

EXCELLENT GROWING CONDITIONS this year combine with spreading awareness of the fruit's health benefits to provide solid support for Québec's \$150-million industry

# Blueberry bumper crop

THE GAZETTE

It might not have been the best weather for tourists and local sun-seekers this summer, but it was ideal for Québec's famous wild blueberries.

The bumper crop, coupled with the trumpeted health benefits of the fruit, were a boon for the local industry that's worth about \$150 million annually.

"Climatic conditions were particularly favourable this year and we're very satisfied with the record volume produced," said Daniel Simard, general manager of the Syndicat des producteurs de bleuets du Québec, which has about 300 members.

"It was one of the best crops ever," Jean-Eudes Senneville, president of marketing firm **Quebec Wild Blueberries Corp.**, said from the Wild Blueberry Association of North America symposium in Moncton.

Senneville said this year's harvest totalled about 34 million kilograms, 98 per cent of which was destined for processing at the province's seven plants, where the berries are washed, graded and frozen for immediate sale or storage.

Manufacturers, in turn, buy them for use in juices, pies, tarts, muffins and other wild blueberry products.

The largest markets for wild blueberries include industrial, hospitality and institutional catering for clients such as hotels and restaurants.

Senneville and Simard, who also attended the industry conference in New Brunswick, said growing awareness of the health benefits of blueberries has boosted boosting sales.

"Our little blue fruit has acquired a solid reputation around the world and the evolution of research on the health benefits reinforce demand," Simard



SYNDICAT DES PRODUCTEURS DE BLEUETS DU QUÉBEC

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said. As for Senneville, he described "a big (sales) increase thanks to the health benefits."

Fourteen researchers from hospitals, universities and research groups from across Canada and the U.S. gathered for an August meeting in Maine where promising studies linking blueberries with brain and cell health were discussed.

Wild blueberries found in Québec's boreal forest are 100 per cent natural and certified pesticide free.

Cultivated blueberries sold on the fresh market make up only a tiny fraction of total production each year.

Quebec wild blueberries come mainly from the Saguenay-Lac Saint Jean and Gaspé regions. Elsewhere, production of the wild fruit on a commercial scale is limited to areas of the Maritime provinces and northeastern Maine.

Simard said blueberries have become the country's most important fruit in the agricultural sector, with Québec the largest producer, with 38 per cent of cul-

tivable land dedicated to what has become known as summer sapphires and blue pearls.

Production of wild blueberries is carried out on 26,000 hectares and the industry supports more than 5,000 direct and indirect jobs.

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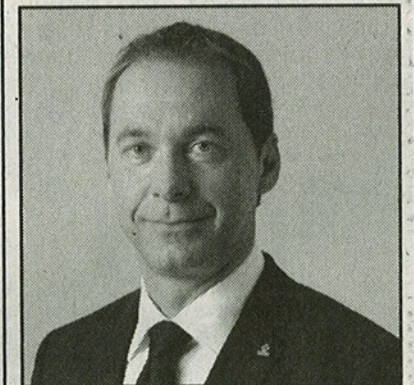
For more information about the blueberry industry, visit: [www.spbq.ca](http://www.spbq.ca)

## Health benefits cited for blueberries

Studies have shown that blueberries are ranked No. 1 for their antioxidant activity. They also:

- Improve short-term memory loss
- Help with age-related declines in neural and cognitive function
- Protect against macular degeneration of the retina
- Promote urinary tract health
- Act as a potent anti-inflammatory agent
- Improve glucose metabolism through the activity of cholegenic acid
- Reduce the risk of some cancers

## APPOINTMENT NOTICE



**Jocelyn Lauzière**  
Chief Financial Officer

Agropur's Chairman, Serge Riendeau, and Chief Executive Officer, Pierre Claproot, are pleased to announce the appointment of Jocelyn Lauzière to the position of Chief Financial Officer.

Jocelyn Lauzière holds a bachelor's degree in Business Administration, Finance from the HEC. After working in the banking sector, he joined Agropur in 1987, where he has occupied various roles in finance and operations management. Until recently, Mr. Lauzière held the position of Vice-President, Treasury and Financial Analysis.