

8th President's annual report 2015



I am pleased to present the 8th President's Annual Report to the members of the International Blackcurrant Association (IBA).

Last year's conference in Vilnius gave us an interesting insight into the blackcurrant production of Lithuania, and we enjoyed excellent presentations about "Blackcurrant - the stress hero"□. This year's conference promises to be highly interesting also, but between the two conferences, many things happened.

First of all, we have harvested little more blackcurrants than predicted in Vilnius. Together with a shrinking volume in the fruit juice consumption, we had to face another year with disappointing financial results. No doubt, the forces of the market will adapt the production to the demand. For the producers, this can be a painful experience. The blackcurrant market is known for its volatility due to the ups and downs of investing and reducing growing surfaces.

As members of the IBA, we know that blackcurrants should not be seen as a commodity. But our association has little influence on the markets and on how countries organize their production. Our aim is to link people, share information and pass on the passion we have for the fruit.

Some countries developed specific systems to answer the market's needs, to make better products, to create local specialities, to develop contract growing, to do better marketing, and so on. The United Kingdom is an example for a well-working blackcurrant market: short links from producer to processor and customer, combined with an excellent promotion work. We will certainly be able to learn from them during the conference. My special thanks go to Sarah Calcutt and Anthony Snell, who did an excellent job in preparing the annual conference in

Kent.

After Bill Floyd's retirement in May last year, we are on a good way to continue his work with Stefanie Sharma as new general manager. She is very active, and over the last year, we have worked on a list of changes, including a better IBA membership system. She also secured sponsorship, and we can look into the future with a sound financial situation and lots of interesting projects. Of course, our income is not high, and many things cannot be done immediately. To be able to really influence the market and consumers quickly, we need much more resources than volunteering IBA members and a devoted part-time General Manager. But we are going forward steadily, and our organization is getting more and more professional.

We will discuss all the projects in our meetings during the Ashford conference.

A key piece of the IBA is the production table, which is a prognosis for the upcoming harvest. It contains estimations of qualified country representatives. No other organisation can provide data of this quality, and we now go even further by including data on organic growing. The Exec, this means the IBA president, the 2 vice-presidents and the General Manager, have decided to do this because globally, for all kinds of crop, the organic market is growing very fast and presents lots of opportunities. Between 2000 and 2012, the number of organic growing surface has increased by almost 250 %, and several blackcurrant growers in the IBA turn towards organic growing. The organic market is also an innovative market: in 2014, 20 000 new organic products have been launched world-wide. This is a wonderful opportunity for blackcurrants, which we all know already are very healthy and of interest to the same kind of consumers than those who buy organic products. And finally, 90% of the market for organic products is being shared by the United States and Europe - our market. For the moment, we don't know how it will turn out. But we have to be vigilant and seize opportunities - demands are being received through our website.

During the production forecast and country review, due to very strict regulations in the UK, we have to be careful not to express price expectations for 2016, because that could be seen as a forbidden price agreement. Statistics and historical prices are ok to be mentioned, but we may keep the collection of this kind of information for future conferences.

Looking forward to meeting you in Ashford,

Dirk Herdieckerhoff

IBA President