

The past years have seen huge changes in the blackcurrant industry, and unfortunately, they led to low prices for growers and low interest from the transforming and supporting industry to be part of the activities of the IBA.

- **Sponsors**

Over the past years, we have seen “old” sponsors leave our association: Weremczuk, New Holland and Bayer no longer support the IBA financially. It has become increasingly difficult for our General Manager to find sponsors. This is, of course, related to the same negative development in the blackcurrant industry:

- the processing and transforming industry has not seen consumption of blackcurrant products increase for years; moreover, blackcurrant products rarely represent more than 5% of a producer's product portfolio or turnover.
- the supporting industry (machinery, mainly) has had good years for a long period of time, during which blackcurrant growing shifted from Western Europe to Eastern Europe. Sales have been positively developed, but don't represent a huge potential any longer – which is the reason why they withdraw.
- blackcurrants are a minor crop. Plant protection products, weeding solutions, pollinating solutions etc. are needed by only a few – and don't represent a good sales potential. We are not attractive enough.

Unfortunately, with less sponsorship, we can only decrease our activities. And with less activities, we are less attractive to sponsors. Which leads me to the next report:

- **Food chain project**

We had recently proudly announced that we would conduct a multinational project on new tools in sustainable weed control on blackcurrants. The main partner for this project, Bayer, has unfortunately withdrawn its support to the blackcurrant industry for the coming year. We hope that this is not a definite decision and understand their position because of the reasons I already mentioned above.

- **Transfer of the IBA from New Zealand to France**

Due to this lack of financial support from private entities, we had started to explore the possibilities of public support. At our last AGM in Angers, France, we then decided to transfer the IBA to Europe. The main reasons for this were financial:

1. The possibility to conduct projects that could benefit from EU subsidies if we have our headquarters and accounts in Europe
2. Lower bank fees in Europe, as transfer costs and currency conversion costs would be lower.

Following this decision, the new Exec started working on the details of such a transfer, and it appeared that we first had to wind up our association in New Zealand and then open a new one in Europe. France seemed to be the best option for establishing our headquarters.

Almost two years have been necessary to find the best options, prepare all the documents and find agreements which would fit every member and allow new members to enter the IBA more easily. In fact, the most crucial question has been the new way of collecting membership fees with the introduction of different fees according to the amount of hectares planted in each country.

Today, we will create this “new” IBA. Our objectives remain unchanged. Let me now explain what we decided to change:

- The head office will be situated in France, in Angers, where the French blackcurrant association has its head office.
- Legal entity members (i.e. country associations) will have to declare the growing surface of their country every year before 15th June. According to this figure, the amount of the membership fee and the number of votes within the IBA will be calculated. Fees range from 500 to 3000€ per country, votes from 20 to 100 voices per country.
- We introduce a commitment to stay within the IBA for 3 years.
- New members benefit from a 50% discount for their first year of membership.

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- We introduce the possibility of having honorary members within our association.
- After considerable problems to collect the membership fees over the past years (each country has been concerned at least once over the past five years), we introduce limits: mark-up of 5% for non-respect of the deadline.
- Sanctions are introduced for countries that would not declare their growing surfaces and harvest forecast – as sharing our statistics play a major role in our association.
- We plan to employ our General Manager for a minimum amount of working hours (6 hours / month), in order to allow him/her to conduct certain activities and projects, mainly for EU projects, where he/her needs to have a role within the IBA.

I now wish and hope that after all these efforts, the future of the IBA will be more positive, and that after the transfer, we will be able to concentrate on projects that are profitable to the whole industry.

Jens Holme Pedersen
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