



PEOPLE
INNOVATION
CAPITAL
INFRASTRUCTURE
AGILITY

New Brunswick Growth Opportunity

Developing the Wild Blueberry Industry



**New Brunswick Growth Opportunity
Developing the Wild Blueberry Industry**

Province of New Brunswick
PO 6000, Fredericton NB E3B 5H1 Canada

ISBN 978-1-4605-1699-7 (print edition)
ISBN 978-1-4605-1700-0 (PDF: English)

10913

Message from the Minister

For centuries, agriculture has played a major role in shaping New Brunswick's economy, culture and priorities. Popular food staples like potatoes and seafood have traditionally led the way, but more recently, the global food supply chain has seen a significant rise in demand for wild blueberries.

Natural and nutritious, the wild blueberry can be found in abundance throughout our province. With market demand for this regional commodity increasing, New Brunswick is uniquely positioned to experience real growth in supplying this niche product to the world, yielding more revenue for the province and more employment in the sector.

In fact, New Brunswick has already become a major global player in the production of wild blueberries. In 2015, the province produced nearly 78.1 million lbs, surpassing all other Canadian provinces.

Further development of the wild blueberry industry is a main focus of the New Brunswick Economic Growth Plan, which targets economic development efforts in areas where there is real potential for expansion and growth. New Brunswick has many assets and attributes that set it apart from other jurisdictions and, together with communities and stakeholders, we are working towards leveraging these strengths to redefine possibilities for growth to generate employment opportunities for New Brunswickers.

For the wild blueberry sector to succeed, we need to:

- Diversify markets;
- Increase value-added opportunities to make the most of our resource;
- Consistent and secure supply of blueberries to meet future value-added demands;
- Increase storage capacity to stabilize inventory;
- Increase blueberry consumption within New Brunswick, using the Local Food and Beverage Strategy;
- Identify opportunities for capital investment from the private sector.

To further support this economic growth opportunity, Crown land has been allocated for wild blueberry production. We will also leverage New Brunswick's Local Food and Beverage Strategy to aid industry development.

As Minister of Agriculture, Aquaculture and Fisheries, I'm pleased that our wild blueberry sector has been selected as one of 12 opportunities for growth as part of your government's Economic Growth Plan. We look forward to working with communities, First Nations, industry stakeholders and local producers to expand this economic growth opportunity, to strengthen our economy and ensure that New Brunswick remains the best place to live, work and raise a family.

The Hon. Rick Doucet,
Minister of Agriculture, Aquaculture and Fisheries
Minister of Energy and Resource Development



The New Brunswick Economic Growth Plan

Focusing our economic development efforts

The New Brunswick Economic Growth Plan establishes the framework and role for the provincial government to help bring the economy back to a solid rate of growth. A growing economy is needed to provide the fiscal foundation that will ensure the province remains a great place to live, work and raise a family.

The Economic Growth Plan is a directional plan outlining how government – across all of its departments, agencies and related organizations - will mobilize to ensure there is a co-ordinated, complementary effort to improve New Brunswick's economy and establish a strong foundation for the future. The plan is the outcome of valuable consultation with hundreds of community and business leaders across the province.

The New Brunswick Economic Growth Plan is based on five key focus areas:

- **PEOPLE** - We will grow our workforce by providing more targeted training and skills alignment efforts; and by significantly expanding the number of new and returning New Brunswickers building their careers in the province.
- **INNOVATION** - We will foster an innovative economy by investing more in research and development, supporting high growth potential entrepreneurs and by transforming government through new and innovative technologies.
- **CAPITAL** - We will boost private-sector investment by strengthening our business climate and addressing key challenges that are holding back growth.
- **INFRASTRUCTURE** - We will expand investment into economic infrastructure that ensures industries continue to invest here and talent from around the world will come to call our province home.
- **AGILITY** - We will increase the speed at which government interacts with the business community and we will strive to build a stronger partnership with industries to move the province ahead within a sustainable fiscal framework.

Pursuing Growth Opportunities

The New Brunswick Economic Growth Plan is focused on leveraging key industries, assets and attributes to create a strong value proposition for business investment. The global competition for business investment and talent has never been more pronounced and New Brunswick needs to focus its efforts to be able to compete and win.

Government will start by using the subject-matter experts in departments and working with the private sector and community-based partners to uncover potential opportunities. A growth opportunity is one that will lead to incremental business investment and jobs, leading to a sustained boost in economic activity (GDP) and tax revenue. Opportunities will be assessed based on:

1. the scope and scale of the opportunity (we need to boost the economy);
2. the time to impact (we need growth in the short term to stimulate the economy);
3. a clearly defined and relevant role for government and the resources required (not all opportunities for business investment require government involvement– some may require just a nudge); and
4. a defined return on taxpayer investment (we need to show that public investment in opportunities will increase tax revenues).

Growth Opportunity: Wild Blueberries

Canadian blueberry production has been growing steadily for the last several years with significant increases in revenue and demand driving production to provide blueberries. New Brunswick's landscape and climate provide the ideal conditions for blueberry growth and production. In partnership with government and stakeholders, the province's blueberry industry has been able to expand production from 11.3 million lbs in 1996 to nearly 78.1 million lbs in 2015. In 2015, New Brunswick's share of Canada's total blueberry production rose from 16 per cent in 1996 to nearly 36 per cent in 2015, to surpass production by all other competing provinces.

Many areas of New Brunswick have land allotted for wild blueberry cultivation or the potential for development. Currently, there is a focus on developing existing areas, such as the Acadian Peninsula, and Charlotte and Kent counties, to capitalize on locations where the industry has concentrated itself. Producer-led expansion will allow current and new producers to identify areas of interest and pursue business opportunities within this sector. Exponential growth in this industry has resulted in more than 430 full-time equivalent jobs and \$33 million in GDP for the province.

New Brunswick is positioned for industry growth production for both short and long term gains. In the short term, the province can support industry by investing in processing and storage capacity, and by increasing land available to producers. In the long-term, we will focus as a government on accessing new export markets, leveraging consumption within New Brunswick through the Local Food and Beverage Strategy, creating opportunities for capital investment and supporting value-added opportunities.

To date, significant investment has been made towards expanding blueberry production in the province. By recognizing the sector as a driver of economic development, and reinforcing established support programs and strategies, the province is demonstrating that it is committed to growing this sector.

Within government there are two main departments primarily working on the blueberry initiative: the Department of Agriculture, Aquaculture and Fisheries; and the Department of Energy and Resources Development. As well, Opportunities New Brunswick is working on the attraction of investment into the sector.

We look forward to working with producers, processors, industry associations and the province's First Nations on expanding the blueberry industry in our province.

People – strengthen the workforce

- Promote blueberry sector employment opportunities, from working on a farm, to processing and marketing sectors.
- Leverage blueberry consumption in the province using the Local Food and Beverage Strategy.

Innovation

- Identify value-added opportunities and associated opportunities to continue attracting investment in the processing sector of the blueberry industry.

Capital – more private investment

- Supporting market growth opportunities by identifying high-growth potential markets, and strategies for export development.
- Expand the amount of land available to blueberry development in an orderly manner.

Investing in strategic infrastructure

- Target areas that contain ideal microclimates for production of blueberries.
- Continued investment in transportation system (rail, road and port infrastructure).

Foster agility and nimbleness in the public sector and across the economy

- Identify and integrate opportunities in this sector with the Student Employment Development Program for blueberry farms.
- Ensure blueberry sector eco-system is diverse and supporting a wide range of producers and operations.