farmers increase exports and compete in the global economy.
- ★ Support increased funding for USDA-FAS Trade Programs.
- ★ Support funding for USDA-APHIS programs that facilitate export market access and protect the domestic industry from invasive pests and diseases.
- ★ Support funding for the Maximum Residue Limits (MRL) Database. The MRL database contains maximum acceptable levels of pesticides and veterinary drugs in food and agricultural products in the United States, as well as 70 other countries, the European Union and the Codex Alimentarius Commission. Specifically, the database includes more than 300 fruit, vegetable and nut commodities, as well as more than 270 pesticides approved for use on those commodities by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.
- ★ Support legislative and administrative efforts that address tariff and non-tariff barriers that impede the competitiveness of U.S. blueberries in foreign markets.
- ★ Support the elimination of Japan's tariff on frozen U.S. blueberries.
- ★ Support new or improved access to foreign markets for U.S. fresh blueberries.

Conservation and the Environment

NABC supports Farm Bill conservation programs and voluntary incentive-based policies that advance science-backed outcomes, promote resilience and help the agriculture industry better adapt to environmental changes.

While the issues vary, our principles remain: NABC believes conservation programs and environmental regulations should be locally driven and based on scientifically and economically sound practices, and should recognize the unique nature of production agriculture.

However, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has multiple, aggressive regulatory and enforcement initiatives underway that ignore the role of states and affect nearly every aspect of U.S. agriculture. Water quality, air quality, pesticide use and climate change are all subject to major actions that would affect farms and ranches of all sizes.

Policy Positions

- ★ Oppose environmental legislation or regulatory actions that cause adverse impacts to blueberry producers, including increased costs of production.
- ★ Support funding for working lands conservation programs, including those that use voluntary incentive-based conservation practices, to maximize conservation program benefits.
- ★ Support efforts to ensure access to critically needed crop protection products for blueberry producers.
- ★ Support reforms to the Endangered Species Act that would reduce regulatory burdens on farmers and create reliable access to natural resources for agriculture, such as water.
- ★ Support implementation of science-based environmental policies, while minimizing cost and regulatory burdens on farmers.
- ★ Oppose expansion of the jurisdictional reach of the Clean Water Act.



Food Safety and Labeling

America's farmers are committed to providing a safe and affordable food supply for consumers globally. NABC urges that any actions by Congress be based on the best available science and prudent risk assessments.

Policy Positions

- ★ Support food safety legislation and regulations that are based on the best available science, and are risk-based, commodity-specific and applied equitably.
- ★ Ensure that food safety regulations enhance our nation's food security, while avoiding negative impacts to blueberry producers.



Nutrition and Consumption

A large and increasing number of federal dollars are spent to ensure nutritious food is available for our nation's individuals, families and children who rely on federal nutrition programs. America's farmers supply the nation and the world with nutritious and wholesome food. NABC urges that any actions by Congress to update or change nutrition policy be based on best available science and USDA's Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA).

Policy Positions

- ★ Support USDA food and nutrition programs and the continuation of USDA commodity purchases.
- ★ Support strengthening the Buy America provision in the school meals program.
- ★ Support funding for the Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP).
- ★ Support a dedicated fruit and vegetable benefit for SNAP participants modeled after the cash value benefit (CVB).
- ★ For all of USDA's nutrition procurement programs, support:
 - Allowing evaluation factors other than lowest cost when awarding a contract.
 - Allowing inspection at the shipping point.
 - Accepting food safety certifications other than the USDA Good Agricultural Practices (GAP).
 - Purchasing a wide variety of specialty crops to address the underconsumption of fruits, vegetables and tree nuts as recognized by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and cited in the Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA).
- ★ Support continued authorization of the Child Nutrition Reauthorization (CNR).
- ★ All USDA food and nutrition programs should ensure recipients have access to all forms of produce – fresh, frozen and dried.
 - Support requiring USDA to consider GusNIP program grant applications/projects that promote or incentivize consumption of frozen produce, in addition to fresh, among SNAP recipients.
 - Support the inclusion of frozen produce items in the Produce Prescription Program. The program currently allows only fresh fruits and vegetables.
- ★ Support changing the DGA to include recommendations for fruit subtypes based on nutritional qualities such as bioactive properties.
- ★ Support efforts to strengthen and increase access to produce prescription programs.



Tax Policy

NABC supports targeted tax policies that strengthen the U.S. blueberry industry by fostering innovation, encouraging capital investment and sustaining domestic production. These policies are essential to ensuring the industry's global competitiveness, while supporting American farmers and rural economies.

Policy Positions

- ★ Support the Section 199A and 199A(g) tax deductions for farmers and farm cooperatives.
- ★ Support bonus depreciation – Bonus depreciation enables farmers to invest in equipment and infrastructure by allowing immediate deductions on qualified assets.
- ★ Support estate tax exemption and stepped-up basis – These provisions help farmers avoid excessive tax burdens when transferring land and equipment to heirs, preserving the economic viability of family-owned farms.
- ★ Support tax deductions for Multi-Peril Crop Insurance Premiums (MPCI).
- ★ Support new tax policies to address labor challenges, including tax credits or deductions to offset Agricultural Overtime requirements or H-2A application fees.
- ★ Support a new tax credit for investments in agriculture technology to help farmers innovate, improve productivity and stay competitive, while addressing challenges and meeting consumer demand for sustainable practices.
- ★ Support tax deductions for environmental agricultural practices, including organic certification, conservation, energy-efficient equipment, renewable energy systems and carbon credit programs.



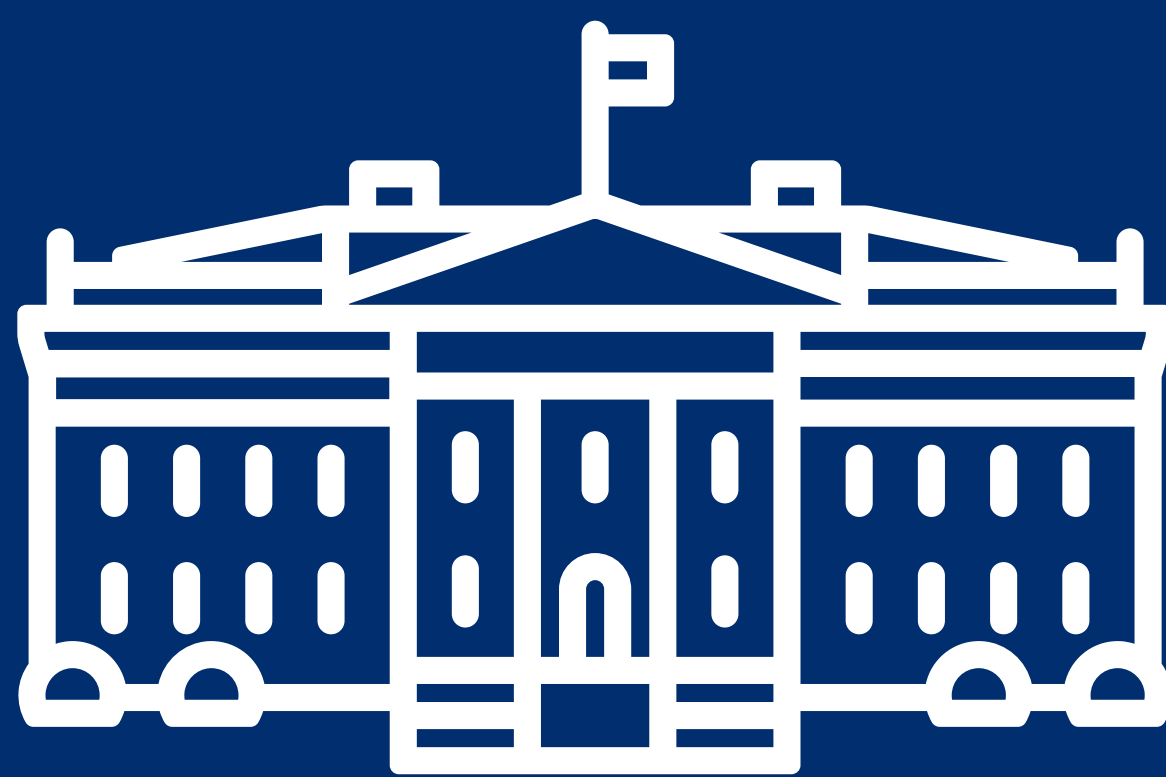
Published by



81 Blue Ravine Road, Suite 110
Folsom, California 95630

916.983.0111
nabc.blueberry.org

BLUEBERRY HILL CLIMB 2025



Advocating for the Future of Blueberries