

# IBA President's outlook into 2016



Predictions are always difficult, especially when they deal about the future. Luckily, I have a crystal ball which shows the future (it is a very interesting and powerful tool, only presidents can borrow it). Working with it is not easy, because it shows blurred pictures. But there are future trends which are not surprising: for example that we get older and work longer - or that everything goes digital.

The evolution shaped our bodies: moles got the best hands for digging, other animals got a long throat to get the best leaves in high trees. We humans have the biggest brain - which is often useful, but all the other parts of our body are still a very ancient construction with old fashioned needs. The fittest survive - and today, it seems the fittest may be those who sit in front of their computers. I was curious to see how it would affect our being in many generations? Is evolution still working? I therefore switched my crystal ball into the long range mode, scared to discover humans consisting of only two parts: a bottom to sit on, with a finger for wiping displays. But as far as I could see, it seems a bottom with a finger is not our appearance in the future.

After this very relieving discovery, I continued to look into the ball - and was very pleased to discover that health is among the future mega trends! Pleased, because health and nutrition belong together; and we blackcurrant people are lucky to make the best natural food available. That is good news!

Unfortunately, the short range mode was more serious. It showed a world in disorder: extremists, climate change, refugees, just to name a few. There are big tasks ahead. Luckily, we have political recipes which enabled us to live in peace and wealth for the last decades. Nationalism, separation, fencing and other dividing forces played no role in it. My crystal ball told me that the political recipes we experienced will work again in future.

It also showed me that our IBA is small and without big influence - for the

moment. But as we understood that working together is better than working against each other, I could see that our future is bright. And this future is not so far away.

Best wishes to all of you for a Good Year 2016 !

**Dirk Herdieckerhoff,**

*IBA President*

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## **Board letter, November 2015**



### **Market situation**

This is the second year where many blackcurrant growers did not create an income from their orchards. It is a painful experience if the product can't be sold. This is due to a general oversupply. Growers have to react to this. Successful ones will look for new partners, develop other products, search for contracts or serve market niches. Some will reduce the acreage or go out of the business.

### **Ashford conference - Sponsors, speakers, subjects**

Thank you very much to Anthony and Sarah, excellent work so far !

I know that organizing and financing is a big task, and I am very pleased that the UK offered to do it without long hesitation. The last German conference created a little surplus, (3000â,¬) which we used to support the members of the association when travelling to blackcurrant events. We took the fees and adjusted the program to the expected income. Every lunch or journey had its own etat, there is

a difference between caviar and soup. The sponsors payed 500 to 1000â,- to display products on the field. If you allow sponsors to be speakers during the conference, it is risky because the audience doesn't want to hear one hour about tractor models.

As you know, there is a Channel between the UK and the other European countries. These waters are very effective, for example to control the immigration of refugees. It also worked excellent against rabies. Unfortunately, it failed completely to keep German discount stores out of the country! These stores, Aldi or Lidl, sell half the fruit juice volume on the German market. The blackcurrant juice drink (25% fruit juice) is offered for 0,80â,-/l. And that for months, the products are placed in the ground shelf. But shadow and light belong together, there should be a way to return back into the gourmet shelf.

Would it be a good idea to get a speaker from those companies (I could be helpful there)? They could talk about the UK fruit juice market. It could also be possible to ask some Tesco people how they maintain their 3% aim (profit from turnover). Anthony, Sarah, what do you think ?

How about Suntory, are they sponsoring or speaking? There is a well proven contract growing system in the UK, and we should do whatever possible to maintain it! One thing we should focus on are the excellent marketing and information activities of the UK blackcurrant association. I think this work is far ahead, compared to other European countries.

## **EU aroma regulation**

There are still "žflavoured waters" on the market. They use the picture and the name of blackcurrants - but there is nothing from our berries in it. It is a clear falsification. Unfortunately, the customer is not allowed to pay these products with home printed fake money. There is a strong lobby of the aroma industry working, which does not care to destruct the last bit of credibility the industrial food producers may have. The EU aroma regulation, which describes the labeling requirements, passed with the positive votes of UK parliament members. Would that be a subject for a speaker?

## **Manager**

Stefanie is working well, the homepage is online, and she establishes connections. She needs more support and response for her activities! Getting

Sponsors is not easy, Bill helped us, but on the longer run, we can pay only one manager. He offered assistance work for the conference in exchange to the participation fee. That's up to the organizers to decide. I hope he can come.

## **Marketing**

We had a request for blackcurrants from China. That happens sometimes, but normally this is not a professional approach, and therefore not serious. If you need a car, you don't ask the automobile association. But in this case, I passed it on to the European associations, because the request was particular for European berries. Denmark responded, but the trade was not a complete success. Generally, I think it is a waste to use blackcurrants to gain anthocyanin color.

Hope for comments ,

Regards

***Dirk Herdieckerhoff***

*IBA President*

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# **7th President's annual report, May 2015**



## **Retrospective 2014**

After 8 years of successful work, our General Manager, Bill Floyd, has to resign due to health reasons. The IBA owes Bill a lot. The IBA Executive looked for candidates, carried out a selection process and, finally, voted for Stefanie Sharma from France to continue Bills work. Stefanie will be introduced in June 2015 during the Vilnius conference.

Last year's harvest was good, but with disappointing prices, following from a low-level, steady-demand concentrate market. This is a result of a decrease in fruit juice consumption in general. It seems that we can expect another good harvest this year. The IBA Production Chart 2015 will be updated during the conference.

## **Activities of the IBA**

The IBA has a number of activities by which we look to achieving our Vision, including:

- Distribution of information: the Production Chart is an important example of this activity
- Linking people: growers, processors, scientists, marketers and consumers, especially through our annual Conferences.
- Promotion and lobby work: working with companies that can change the global attitude towards blackcurrants. This work ongoing and done by your Exec and General Manager.
  
- **Future of the IBA**

We don't shy away from big tasks, but we have to be realistic. All of our work has to be done with a very limited budget, a part-time manager and volunteers. The Country Organisations are each different in their structure, products, customers and size. And so are their berries. This is a very important point: blackcurrants should not be treated as, nor promoted as a commodity like wheat or oil. They can be special in their origin, plant varietal and agronomy practices, and their phytochemical (flavour/nutritional/neutraceutical) values.

Undoubtedly blackcurrants have an excellent and proven health value. But to claim that in the EU on product labels, it would be necessary to prove that to the EFSA in a very expensive procedure. That is why the "Stress Hero" strategy is a good way to add story and value to our product.

I'm very positive about the future of our global crop and the future of the IBA. I look forward to meeting old and new friends and colleagues in Vilnius. My special thanks to Audrius Sasnauskas and the team from Lithuania for their excellent preparation. Once again, we can look forward to a very successful Conference, continuing the traditions established in New Zealand, Denmark, France, Netherlands, Scotland, Germany and Poland.

*Dirk Herdieckerhoff, IBA President, May 2015*

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# **Report to the IBA on the Polish Blackcurrant Growers Association Meeting, September 2014**



*held Skierniewice, Poland, 20th September 2014*

## **PURPOSE OF THE MEETING**

- *To summarise the present situation for Polish blackcurrants, as seen by both growers and processing plants.*
- *To consider how to co-operate in coming seasons.*
- *To develop strategies to solve the current problems and prevent such problems in the future.*

## **MEETING CONTENT**

### **Welcome and introduction of guests**

- *President of the IBA Dirk Herdieckerhoff*
- *A representative of the Polish Minister of Agriculture*
- *Representatives of the processing plants: the meeting invited representatives of the four largest companies in Poland (Doehler, Austria Juice, SFZ, OK) - invitations to the meeting were sent in late August.*
- *Of the four invited companies only one attended -Austria Juice's Jaroslaw Dybus.*

### **Season review 2014 by a member of the KSPCP Board**

This year's season for the producers of black currant was one of the worst in history. Very low prices for the fruit offered by the processing plants could lead to bankruptcy for many farms, and in the next few years to the collapse of blackcurrant production in Poland. The real value of 0,40-0,45 zÅ, / kg of fruit growers received on average this year, is much lower than the prices that producers received in 2003-2004, which were considered at that stage to be the worst. Prices per fruit in 2003 -2004 allowed growers to small expenditures associated with the subsequent functioning of households, prices in 2014 did not cover the cost of harvesting fruits and deliver them to processing plants.

The mood among manufacturers was very bad, and many people do not even want to talk about blackcurrants. At many farms, berries were not collected at all, and some plantations face liquidation.

### **Assessment of the situation by the Minister of Agriculture and the envisaged aid and prevention**

The Polish Government understands the dramatic situation of fruit this year. The Minister of Agriculture asked the President of the OCCP to take action to investigate whether market behavior by entrepreneurs buying blackcurrants infringed the anti-competitive behaviour regulations.

The Polish Government provides the financial support this year to producers of black currant and cherry in the amount of 30 million zÅ,, ie. 410 zÅ, / ha.

In Poland, work is progressing on a project called the Stabilization Fund, which in

the future may pay compensation to farmers in case of a drop in their income by more than 30 percent against the average annual income of their last three years - eg. due to lower prices of agricultural products caused by, amongst others things, by market speculation. According to the National Fund money will come from contributions from farmers and purchasers of agricultural products who will be charged 0.2% of their net value.

Ongoing preliminary work on system procurement contracts comply with the Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council of Europe 13.08.

### **Assessment of the situation by representatives of the processing plants (Austria Juice)**

The cause of low prices in Poland in 2014 was:

- The large stocks of concentrate and frozen foods.
- Price fluctuations between years due to erroneous and unreliable forecasts of yields of fruit.
- A fall in the consumption of beverages with fruit.
- The overproduction of blackcurrant.

Signing contracts with a fixed price contracting is dangerous, because another supplier may offer concentrate at a lower price from another source. Signing contracts with manufacturers does not solve the problems until the overriding production and oversupply issues are addressed.

Austria Juice expressed willingness to help and take part in further discussions.

### **Facts**

The analysis of the balance of production of black currant in the years 2008-2012 shows that Poland, processed an average of 115, 400 tonnes of fruit, which indicates that the production of fruit in 2013 was 4% higher than the average of the years' 2008-2012.

According KSPCP, blackcurrant production in Poland in 2014 amounted to 80% of the 2013 year. In the current season, crops from many fruit plantations have not been collected (estimated by KSPCP to be 10-15% of the total crop), which significantly reduces the overall total of the blackcurrant harvest size in Poland.



Confirmation of lower totals are published CSO data: according to the estimates of the GUS experts, the 2014 harvest is estimated at 124,000 tonnes.

*It should be noted that the above estimate covers the entire Polish national production, not only commercial orchard crops but also private gardens.*

Production estimated by the CSO experts may in fact be even lower if the percentage of “not collected fruit” proves to be greater than estimated in mid-July. The information available looks set to confirm that the 2014 production level was similar to the levels of 2007 and 2011; but prices nearly 10 times smaller.

At the end of this year’s harvest in Poland, there were numerous inquiries regarding the purchase of large quantities of fruit, and the offered prices were 100% higher than those paid in full season. On the one hand processing plants inform that there is a large overproduction of fruit in Poland and large stocks of frozen and concentrated, but on the other hand the same companies invest multimillion-dollar amounts in the development of infrastructure, increased capacity and greatly increased storage capacity.

More than 90% of blackcurrant plantations in Poland have a surface area of 1 - 5 hectares. Poland is characterized by fragmentation of production and a poor response by growers to be part of organized producer groups. With favorable weather conditions in the next year (no spring frost, the optimal quantity rain during flowering), we have overproduction of currants in Poland.

Compensation for embargoed exports to Russia will not be available to producers of fruit blackcurrant because of failure of blackcurrant crops to meet the requirements of the Regulation of the European Commission.

Overall, there is a lack of good relations between growers and processing plants.

There is a high concentration of processing plants in Poland, the strong position of several existing entities strongly affects the potential for new market participants.

## **Conclusion**

There is a lack of good will to create better cooperation between growers and processing plants in Poland (example: of the four invited companies - only one attended). To stabilize the situation growers should seek to have further

discussions with the industry on contracts for the supply of fruit and for quality certification for crops. If the price level in 2015 is similar to 2014, many farms will fail and there will be a decline in the production of blackcurrant, not only in Poland but also in other European countries. Low prices for the fruit will be a limiting factor for the level of production. Intensification of activities to promote the health benefits of fruit and juice consumption growth in the domestic and international markets is needed and this has to be the role of the IBA. Help from the government in Poland (surcharge 410zÅ, / ha - de minimis aid) is a temporary aid, promising solutions are needed (a Stabilization Fund is a good idea).

**Piotr Baryla**, *Vice President KSPCP, Vice President IBA (September 2014)*

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## **President's Annual Report, June 2014**



I am pleased to present the 6th Presidents Annual Report to the members of the International Blackcurrant Association (IBA).

In general the IBA, has been developing internally as well as in its industry and marketing activities. We have approved the overall key strategies of the IBA in 2012. They are the basis for IBA development: activities are being implemented gradually as our budget permits. We discuss the strategy at our AGM's and restate it if needed: once approved, it's our guideline. We elect the Board on the basis of skills; it allows us to use experience at many levels. I'm happy to see all Board members contribute from their specific core areas.

### **Retrospection on the IBA conference 2013 in Waldenburg**

## **(Germany)**

One of our key-strategies is to support and develop the annual conference. More than 100 attendees have joined the biannual IBA Horticultural conference in Waldenburg 2013; the conference focused mostly on the growers and processors perspective. The Conference also gave us an invaluable insight into German primary production, domestic market trends and consumption. Especially into German consumption of blackcurrant beverages. As with previous years, the wonderful knowledge of the local organizers enriched the knowledge of the delegates. Our IBA Conferences are a unique forum, where we share knowledge and inspiration: they cover most aspects of the value chain from growers to marketers and customers. My thanks fo to the organizing team in Waldenburg, supported by our General Manager, Bill Floyd: this conference was a success.

## **Poland host of the IBA conference 2014**

Poland is now a second-year member of the IBA. We are all very pleased to see Poland, as the major global producer of blackcurrants, quickly responding to its IBA membership by taking responsibility for the 2014 IBA Conference. The KSPCP has demonstrated leadership at this conference by developing a strong and well-focussed program. The Conference is situated in the Eastern part of Poland. This allows more Eastern European delegates to join us.

## **Blackcurrant country associations - the basis of the IBA**

Country memberships are the bedrock basis of the IBA and our 8 financial Country Associations work well together. We are looking forward to a reconstruction of the Japanese industry structure that will allow Japan to be a member of the IBA again. It's an on-going process to achieve more country-members and I encourage non-members to support and join the IBA: our membership structure allows for research or processing groups to represent a country if no grower association exists.

## **Sponsoring the IBA**

Sponsorships are critically important to the IBA. We are very pleased with how our sponsorships are developing and pleased to find the IBA as valuable fix-point for world leading companies. In turn we are pleased to serve our sponsors with facts and knowledge from the IBA database. You will find our sponsors visible in most of the IBA activities but with a special focus on key-activities such as annual

production forecasts and the New Product Development Initiative. The IBA Global production forecast (sponsored by Weremczuk) is a key feature of the annual IBA conference and invaluable to all members of industry. The input is based on actual national forecasts based on reports from growers and advisors.

## **The IBA global production forecast**

We have developed the forecast years ago, while no precise information was available in the short gap between flowering and harvest. It still keeps its value for all members and thanks to KSPCP Poland, it is now even stronger by serving a common information base for the Polish crop. As a grower-based association the IBA is most careful not to share any information influencing the free market and also to ensure that all information is credible. Discussions of prices in an organised forum can be seen as an illegal activity influencing the market and so is banned from our own activities. But historical prices are important background information and the IBA is aiming to show historical prices that allow the market to understand the values of such qualities as purpose and nationality, and growing practices.

## **Future activities**

Of course, the IBA does not (and cannot) develop new markets or products. And the IBA cannot create a balance between production and consumption. But we can stimulate ideas in the marketplace that could increase demand. To this end I am very pleased to announce the decision by Austria Juice to create a Blackcurrant-focussed New Product Development Unit to explore ideas and market opportunities for its customers.

The Vision of the IBA is to gather skills, knowledge and resources from all levels within the industry in order to encourage to new market innovations and strengthen the demand for a highly respected Blackcurrant fruit. As part of this we aim to be the GO-TO fix - point for knowledge about our crop. As members of the global blackcurrant family we all stand to benefit from the IBA achieving its Vision.

## **Financial Situation**

Revenues in 2013-14 were achieved by Country Association financial memberships,) 8 members - € 6.000 total) and sponsorships (€ 15.911). Remarkable is decline of sponsorship in total, due to Agrana Juice

merging to Austria Juice. The sponsorships will extend in 2014 as Austria Juice and New Holland are involved in individual activities. Due to a limited budget, administration costs was kept to a minimum and so declined by 15%. Our budget 2014/15 indicates total revenue at €46.500 due to the development of strategies that are essential. Essential both to the IBA's service to its members as they provide good value for our sponsors.

### **Focus on developments**

Development of our Sector-Groups (Agronomy/Plant breeding and Market Development) is still a key- strategy but not a main-priority. Instead, we need to develop them by voluntary support or by individual initiatives such as demonstrated by Austria Juice. Our main focus is still: our Conferences; Country Associations; science/ market development; and general management. All the time providing positive and valuable information and networking connections for members, researchers, processors and sponsors.

### **IBA - a unique association**

Outsiders have told us that the IBA is quite unique in the world: we operate on very limited funds, and with a part-time management team and the voluntary work of your Executive: but it works! I'd like to thank the Board for their support, giving expertise and experience where needed. Thanks especially to my Vice-Presidents for their contributions year round. They proved sound focus advice and support. Thanks to all members and sponsors, who are the life-blood of the IBA. And most of all, thanks to our innovative General Manager, Bill Floyd, who works with great respect for our industry and the IBA's Vision.

### **Announcement**

And finally, as announced, I'll step down from position as President and board - member of the IBA. I'm honoured that I have been involved in an international forum of dedicated Blackcurrant people since 1996. I'm proud to have been part of its leadership since 2000: succeeding in forming the international association "IBA" in 2008 and having it verified in Denmark 2009. But most of all, I'm happy to see the development from only a few delegates in 2007, (Brussels), to more than 200 attendees in 2014. This could not have been done without your support. Thank You!

*Svend Jensen, IBA President, 2 June 2014*

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# President's Annual Report, June 2013



I am pleased to present the 5<sup>th</sup> Presidents Annual Report to members of the International Blackcurrant Association (IBA) after my first year as President.

## **Retrospective 2012**

In general the IBA has been developing internally as well as in its industry and marketing activities. The Rules of the IBA were approved at our 2012 AGM and so now act as our formal platform. The overall key strategies of the IBA are now developed and we gradually implement them as our budget permits.

## **Organization IBA**

Internally we have established an Executive forum based on the GM, the President and 2 vice-presidents (northern and southern hemisphere). We meet by Skype call every month, ensuring the close communication needed to develop and implement activities. But these Skype calls also require a lot of resources. The Board was elected on the basis of skills; and allows us to use experience at many levels. I'm happy to see all Board members contribute from their specific core areas.

## **The IBA conference 2012 in Dundee**

One of our key-strategies is to support and develop the annual conference. The conference in Dundee 2012 was joined by more than 180 attendees, showing the high interest from all levels in the blackcurrant industry. Our conferences are a unique forum where we share knowledge and inspiration: they cover most aspects of the value chain from growers to marketers and customers. And so they are a fundamental part of the IBA activities. Thanks to the organizing team in Dundee, supported by our General Manager, Bill Floyd: this conference was a success.

## **Poland - a new member of the IBA**

Poland is now a financial member of the IBA. We are all very pleased to see Poland, as the major producer of blackcurrants, finally succeeded in organising a Foundation (the KSPCP). The KSPCP can take responsibility in national as well as international affairs. It has already achieved success in high-lighting the need of modernizing the national forecasts of annual production of berries in Poland. We appreciate the KSPCP's close connection to the IBA. This year, we invite a member of the KSPCP to join an extended IBA board.

Connections to national news media are essential. The recently established industry magazine, Jagodnik, is now a part of our Polish media communication network; it provides access directly to the Polish regions.

## **Agronomy & Plant Breeders Sector Group**

The annual conference in 2013 has been extended with an Agronomist and Plant Breeders Forum. The Forum is an activity of the newly formed Agronomy & Plant Breeders Sector Group, a new organisation managed by Jim Grierson; and so a part of the IBA activities. Once established it will find its own development, giving close networking to its members, and linked to the annual IBA conferences. The Sector Group's activities will of course be of great interest to many, but we have to respect that much of their work will be in closed shop. I'd like to thank Jim Grierson for chairing the initiation of this Sector Group.

During 2012-2013 the IBA was significantly involved in planning the Sector Group's first Forum and this has added a lot of knowledge to our own Executive team; especially insight into Russian production and research. But, prioritising our resources means that Sector Group needs to be "self-running" and "self-funded".

Your Executive has to balance how to implement the various key strategies with limited financial resources.

## **Statement of account**

Revenues are achieved by (a) financial memberships at 45 % of total revenues, and (b) sponsorships 2013/14 at 55 %. Our budget 2013/14 indicates total revenue at  $\hat{a}$ , -37200. Unfortunately, to achieve balance between revenues and expenses, adjustment is needed and so the General Administration costs will be

reduced by decreasing the numbers of Exec Skype-meetings from 12 to 6. Development of Sector-Groups is still a key- strategy but not a main-priority. Instead we need them to be developed by voluntary support. Our main focus is still: Conferences; general management; Country Associations; science/ market development. And of course, keeping close connections to members and sponsors. In order to achieve more activities, we need more revenues and especially sponsorships would be welcome. Bill is working on this as a main-priority, but I'd like to call on all of you to act as ambassadors and introduce us to potential sponsors.

## **Summary**

The IBA is still developing as seen in 2012/13 with the success of our conference in Dundee, Poland becoming a financial member, assistance with the Ag/PB Sector-Group, and closer relations to Russia. I'll like to thank the Board for their support, giving expertise and experience where needed. Thanks especially to my Vice - Presidents for their contributions year round, proving sound focus advice and support. Thanks to all members and sponsors: your support makes it possible to maintain and develop the IBA. And most of all thanks to our innovative General Manager, Bill Floyd, who works with great respect for our industry and the IBA's Vision.

I wish we had a larger budget to achieve more activities, but we have to be responsible and we have to make the best of what we have!

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# **President's Message, March 2012**

It is pleasing to hear from our members of the IBA family that the awareness of the attributes that the Blackcurrant can offer to consumers is on the increase. Delivering the awareness message is the responsibility of all sectors of our industry. It is essential that we all have a greater appreciation of these attributes from breeding through to consumption. Our strap line delivers a strong wholesome message The Blackcurrant- The Best Berry for Life! Meaning it is for all ages whether for infants through to grandparents the blackcurrant will deliver



a positive attribute that will enhance our healthiness.

Henry Ford once said-“Coming together is a Beginning, Keeping together is Progress, Working together is Success”.

On May 15th in Dundee, Scotland we have the opportunity of coming together and building on what is now seen as a unique position within the global berry fruit industry. I hope all of you consider your responsibility to be part of this carefully designed three day program organised by a hard working committee from the James Hutton Institute and fellow IBA personal. Refer to [www.internationalblackcurrantassociation.com](http://www.internationalblackcurrantassociation.com) for the program and registration details. Prior to the conference starting proper, the IBA are running two concurrent forums Tuesday 15th from 13.30-1600 hrs one being Agronomy and the other on Marketing/Brands. The final content of these forums will be posted on the Web very shortly. Following these forums the IBA Annual General Meeting will be conducted 16.30 through 17.30 all are very welcome. The strength of all forums and the AGM is you. We wish to encourage all those present to be part of these meetings by having your say.

It is with great pleasure that I welcome Franz Ennser, Managing Director, Agrana Juice Holdings GmbH -(see March Feature) as an independent director of the IBA board. We look forward to his contribution around our table. We in the Southern Hemisphere have just completed our harvest with both Australia and New Zealand reporting a satisfactory harvest. We wish that the pending Northern Hemisphere spring is a kind one for our Blackcurrant growers.

Looking forward to seeing you all at the 3rd International IBA Conference in Dundee, Scotland.

*Jim Grierson, IBA President, March 2012*

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## **President's Message, December 2011**

With the year closing fast I am encouraged and please to see that more and more consumers, foodies and health professionals are taking advantage of the

wonderful attributes of the our King of Fruits the “Blackcurrant” □ Best Berry for Life!

With more independent human research papers a myriad of user friendly products coupled with the need for healthier diets the marketing sector of the our Blackcurrant industry has a wonderful opportunity to capitalize on these global trends. This of course is where we at the IBA can assist in directing Country Member Associations to opportunities we field through our Web Site. One of the main strengths of the IBA is to help our members to build an awareness of the “Blackcurrant” □ Best Berry for Life! within their own country environment.

Our General Manager Bill Floyd has been encouraging country members to send through their Web Site details so we can link via our [www.internationalblackcurrantassociation.com](http://www.internationalblackcurrantassociation.com) web site to theirs. Where this has taken place reports are showing a greater awareness with good general consumer interest. For those of you who have not go your own Web Site we offer the opportunity for you to forward the information and Bill will guide you here with the result being a page or two with your country details and contacts at very little cost to you. The link system above is at no cost to the member countries that have their own Web Site being all inclusive of their annual membership fee. I invite those that have not taken advantage of this medium to do so at your earliest convenience.

You will have seen the details of the 3rd International Blackcurrant Conference hosted by the James Hutton Institute in conjunction with GSK-UK. There is a very interesting well balanced program of plant breeding, science, marketing and opportunities for all delegates to mingle amongst the leaders of the different sectors of our global industry. Registration can be as easy as going onto the IBA Web Site and connect to the link on our home page. I look forward in meeting you all in Dundee May 15th thru 18th 2012. On the afternoon preceding the conference on the 15th of May we have two forums running concurrently from 2pm to 4pm. One is on Agronomy and the other on Marketing/Brands. At 4.15pm the IBA- AGM will commence. Over and above our member country delegates any conference delegate may attend the AGM. This gives you the opportunity to meet your board and have a greater understand on how they wish to advance the vision of the IBA.

I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of all our IBA family to wish you a

Safe, Merry Christmas and very Prosperous New Year.

*Jim Grierson, IBA President, December 2011*

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# President's Message, September 2011

I have just finished writing this column as I have been advised of the death of a dear and valued friend and pioneer of the industry, Frans Buijsrogge. I will keep my column the same and I speak positively on many matters despite a real sadness from that loss but Frans would not have wanted me to do otherwise: - *Jim Grierson*.

Since my last communication our European growers have been very busy harvesting. Unfortunately for most the harvest output has been well under previous years. As predicted at the Goes conference the harvest has finished around the 92,000 t. We are of course seen to be in a commodity market therefore supply and demand have a great influence on what prices are finally agreed between buyers and sellers. Prices for fruit at the farm gate have varied from  $\hat{a}, -0.95\text{c/kg}$  thru  $\hat{a}, -1.50/\text{kg}$  with fruit concentrate being as high as  $\hat{a}, -8.40/\text{kg}$  down to  $\hat{a}, -6.20/\text{kg}$ . This is almost twice the price from previous years. Although a major factor in this increase is the shortfall in production, there is also increasing demand from buyers who are interested in the health research that is becoming available. While supply might come more into line with normal market demand in the future the increasing interest from a range of buyers should see prices closer to what growers require in the future.

As we have been saying for several years now, the challenge for the Blackcurrant industry as a whole is to de-commoditize the Blackcurrant: as it has some of the most compelling human scientific research to support many sound health claims. From my own experience in the industry over the last 30 years there isn't a better time for our industry to reposition itself in the global market. We have all the elements in place: increased demand as consumers start to understand the

real health value of the blackcurrant; increased interest in new product development opportunities by both existing and new crop buyers; and most importantly, a new spirit of cooperation between our producer countries to grow the “global demand-pie” and then compete through innovation and agronomic excellence to capture their own share of that increase.

The UK Foundation will host our forthcoming 3rd International Blackcurrant Conference to be held in Dundee in association with the James Hutton Institute. Jonathan Snape and his team are putting together a very interesting programme for this conference. Mark your diaries for the 15th thru 18th May 2012: you will want to be there!

As a fore runner to this conference, the IBA are running two forums: “Marketing: the new ‘futures’ for Brands and Processors’ and the ‘Agronomy: growing for the new futures’... The chairman Svend Jensen and Rob Saunders respectively are working on an agenda with the IBA executive for each forum and we will have details out to you later in the year. As research teams increasingly discover new health attributes for blackcurrants it’s important that we as the industry’s global ‘representative’ don’t misrepresent those attributes to the market. You’ll see that on our website we now make an important declaration regarding how such science results should be used: research is only relevant to the blackcurrant product used for the trials: different cultivars, different growing conditions, different processing techniques, all change the phytochemical dynamics of the finished product.

Scientists still don’t know exactly why some blackcurrant formulations achieve some specific health values and we mustn’t allow investment by some companies in research and product development to be “watered down” by consumers assuming the results of specific research necessarily relate to any and all blackcurrants. If it happens then no one will invest in such research. And more importantly, if it happens then consumers expecting some physiological value from taking any blackcurrant product could be disappointed. Your executive has been made aware (under confidentiality) of some very exciting developments in new areas of health and lifestyle research and product development. As these initiatives become public and are coupled with the already high-profile research being done in institutions in the UK, USA, Japan, New Zealand, Finland, and France, we can expect a renaissance of the blackcurrant as one of the most respected and desired natural fruits for human health and well-being.

Each year the catchphrase agreed at our inaugural Conference in Christchurch New Zealand in 2008 become less and less futuristic aspirational and more a proven reality for here and now: Blackcurrant - The best berry for life

*Jim Grierson, IBA President, June 2011*

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## **President's Message, June 2011**

Those of us who attended the 16th European Blackcurrant conference in Goes, Netherlands enjoyed a very interesting and ground breaking conference. There was some very exciting research on gut health presented by Dr Abdul Molan and our own General Manager Bill Floyd presented on behalf of Sujon, NZ the benefits of consuming Blackcurrant formulations for muscle recovery after exercise both in humans and horses. You will find the science and ongoing results behind these products elsewhere on the IBA web.

It is a pleasure to report that at the AGM of the European Blackcurrant Association, President Svend Jensen, confirmed that the EBA voted to discontinue as an independent organization and saw fit to formally become part of the International Blackcurrant Association. Under the IBA banner we will continue with the annual conference concept being grower based with a full industry conference every two years. As I presented at Goes, I would like to congratulate the European past and present attendees for their work over the past sixteen years as the EBA, which has been the catalyst in the formation of the IBA.

Whilst we reviewed the projected production from the forthcoming European harvest it became obvious that due to the loss from frost and the continuation of the extreme drought across Europe that our annualized international production would be in the region of 100,000 tones. This is the lowest we have predicted since we started to record these figures. What does this mean for our industry? If the IBA philosophy persists we should under these conditions add value to our price per kg produced as the fundamental law of supply and demand will take over and innovative and committed buyers will seek to lock in reducing stock supplies. In this situation the trend of the last decade for the first of the season's

sales to set the price for the balance of the season is not likely to apply to the 2011 crop. My challenge to the industry is, do not sell for the sake of it, this is an opportunity for considered selling, for creating a sound grower-buyer relationship that will benefit all in the long-term. Market demand is increasing: and the new uses of the blackcurrant will add to the market pull.

Prior to the conference in Goes, the IBA called an inaugural meeting with key processing and marketing companies to discuss the IBA philosophy and ask what is required to better the knowledge of how we can strengthen the position of the Blackcurrant compared to our competitor berry fruit. The outcome was very positive and one we wish to build on again at the 3rd international blackcurrant conference next year.

The UK Foundation is being host of the forthcoming 3rd International Blackcurrant Conference to be held in the Dundee, Scotland (May 16th thru 18th, 2012) in conjunction with the James Hutton Institute. Organizing chairman, Jonathan Snape reports that the program is developing well. I encourage all to mark your calendar for this event.

I would like to thank the IBA members in voting both myself as President and Svend Jensen as Vice President. We along with our board wish to continue to develop the IBA for the benefit of the global blackcurrant industry.

*Jim Grierson, IBA President, June 2011*

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## **President's Message, April 2011**

Since my January "Presidents Postings" there have been two very serious global disasters. Earthquakes in Christchurch, New Zealand and the whole of the North East coast of Japan fortunately I can report that we have not experienced any loss of life within our Blackcurrant family. This can only be seen as a miracle with the unprecedented damage to buildings, people and personal property. May we take time to reflect on the situation these people find themselves in after these two major disasters.

There are only a few weeks to go before we have the opportunity to meet together at the 16th European Blackcurrant conference, Goes, Netherlands. If you have not seen the program and registration forms you will find them on your IBA Web Site. Wim and his hard working team have put together a very interesting agenda of activities for all segments of our industry to benefit from. I am looking forward to seeing you there.

Both the European Board and the IBA board will be meeting on the Wednesday 25th prior to the conference starting on the Thursday 26th May. You are very welcome to sit in on the General and Annual General Meeting of the IBA starting at 3pm.

During the IBA General meeting I intend to openly discuss the draft Rules, Policy and Procedural processes we wish to document for the ongoing Governance of the IBA. I look forward to you bringing your ideas to this meeting.

I am pleased to report that our Web-Site is gathering momentum on a daily basis. General Manager, Bill Floyd advises that there has been very good interest shown across all of our sectors of the blackcurrant business and that the most rewarding is the number of countries confirming their intention in becoming members of the IBA. More on this at the, Goes, Conference.

Travel Safe

*Jim Grierson, IBA President, April 2011*

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## **President's Message, January 2011**

With the first decade of the 21st century behind us it is time not so much to reflect on the past but open our minds on what we can do to contribute to our Blackcurrant Industry in the second decade.

The past years have seen severe financial difficulties faced by the Blackcurrant Industry with uneconomic returns at all levels of our industry. The pain is evident and despite many positive gains made during this time, the industry continues to

operate under real pressure.

Market signals are very important and influence our returns in all sectors of our industry. The key message for the next decade, starting in 2011, is all participants in our industry need to make collective decisions for the long term profitability. We must place ourselves in a position so each sector is banking some profit for reinvestment in this exciting, competitive business.

Significant progress has been made in Plant Breeding, Agronomy, Science & Research of Health and Wellness, Processing- Juice, Powder, Concentrate, Smoothies, Ingredients, Partnering with other Berries.

Difficult as it may be “Brands” are gaining momentum even with the trade barriers and legal hurdles thrown up by the various “FOOD SAFETY AUTHORITIES” around the world. Your national associations feel the same issues and challenges but it is pleasing to see an increase in the number of national associations forming over the past two to three years. One of the major strengths the IBA has is the forming of excellent networks, pathways and communication opportunities created with the introduction of our Web Site. This has been an important facet in the key role IBA can play alongside your country associations.

Collaboration has and will continue to be the key message for us all. Fragmentation and splinter groups forming to seek different outcomes than your associations, may achieve but should be tempered with the proviso that a unified and collective industry is stronger than any group acting as individuals.

Fundamentally the challenge IBA has is to represent industry, not the interests of a few. To perform well we must demonstrate fairness and neutrality to the net gain of all.

May I take this opportunity in thanking those of you who have assisted our General Manager, Bill Floyd, with content for your IBA Web Site. I challenge all of you to keep up the support of our industry via this medium.

***Jim Grierson, IBA President, January 2011***