

# New Brunswick Wild Blueberry Pollination Strategy

2024-2029  
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



## MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER

New Brunswick is one of the very few places in the world where wild blueberries thrive. New Brunswick's wild blueberry sector is a growing industry and contributes significantly to the provincial economy. Pollinators play an essential role in the success of this sector.

The 2024-2029 New Brunswick Wild Blueberry Pollination Strategy recognizes the importance of the pollination services that New Brunswick beekeepers provide to the growth and sustainability of the wild blueberry industry. As part of the strategy, our government will focus efforts to support the pollination sector and the wild blueberry industry through a series of key initiatives aimed to improve the availability of pollinators in New Brunswick, and to help strengthen the province's agriculture sectors.

The Honourable Margaret Johnson  
Minister of Agriculture, Aquaculture and Fisheries

## MESSAGE FROM BLEUETS NB BLUEBERRIES (BNBB)

Bleuets NB Blueberries (BNBB) is pleased to contribute to the development and implementation of the 2024-29 New Brunswick Wild Blueberry Pollination Strategy that aims to increase pollination resources over the next five years. The wild blueberry and beekeeping industries contribute significantly to the provincial economy. The initiatives set out in this strategy seek to support the pollinators through addressing challenges that aim to improve the availability of pollinators. This strategy will greatly help support existing and future wild blueberry producers in New Brunswick.

Alain Lepage  
Director of Bleuets NB Blueberries

## MESSAGE FROM NEW BRUNSWICK BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION (NBBA)

The 2024-2029 New Brunswick Wild Blueberry Pollination Strategy recognizes the importance of the pollination services that New Brunswick beekeepers provide to the growth and sustainability of wild blueberry production. The strategy demonstrates that government supports the beekeeping sector through initiatives to help grow the sector and address challenges of our sector. The New Brunswick Beekeepers Association (NBBA) is committed to this initiative and is eager for the opportunity to continue to collaborate with the Department of Agriculture, Aquaculture and Fisheries and our partner industries.

Chris Lockhart  
Director/Past President of the New Brunswick Beekeepers Association Inc.



## Introduction

The Department of Agriculture, Aquaculture and Fisheries, developed a five-year action plan, in collaboration with industry, to increase the availability of pollination sources from within and outside New Brunswick to support pollination demands.

Wild blueberries are one of the fastest growing segments of New Brunswick's horticulture sector, second only to potatoes in the total acreage grown. A significant contributor to this sector is the pollination services provided by New Brunswick beekeepers and beekeepers in other provinces. The existing demand for pollination services exceeds the total supply of pollinators available from all sources (local or imported). The demand will continue to increase as fields mature and additional acreage comes in production.

Honey bees are the primary pollination source for the wild blueberry sector. Alfalfa leafcutting bees, bumble bees and native bees also play a crucial role to support pollination. Increasing the availability of pollination sources from within and outside New Brunswick is required to support future pollination demands and the growing wild blueberry sector.

# Current Pollination Status and Future Demand



Currently, an estimated 47,000 pollinating units are available annually, of which approximately 70% are honey bee colonies and the remainder are commercial bumble bee quads and alfalfa leafcutting bees. It is expected that by 2029, 75,000 pollinating units will be required to meet the demands of the sector.

New Brunswick beekeepers supply an average of 9,500 honey bee colonies annually, and the blueberry growers import an additional 23,000 honey bee colonies from other provinces. Blueberry growers also purchase 9,000 commercial bumble bee quads and New Brunswick alfalfa leafcutting bee producers supply 11,000 gallons (equivalent to 5,500 honey bee colonies).

## EXISTING AND ESTIMATED POLLINATION UNITS BY POLLINATION SOURCE

POLLINATION SOURCE	POLLINATING UNITS (2018-2022 AVERAGE)	ESTIMATED POLLINATION NEEDS BY 2029
NB honey bee colonies	9,500 hives	17,000 hives
Imported honey bee colonies	23,000 hives	40,000 hives
Alfalfa leafcutting bees	11,000 gallons (equal to 5,500 hives)	14,000 gallons (equal to 7,000 hives)
Bumble bee quads	9,000 quads (equal to 9,000 hives)	11,000 quads (equal to 11,000 hives)
<b>Total number of units</b>	<b>47,000 units</b>	<b>75,000 units</b>



Increasing pollination resources to meet existing and future pollination demand must consider risk factors that could compromise the goals of this action plan such as bee health, overwintering of colonies, market prices for honey and wild blueberries, labour shortages, interprovincial movement requirements, availability of colonies within and outside the province, investment costs and profitability.

# Strategic Goals



The 2024-2029 New Brunswick Wild Blueberry Pollination Strategy will work towards increasing pollination resources for producers and beekeepers by 60% from 47,000 to 75,000 units by spring of 2029.

An industry-government steering committee has been struck to oversee the strategy implementation.

The strategy will be implemented through a series of initiatives and focuses on the five strategic goals below. The initiatives set the stage towards supporting existing and future pollination resources to pursue opportunities for growth within the beekeeping and wild blueberry industries.

GOALS	INITIATIVES
<p><b>1</b></p> <p><b>Increase the number of New Brunswick honey bee colonies available for pollination from 9,500 to 17,000 (an increase of 79%).</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluate the Sustainability and Growth of the NB Beekeeping Sector.</li> <li>• Identify Support Programs to Increase the Number of Colonies Available for Pollination.</li> <li>• Enhance the Education, Training, and Labour Opportunities in the Beekeeping Industry.</li> <li>• Increase Bee Yard Opportunities in NB.</li> </ul>
<p><b>2</b></p> <p><b>Increase the number of honey bee colonies available for importation from 23,000 to 40,000 (an increase of 74%).</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the Number of Honey Bee Colonies Available for Importation into NB through Collaboration with other Provinces.</li> </ul>
<p><b>3</b></p> <p><b>Increase the number of alfalfa leafcutting bee gallons in New Brunswick from 11,000 to 14,000 (5,500 to 7,000 hive equivalents) (an increase of 27%).</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate Alfalfa Leafcutting bees as an Effective Pollinator in Suitable Sites in Southern NB.</li> <li>• Promote Leafcutting Bees to Wild Blueberry Producers across the Province as an Effective Pollinator.</li> </ul>
<p><b>4</b></p> <p><b>Increase the number of bumble bee quads in New Brunswick from 9,000 to 11,000 (an increase of 22%).</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborate with Bumble Bee Suppliers on Existing and Future Supply.</li> </ul>
<p><b>5</b></p> <p><b>Support native bees as pollinators in New Brunswick.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain a Healthy Native Bee Population in Wild Blueberry Producing Regions.</li> </ul>