



- Advertisement -

At Diamond Blueberries, the product is just what the doctor ordered

By

Seth Mendelson

June 21, 2024

Blueberries are super; just go ask your doctor or health care specialist.

That is what officials at Diamond Blueberries want consumers to understand as they get ready to harvest what they expect to be another excellent crop of blueberries from New Jersey this month.

The bottom line, they say, is that blueberries are a hot commodity. The fruit's reputation is helped, in large part, by a growing number of tasty varieties and the greater understanding by consumers that blueberries are considered a superfood by many that may help lower blood pressure, prevent heart disease, improve memory and help in exercise recovery.

“We are very happy to report that the overall blueberries category is doing extremely well,” said Brandon Raso, vice president and general manager of the Hammonton, NJ-based company that was established by his great-grandfather in 1928. “It is being helped by strong promotions and marketing as well as getting the word out to the public about health research associated with the product.”

Raso, who has been general manager at the company for about a decade, said that worldwide sales of blueberries have almost doubled in the last 10 to 15 years and many expect that growth rate to continue, if not increase, in the near future.

“Blueberries have always been a healthy commodity,” he noted. “Now, through social media and other marketing methods, we are reaching a broader range of consumer groups, where many of these people are much more interested in healthy alternatives for their families. Blueberries fit the mold. They are good for older people, younger people and those moms who want the best for their kids. The best part is that blueberries taste great and are an easy sell to get those kids to eat them.”

Challenges remain in the category. First, companies like Diamond Blueberries have to fend off increasing competition from imports, especially products from Peru and Mexico. Second, labor issues, like finding enough manpower to harvest the crop and keeping labor costs stable, are

constant battles.

Diamond Blueberries' officials are not standing still. Raso said that new varieties produced at Variety Farms, the company's farm, is helping to ward off international competition. "These new varieties, as well as new technologies in the field and at the packinghouse, are helping us stay relevant," he added. "The blueberry breeding industry has completely ramped up and advanced in recent years. We are always evaluating what might be the next new variety that we plant on a mass scale."

Promoting that blueberries should be a big part of an everyday diet will also play a role in the future as well as a greater emphasis on technology and listening to consumer needs. "We have a lot on our plate," Raso said. "We are focusing on new varieties, different pack sizes, having the latest technologies to stay ahead of the curve in the fields and at the packing facilities and marketing what we offer."

As for this season, Raso said that his farms in the southeast came through with excellent crops and there were few issues with labor, which helped keep supply levels high.

"As we enter the start of the New Jersey market, we are very excited what we have seen thus far and we intend to keep our consumers very happy," he noted.

The local area in south New Jersey is helping as well. "We have such great support from our local community, probably because they realize that New Jersey is the birthplace of the blueberry and they take such great pride in that fact," Raso explained. "People in this area just love Jersey berries and they have such pride in these products. It really helps us get the word out and builds a lot of trust with consumers."

[Print](#)