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### **BC BLUEBERRIES PRODUCE SWEET NEWS FOR LOCAL JOBS AND ECONOMY**

(Vancouver, B.C.) – British Columbia’s blueberry season is just around the corner and with more than 700 blueberry growers preparing to start picking fruit, now is a great time to focus on the importance of supporting a home-grown industry and local farmers.

Starting July 18, consumers will start to see fresh B.C. blueberries in the produce department of their local supermarket. As the world’s third largest producer of highbush blueberries, British Columbia’s blueberry growers employ more than 10,000 workers within the region to work in the fields and harvest approximately 40 million kilograms (89 million pounds) of blueberries. Sales of B.C. blueberries are expected to top \$100 million in 2011.

“Buying locally keeps jobs in the community and builds stability in our economy,” said Debbie Etsell, executive director of the British Columbia Blueberry Council. “It means success for our dedicated growers and provides jobs for packers, shippers, pickers, and processors throughout the province.”

“But the best reason to buy local B.C. blueberries is much simpler,” adds Etsell. “They are here, they are fresh, and they are simply delicious. They’re nature’s candy – in season, our fresh local blueberries just can’t be beaten.”

While British Columbia’s cool, wet spring has somewhat delayed the bulk of the blueberry harvest, growers are anticipating a bumper crop of sweet, juicy blueberries and a long, abundant season that is expected to extend into October.

Blueberries grown in British Columbia currently represent 98 per cent of Canadian fresh product. While some of these blueberries will be packaged, processed or frozen, approximately 50 per cent of the harvest of fresh, sweet blueberries will soon be popping up at farm gates, farmers’ markets and in supermarkets across British Columbia and Canada.

Since 2003, the total area of B.C. farmland planted with blueberries has more than doubled to in excess of 8,100 hectares (20,000 acres) making it one of British Columbia’s fastest growing agricultural industries.

#### **About the British Columbia Blueberry Council**

The British Columbia Blueberry Council represents 700 blueberry growers, located in some of Canada’s most rich and fertile farmland. Plantings of premium quality high bush blueberries top 8,100 hectares in British Columbia and produce upwards of 40 million kilograms of blueberries annually. With more than \$1 billion in sales in the past five years, Canada is the third largest producer of sweet and juicy highbush blueberries in the world. Available fresh in BC from July through October, delicious BC blueberries are also frozen, dried, juiced, pureed and powdered, available for year round-distribution throughout Canada and around the world.



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