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IN AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

## **Grower Intent to Adopt Blueberry Strategic Marketing Plan**

Strategic Marketing for the Florida Blueberry Industry  
With Florida Specialty Crop Foundation

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## For More Information

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## Executive Summary

Grower Intent to Adopt Strategic Marketing for the Florida Blueberry Industry

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### Introduction

As blueberry production in the United States continues to grow, so does the Florida blueberry industry. With a short production window prior to other domestic blueberries entering the market, the Florida blueberry industry is faced with unique challenges, as well as unique advantages, compared to other production areas. This document describes Florida blueberry grower's existing marketing efforts and their intent to adopt strategies suggested in the marketing plan. Please refer to the Strategic Marketing Plan for the Florida Blueberry Industry document at <http://www.piecenter.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/BBMarketingPlanFinal-1.pdf> for more information on the suggested marketing tactics.

### Methods

Members of the Florida Blueberry Grower's Association were presented with the Strategic Marketing Plan for the Florida Blueberry Industry at the 2016 fall meeting and tradeshow held in Plant City, Florida. The presentation described the major highlights of the plan including specific marketing tactics and the two major goals of the plan; to increase public knowledge of the health benefits and seasonal availability of Florida blueberries.

Following the presentation of the strategic marketing plan, producers in the room were asked to complete a 10 question survey. The survey and presentation were designed to meet two major objectives of the grant project. Objective one: identify the level of awareness of the marketing plan with the goal of increasing awareness by 75%. Objective two: identify grower intent to adopt the marketing tactics described in the strategic plan.

Survey data was collected following the presentation of the Strategic Marketing Plan for the Florida Blueberry Industry. A convenience sample of producers that attended the presentation was utilized. The survey was disseminated to 105 growers that attended the presentation. 40 surveys were returned for a 38% response rate.

### Summary of Findings

The key findings of the survey are presented here:

- A majority of growers ( $n = 30, 78.9\%$ ) were aware that a marketing plan for Florida blueberries existed.
- Over half ( $n = 21, 52.5\%$ ) of the growers did not have a dedicated marketing budget.
- Social media was the tactic growers reported most often ( $n = 26, 74.3\%$ ) using for marketing purposes.
- The low cost of options was reported most often ( $n = 21, 63.6\%$ ) as the reason for implementing a new tactic.



- A majority of growers ( $n = 34$ , 85%) indicated that they would implement or increase use of at least one new marketing tactic.
- Six growers (15%) did not plan to implement any new tactic.

### Demographic Variables

Demographic variables were included in the survey. Of those surveyed 67.5% ( $n = 27$ ) were male and 32.5% ( $n = 13$ ) were female. Nearly half ( $n = 18$ , 45%) held a four-year college degree and 17.5% ( $n = 7$ ) held a two-year college degree (Table 1).

**Table 1: Highest Education Level Completed**

Education Level $n = 40$	$n$	%
Did not graduate high school	1	2.5
High school diploma/GED	5	12.5
Some college, no degree	4	10
2 year college degree	7	17.5
4 year college degree	18	45
Graduate or professional degree	5	12.5

Growers were asked about the total number of acres they had dedicated to blueberry production. Half of the respondents ( $n = 20$ , 50%) had 20 or more acres in blueberry production. Slightly less than half ( $n = 18$ , 45%) had 1 – 20 acres in blueberry production. Two growers (5%) had less than an acre of blueberry production.

Over half ( $n = 21$ , 52.5%) of the growers surveyed indicated that they did not have a dedicated marketing budget to promote their Florida grown blueberries. Fourteen growers (47.5%) indicated they had a marketing budget of at least \$500. Five (12.5%) of those 14 growers had a marketing budget over \$5,000 (Table 2).

**Table 2: Dedicated Marketing Budgets**

Marketing budget $n = 39$	$n$	%
No dedicated marketing budget	21	52.5
Less than \$500	4	10
\$501 - \$1,000	5	12.5
\$1,001 - \$2,000	3	7.5
\$2,001 - \$3,000	1	2.5
\$5,000 or more	5	12.5

### Obejective One: Grower Awareness

A majority of growers ( $n = 30$ , 78.9%) reported knowing that a strategic marketing plan for Florida blueberries existed. Eight (21.1%) growers reported they were unaware that a marketing plan existed. Growers were asked if they used any tactics described in the marketing plan. Eight growers reported they



were not using any of the marketing tactics described in the plan, while 30 growers (78.9%) reported they were already using at least one marketing tactic.

Growers reported specific use on 11 variables described in the marketing plan. Social media was reported most frequently ( $n = 26$ , 74.3%) as the tactic used by growers followed by agritourism ( $n = 16$ , 53.3%). Retail incentive programs ( $n = 7$ , 25%) and earned media opportunities ( $n = 7$ , 25%) were used the least (Table 3).

**Table 3: Marketing Tactic Currently Used by Blueberry Growers**

Tactic	<i>n</i>	%
Social media $n = 35$	26	74.3
Agritourism $n = 30$	16	53.3
Fresh From Florida labeling $n = 32$	15	46.9
Email pushes $n = 32$	14	43.8
Promoting Fresh From Florida recipes $n = 34$	14	41.2
Digital campaign $n = 29$	13	44.8
End-consumer communication $n = 30$	13	25.0
Retail communications $n = 29$	10	34.5
Restaurant partnerships $n = 30$	9	30.0
Retail incentive programs $n = 28$	7	25.0
Earned media opportunities $n = 28$	7	25.0

Several different reasons were given for selecting new marketing tactics. The low cost of options was reported most often ( $n = 21$ , 63.6%) as the reason for implementing a new tactic followed by ease of use ( $n = 16$ , 48.5%) and ability to reach consumers directly ( $n = 16$ , 48.5%). Consistent branding across channels was the least cited reason ( $n = 7$ , 21.2%) for implementing a new tactic (Table 4).

**Table 4: Reasons to Implement New Tactics**

Reason $n = 33$	<i>n</i>	%
Low cost of options	21	63.6
Ease of use	16	48.5
Reaches consumers directly	16	48.5
Build trust with public	15	45.5
Interaction with consumer through two-way communication	13	39.4
Opportunity to defend agriculture	12	36.4
Time commitment	9	27.3
Consistent branding across channels	7	21.2

Respondents to the survey also wrote in several other tactics they utilize to promote Florida blueberries. Other marketing tactics included automobile signage, advertising banners in local school gyms, local magazine advertising, roadside signage, and advertising flyers placed in local stores. Several respondents



indicated that they rely heavily on the efforts of their marketers to promote Florida blueberries to the public. One grower wrote in that “purchasing power is consolidated on the retailers, not consumers,” suggesting that marketing efforts should focus on retail purchasers.

### Objective Two: Grower Intent to Adapt the Marketing Tactics

Growers were also asked to report their intention to adapt new marketing tactics outlined in the strategic marketing plan. A majority of growers ( $n = 34$ , 85%) indicated that they would implement or increase use of at least one new marketing tactic. Six growers (15%) did not plan to implement any new tactic.

Social media was reported as the tactic that would be implemented by most growers ( $n = 25$ , 62.5%). Fresh from Florida labeling ( $n = 16$ , 44.4%) and agritourism ( $n = 16$ , 44.4%) were reported as two tactics that were also likely to be implemented. Earned media opportunities ( $n = 1$ , 2.8%) were least likely to be implemented by growers.

**Table 5: Marketing Tactics Growers Plan to Implement**

Tactic $n = 36$	$n$	%
Social media	25	62.5
Fresh From Florida labeling	16	44.4
Agritourism	16	44.4
Promoting Fresh From Florida recipes	13	33.6
Email pushes	12	33.3
Restaurant partnerships	12	33.2
Digital campaign	10	27.8
End-consumer communication	7	17.5
Retail communications	4	11.1
Retail incentive programs	2	5.0
Earned media opportunities	1	2.8

The time consuming nature of marketing ( $n = 7$ , 33.3%) was given as the top reason for not implementing a new tactic. Interestingly, no grower reported that being uncomfortable with handling negative messages was a reason for them to not adopt a new marketing tactic.

**Table 6: Reasons Growers do not Implement Marketing Tactics**

Reason $n = 19$	$n$	%
Time consuming	7	33.3
Don't know how to use	6	28.6
Won't reach my customers	6	28.6
Overwhelming nature of marketing	6	28.6
Too expensive	5	23.8
Uncomfortable handling negative messages	-	-

