



By Carl Collen

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China welcomes fresh US blueberries



USHBC teams up with Pagoda for the first-ever promotion of US fresh blueberries in China

After years of hard work and bilateral negotiation, consumers in China can finally enjoy fresh blueberries from the United States—the birthplace of modern blueberry cultivation. The US Highbush Blueberry Council (USHBC) teamed up with Chinese retailer Pagoda to hold a ceremony celebrating the arrival of fresh US blueberries in mainland China.

It follows 'years of hard work and bilateral negotiation, the USHBC noted, and marks the first-ever promotion of US fresh blueberries in China.

The ceremony also featured Lindsay Malecha, deputy director of the Guangzhou, China office of the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) Agricultural Trade Office (ATO).

Years of patience

To gain access to the China market, the US government and the USHBC worked together with China's customs authorities to develop export phytosanitary protocols for fresh blueberries, a process which took

The breakthrough came in May of 2020 when fresh U.S blueberries received final approval for import into China from the General Administration of Customs of China (GACC).

"I'm excited and honoured to join the US Highbush Blueberry Council, our great friends at Pagoda, and consumers here in Shenzhen today to celebrate this inaugural promotion of USA blueberries to China," said Malecha. "It highlights the collaborative work between our countries that benefits US blueberry farmers and makes it possible for distinguishing Chinese consumers here and across China to enjoy delicious US blueberries for years to come.

"Opening the Chinese market was a major milestone for the US highbush blueberry industry last year, and we are excited to celebrate the successful arrival of USA fresh blueberries in China this season," said Alicia Adler, vice-president for global business development at USHBC. "On behalf of the U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council, I would like to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of the growers

exporting to China this year, and express gratitude to the importers and retailers in China for their commitment to growing blueberry demand."

Oregon-grown fruit

The blueberries in Pagoda's three-pallet inaugural shipment were grown by Norris Farms in the Umpqua River Valley in Oregon, and sent to China by airfreight.

They were supplied by Superfresh Growers, a Washington State-based company with experience supplying fruit from the northwestern United States to markets around the world.

"The microclimate in the Umpqua River Valley yields delicious, large, high-quality blueberries over a long season," said Jeff Webb, director of international business development at Superfresh Growers. "As a fifth-generation family-owned company, we are delighted that our blueberry program is supplied by a family farm with a multi-generational legacy spanning nearly 50 years.

"We believe that this joint depth of

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years of patient legwork.

experience, along with our respective family-owned values and business practices, will shine through to consumers in China when they taste our US blueberries.”

Specially selected berries

With over 4,700 stores across China, Pagoda is China’s largest fruit shop chain and was described as “well-suited to marketing the inaugural shipment of US fresh blueberries to China”.

The berries in the shipment were specially selected to match Pagoda customers’ demand for large and sweet berries, the USHBC explained.

The berries will be sold in a limited number of Pagoda stores in the Pearl River and Yangtze River deltas as a premium grade product due to the size and sweetness level.

“Thank you to the Agricultural Trade Office of the US consulate general in Guangzhou, the US Highbush Blueberry Council, and other partners for cooperating with Pagoda,” said Zhang Wangbo, general manager of Pagoda Group's Commodity Center. “Pagoda is very honoured to be the first company to promote fresh American blueberries to Chinese consumers.

“We will leverage Pagoda’s strong brand and sales channels to promote these blueberries so that more Chinese consumers can understand, taste and fall in love with USA blueberries,” he added. “Through our cooperation with hundreds of suppliers around the world, we have brought delicious new fruits to more and more consumers in China – a trend we hope to continue in the future through cooperation with new high-quality suppliers.”