

# **CENTER FOR PUBLIC ISSUES EDUCATION**

IN AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

## **Abbreviated Report**

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

Authors: Tori Bradley, Dr. Allen Wysocki



## For More Information

Contact the Center for Public Issues Education at [piecenter@ifas.ufl.edu](mailto:piecenter@ifas.ufl.edu) or 352-273-2598

## Suggested Citation

Bradley, T. & Wysocki, A. (2016). Strategic Marketing Plan for the Florida Blueberry Industry. PIE2015/16-4b  
Gainesville, FL: University of Florida/IFAS Center for Public Issues Education.

## About the Authors

**Tori Bradley** – Graduate assistant, UF/IFAS Center for Public Issues Education and Department of Food and Resource Economics

**Dr. Allen Wysocki** – Associate Dean, UF/IFAS, College of Agricultural and Life Sciences

## Acknowledgments

This includes individuals who have helped with the project but are not considered co-authors. This also includes the expert panel.

**Joy Rumble, Ph.D.** – Assistant professor, UF/IFAS Center for Public Issues Education and Department of Agricultural Education and Communication

**Alexa Lamm, Ph.D.** – Associate director, UF/IFAS Center for Public Issues Education; Assistant professor, Department of Agricultural Education and Communication

**Sandra Anderson** – Research coordinator, UF/IFAS Center for Public Issues Education

**Shuyang Qu** – Graduate assistant, Department of Agricultural Education and Communication

**Melissa Taylor** – Research Coordinator, UF/IFAS Center for Public Issues Education

**Jennifer Clark** – Senior Lecturer, UF/IFAS Food and Resource Economics Department

**2016 Gator NAMA Competition Team**

This research was funded by an FDACS specialty crop block grant and was completed in collaboration with the Florida Specialty Crop Foundation.



## Contents

For More Information.....	1
Suggested Citation .....	2
About the Authors.....	2
Acknowledgments.....	2
SWOT Analysis.....	4
Strengths .....	4
Weaknesses.....	5
Opportunities .....	7
Threats.....	9
SWOT Implications .....	10
The Plan.....	11
Target markets .....	11
The Tactics .....	11
Fresh from Florida .....	12
Industry and Grower tactics.....	15
Definitions of Commonly-Used Words.....	21
Appendix 1: U-pick Information.....	22
Appendix 2: Information on suggested social media .....	23
References.....	24



## SWOT Analysis

A SWOT analysis is a useful tool for identifying the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats a company or organization faces (Wysocki, Wirth, Farnsworth, & Clark, 2015). According to Wysocki et al. (2015, paragraph 30) “strengths and weaknesses are internal, while opportunities and threats are external to the firm”. The goals of the SWOT analysis are to determine the firm’s competitive advantages and develop tactics to capitalize on these advantages. The section following the SWOT analysis, entitled “SWOT Implications,” identifies the competitive advantages and disadvantages for the Florida blueberry industry. In conducting this SWOT analysis for the Florida blueberry industry, the basis for the findings was provided through information from interviews with marketers and growers, as well as the consumer and producer surveys conducted by the PIE Center.

### Strengths

- **Florida grows Southern Highbush variety**
  - Florida’s varieties generally contain fewer seeds and are generally sweeter than varieties grown in other areas
  - The Southern Highbush variety is not widely available north of North Carolina. In North America, Southern Highbush varieties are only grown in southern states
  - Big companies are growing the same varieties in Florida as the smaller grower-operated companies
    - Allows for small growers to compete with large growers under large marketing companies because no proprietary varieties currently exist
    - There is still room for small growers to capture a segment of the market
    - May provide opportunities for proprietary varieties to be grown in Florida at some point
- **Unique market window from mid-March to mid-May**
  - Florida offers the first domestic blueberry to the United States
  - Florida offers the freshest blueberry available during March through May
  - Chilean and Mexican fruit travels for 14 days or more and loses freshness
  - Florida blueberry season fills a market gap before Georgia enters the market
  - Higher blueberry prices for Florida growers from last week of March to mid-April
- **Connection to the University of Florida IFAS research**
  - UF IFAS is an established entity that continues to produce new or improved varieties suited to Florida’s climate
  - The infrastructure is designed for growers to receive advice from researchers and extension agents
  - Growers can suggest improvements to existing varieties based on experience through UF IFAS
- **High quality standards and grower practices**
  - All growers follow USDA quality and safety guidelines with several audits per season
  - Marketers have their own strict best practice standards that go beyond the USDA guidelines
  - Marketers rely on growers to monitor their own quality to maintain brand reputation
  - Florida is an established blueberry growing state
    - People know to expect high quality when buying Florida fruit
    - This industry is not trying to break into a new market
- **Established association for promoting the industry**
  - The Florida Blueberry Growers Association already has strong partnerships established with growers, marketers, and retailers
    - Many growers report using FBGA resources when learning to promote their blueberries
  - Fresh from Florida is an existing partner with FBGA
- **Blueberry attributes**
  - Benefits of blueberry consumption are becoming widely known by consumers



- This is driving consumers to buy more blueberries
- Initiatives exist to ensure consumers are aware of the blueberry health benefits
  - Commissioner Putnam and the Moffitt Cancer Center endorse the blueberry as a “super food”
- Blueberry recipes are available on industry websites, including several marketers’ websites, the Fresh from Florida social media sites, and the FBGA website
  - The recipes show that berries can be eaten alone or as part of a larger recipe

## Weaknesses

- **Growers spend more per acre than other states due to unique climate**
  - Costs that support the health of the plants and combat disease pressures are higher than in other blueberry producing states
  - Increases the cost of production
- **Growing size of the market**
  - Growers believe that big marketers do not provide the local feel needed to promote blueberries as being from Florida
  - More growers in Florida means more blueberries need to be moved and potentially lower average prices for all Florida growers
    - Shared trucks for transportation to sale sites
      - Causes confusion when fruit is rejected at the retail site
      - Growers want the marketers to require retailers to look at pallets individually and identify problems with individual growers
- **Lack of consumer knowledge**
  - Consumers are unaware of the Florida growing season
    - 84% of consumers surveyed were unsure when Florida blueberries are in season-
      - Only 16 percent believed they could identify the Florida season
    - Those that thought they could identify the Florida season, inaccurately believed blueberries to be in season in the summer months, not spring
    - When blueberries are in season, consumers do not see them in stores until the Chilean berries are off the market
    - Lack of consumer knowledge leads to lack of demand for Florida blueberries
      - Consumers cannot demand Florida blueberries if they do not know when they are available
- **Short window for marketing**
  - Six weeks maximum for Florida growers to receive high prices
  - The Florida season is variable due to weather
    - Some years the season begins in March and other years it may be April
    - Because of the variability in the season, growers often provide different responses when asked when Florida blueberry season is
    - Differing responses in seasonable availability create a weakness because the lack of a unified message creates conflicting marketing materials and confused consumers
  - Difficult for a small grower or a few farms to promote for the season
  - Marketing efforts must begin before the market window
  - Costs the same to pack no matter the prices received
  - Big marketers are not willing to change labels for the short season to include the Fresh from Florida logo or any other logo denoting the growing state



- Marketers cannot reuse labels for all regions if they need to put a special designation just for Florida on the label
- This is not cost effective
- **Trust**
  - Some marketers do not trust crop volume estimations from growers
    - Marketers do not always believe they are getting the most reliable information on how many berries will be available week to week
    - A perceived lack of accuracy makes it difficult for marketers to contact retailers and other buyers to make sales based on accurate volumes ahead of time
    - Marketers do not trust the growers to be timely in their crop volume reports or the ability to reach the growers in a reasonable time for making sales
  - Grower trust in marketer practices varies by grower
    - Growers generally have a positive attitude about the outcome of working with a marketer
      - More than half are loyal to their marketer
      - The majority feel positively toward their marketer's business ethics and quality of their work
    - Some growers voiced concerns about working with a marketer
    - Some growers do not trust that their fruit will be accepted at the buyer's location
      - Rejection criteria is not uniform or regulated
      - Rejection criteria is not relayed until the marketer has moved the fruit
    - Some growers do not believe they are receiving the highest price for all of their fruit because of preselling agreements
      - When prices rise, the growers do not believe it is fair for them to be held to the lower presell prices
    - High cost if the fruit is rejected (labor, packing)
    - Grower loses contact with the fruit once it is received by the marketer
      - Growers do not know how to better predict sales and how to adjust to different quality standards when they do not know where their fruit is going
- **Retailer practices**
  - Some large retailers buy based on price, as opposed to growing location of the blueberries
    - Marketers believe that Chilean blueberries will be placed ahead of Florida berries, as long as they are available for a lower price
    - Florida blueberries have a higher average price historically
      - This makes it more expensive for retailers and customers to purchase them early in the season
      - The lower-priced Chilean fruit stays in stores until a clean break can be made for Florida fruit to come in
    - Very little advertising is done based on location of berries
      - Retail advertisements may display the Fresh from Florida logo, but may also simply state "Southern grown" or "sweet" berries
    - The customer, regardless of preferences, has no control over what is in the produce aisle. The retailer decides what is available
    - Retailers use this type of structure because of the nature of their business. They must buy in a way that is best for their bottom line
  - Rejection practices are non-uniform and unregulated
    - Marketers report berries being rejected by a retailer one day and the same fruit being bought by the same retailer the next day



- This is often referred to as “market disease”
- Retailers do not have consistent buying practices, making it hard for marketers and producers to predict sales
- **Unregulated and non-unified market**
  - Little communication directed at marketers about volumes during the season
    - Increased communication about blueberry movement and prices to reporting services (e.g., USDA Market News) could help reduce the low prices are sometimes accepted early in the season
      - Marketers sometimes take low prices early in the season to avoiding risk due to market uncertainty
      - This practice leads to “killing of the market”
      - The high prices desired by growers will not be recovered if low prices are taken early in the season
    - No way for other buyers and growers to know how the market will vary day-to-day because the volume data for the whole industry is not currently available

## Opportunities

- **Increase market coordination**
  - Growers and marketers alike mention that they desire a more unified presence in the produce market for Florida blueberries
  - Create a deliberate and cohesive marketing perspective for all members of the industry
    - A unified message about the industry to consumers and retailers
  - Need to create a unified message regarding Florida’s blueberry season for marketing
    - The unified message would be used on all communication and sites including FBGA, USDA information (including FDACS website), and all other information sites that promote Florida blueberries
    - The unified message may have to be more general than specific
      - Use “spring” as the season due to weather fluctuations
  - Use FBGA as a platform to increase communication between all growers and marketers throughout the season
    - Communicating accurate volume information about movement and pricing may help to ensure higher prices for all growers for longer periods of time during the season
      - Current market prices are available, but accurate and current volume reports could increase the likelihood that marketers will make sales based on accurate market information, prolonging higher prices
    - Partner with retailers as a unified front to promote Florida blueberries and the season at Florida locations and locations carrying the blueberries
    - Increase labeling of Florida blueberries
      - Fresh from Florida offers stickers that can be added to existing clam shell labels
      - Labels can be added to increase the visibility of Florida-grown blueberries
  - Increase communication between marketers, growers, and retailers
    - Marketers can communicate to growers the retail buyer expectations so blueberries have less risk of being rejected
    - Keep retailers accountable for rejection decisions
      - Marketers should follow up when fruit is rejected to learn why it was rejected
        - Marketers should always request the USDA inspection report that led to the rejected load to clarify the reasons for the rejection



- It is a best practice to relay the reasons for rejection to the grower for the next shipment
- **Opportunities exist for growers to grow specialized varieties to differentiate Florida blueberries**
  - It is a strength that the whole industry is growing similar varieties because the smaller growers can compete with the larger growers and stake a claim in the market
  - If growers in Florida can leverage the association with University of Florida research, there may be an opportunity to differentiate blueberry varieties from other states
  - May create market opportunities for untapped demand for potential blueberry varieties
- **Educate consumers**
  - Differentiate Florida blueberries
    - Florida blueberries are different than other blueberries on the market at the same time based on freshness
    - They are not shipped for weeks from other countries
      - Florida blueberries may have been in the field the day before the consumer buys them
    - Promote Florida blueberries as the first domestic blueberry each year or the “first of the U.S. season”
    - Identify growing locations in the state for consumers to connect to local production
    - Fresh from Florida is an already established branding program that growers and marketers can take advantage of to further differentiate Florida blueberries from blueberries grown in other locations
      - Seventy-one percent of surveyed consumers indicate they would choose the package with the FFF logo over others in the same refrigerated case
      - FFF offers stickers with the FFF logo that can be added to marketer labels
      - FFF offers coordination of several marketing activities for Florida commodities
  - Increase knowledge of the Florida blueberry season to uncover the demand
    - If people know when and where to look for Florida blueberries, they are likely to begin asking for and demanding them
    - Remind consumers of the upcoming blueberry season prior to the start of the season
    - Implement a more aggressive marketing campaign throughout the season
  - Increase consumer experiences with Florida blueberries to increase the demand
    - Very few people surveyed indicated that they had any experience with seeing a blueberry field or growing their own blueberries
    - Personal experience with the blueberry farms and growers may lead to consumers demanding Florida blueberries over other states’ blueberries
- **Health-conscious consumers**
  - Further communication and promotion of blueberry health benefits can encourage the purchase of blueberries
  - Increase awareness of health benefits among all age, education, and income groups
    - Lower education was found to be an indicator of lower blueberry health benefit knowledge
  - Health benefits applicable to the elderly as well as young children
- **Social media and community reach**
  - Build the Blueberries from Florida social media presence to connect with consumers
    - BlueberriesfromFlorida.com great for providing information to consumers
      - The blog, recipes, health information, and tips are already present on this site
    - The Blueberries from Florida social media sites offer up-to-date information
    - FBGA website needs to have the Florida season easily identifiable to visitors





- FBGA website needs to have a more accessible links to the social media websites
- A social media kit for all growers could be helpful in aiding their promotion as well as delivering a unified industry-based message
  - The 2016 Florida Blueberry Festival has 7,100 people noting they will attend the festival and 36,000 who are interested in the event
- Partner with retailers to reach consumers before and during the season
  - Winn-Dixie has already begun to promote local, in-season products in Florida
  - “When we buy local, everyone wins — we want to be able to offer locally made and locally sourced products, so everything is funneled back into the community,” Nicole Hatfield, Winn-Dixie senior manager of local business, said in a statement, “By featuring local products in each of our stores, we hope to share and encourage the culture of the local community”
  - Publix is also a strong supporter of the Fresh from Florida program
    - The 2016 Florida strawberry crop was advertised in stores with ample signage
- Increase the amount of information available about U-picks for growers
  - Producers that currently use U-picks for direct marketing indicate that they are easy to start and promote
    - There is an opportunity to provide more information about the benefits of U-picks to those not currently using them
    - Make all of the information about starting and maintaining a U-Pick operation available through FBGA
    - Available information may encourage others to incorporate u-picks into their business, which could increase consumer experiences with Florida blueberries and increase their likelihood to seek out Florida blueberries specifically
    - Additional marketing materials should also be made available for current U-Picks to grow their marketing presence

## Threats

- **Increasing volume of other production regions**
  - Encroachment on the Florida market by domestic and international growers, both in volume and in timing because of year-round need for blueberries
  - Retailers do not want to buy higher-priced Florida fruit until the lower-priced Chilean fruit is cleared off the market
  - Chilean fruit using controlled atmosphere to control ripening and delivery time
    - Chile is picking green fruit, while Florida is picking ripe fruit and delivering within a few days
  - Chilean Blueberry Committee has increased social media and overall marketing reach in the U.S. and other countries
- **Other produce in the marketplace at the same time**
  - Global availability of fruit has led to a variety of produce selections being available year-round
  - Blueberries must compete with strawberries, raspberries, and blackberries, etc.
  - Consumer preference of other fruits over blueberries or price elasticity plays a role in consumer decisions on which fruits to purchase, beyond their desire to buy Florida-grown produce
    - PIE Center research (Taylor, Rumble, Anderson, 2016) shows that 44% of blueberry purchasers do not buy more blueberries in general because of their preferences for other fruits
- **Consumers generally cannot tell the difference between blueberry varieties**
  - Consumers know that the blueberry is sweet, not that it is a Southern Highbush from Florida



- Growers may want to differentiate by growing proprietary varieties, but if consumers do not recognize the difference in taste or quality, demand will not be generated
- **Low reliability of labor**
  - Labor moves with the crops and prices
  - Workers must work harder to pick because there is less output per acre in Florida, compared to other eastern producing states
  - Laborers get paid minimum wage even if their production is low
  - Laborers move onto other states as soon as they begin harvesting, even if there is still work to be done in Florida
    - Laborers leave to secure housing and future jobs

### SWOT Implications

Competitive advantages for the Florida blueberry industry exist if the industry's key strengths are utilized toward the available opportunities.

- One opportunity for the Florida blueberry industry is to increase social media presence and community reach, especially pertaining to the Florida blueberry season. FBGA, which is an already established source of information about Florida blueberries, can establish this community outreach through existing internal resources.
- Another resource the industry is fortunate to have is its connection with the University of Florida. The University has experts and students willing to help establish social media campaigns, industry promotional materials, and consumer research projects. By utilizing both FBGA and UF/IFAS, the industry can use social media and community outreach platforms effectively.
- The connection to the University of Florida and Fresh from Florida also lends to the industry's opportunity to educate consumers about the health benefits of blueberries. Aligning with the University will lend credibility to the claims of blueberries as superfoods.
- Additionally, the already-established FBGA is a key strength because it can aid in market coordination efforts. Efforts are already underway by FBGA, such as seasonal industry meetings and messages on the FBGA website from the president to growers. FBGA can be used as a platform to communicate a strategic marketing perspective to all members of the industry that will allow for a unified message to be delivered by the state to both retailers and end-consumers. The message can be as simple as saying that consumers and retailers should begin looking for Florida blueberries at a specific time due to weather events or to promote a new industry initiative. Involving the grower-members of FBGA will allow for more exposure on more platforms to communicate the industry's messages. Growers can also be unified through FBGA to accurately forecast crop volumes, which will lead to better estimates for marketers and retailers, strengthening these relationships.

Where competitive advantages exist, so do competitive disadvantages.

- One weakness that was identified for the Florida blueberry industry was the lack of consumer knowledge about the Florida season. The increasing volume of other growing regions threatens to overshadow the Florida market. Demand must exist specifically for Florida blueberries to ensure that the Florida season is still important to consumers. Consumers cannot generally tell the difference in blueberry varieties, so the demand for Florida blueberries must come from increasing consumer knowledge about the freshness of Florida blueberries compared to Chile. Demand may also come from increasing pride in purchasing blueberries grown in home-states or in the United States, as opposed to purchasing from other states or countries.



- Retailer practices, coupled with the increasing volumes of production from other areas, present unique challenges to the Florida market. The increase in production from other states and countries, as well as retailer practices that do not currently promote blueberries based on growing region, will have to be addressed by both marketers and the industry. Both entities have an interest in making sure that retailers know when Florida blueberries will be available. The targeted marketing tactics for the Florida blueberry industry are developed by knowing how these key advantages and disadvantages tie to the opportunities and threats to the industry.

## The Plan

### Target markets

PIE Center consumer research (Taylor, Rumble, & Anderson, 2016) indicates that the primary household grocery shoppers are mostly white females between the ages of 30-69 years old. The majority of shoppers earn less than \$30,000 or from \$30,000 to \$49,000 per year. Marketing efforts should target consumers in these demographic groups. Beyond simply identifying who the main grocery shoppers are for households, it is important to recognize other groups that also influence the blueberry industry. In a conversation with a longtime blueberry grower, it was mentioned that minority groups should not be discounted as target markets, as these groups are growing in size in the United States. For this reason, marketing tactics will serve to reach the primary grocery shoppers as indicated by the PIE Center research, but will not be limited to just this group. These tactics will serve to reach several groups of current and potential buyers.

### The Tactics

The tactics take on a few different forms. They span a spectrum of audiences, from nationwide marketers to small growers that pack and sell their own berries and for the Florida Blueberry industry as a whole. Based on information from several growers, some of the tactics suggested for individual growers may be implemented by their marketing groups instead of the growers themselves. The proposed tactics provide much of the necessary information, but may contain some ideas that have nuances that need to be determined upon implementation. Overall, the tactics are split into two large groups, Fresh from Florida tactics and Florida Blueberry Growers Association tactics, within which the individual grower tactics are included.

A two-pronged approach is recommended, with tactics to reach consumers to increase overall demand and tactics to reach retailers to increase their awareness of the availability of Florida blueberries.

An integral part of this plan is to designate a specific time period that all information sources use to promote the Florida blueberry season. For the purposes of this plan, March through May is used as the specified season to be consistent with previous FBGA marketing materials. The industry should first determine the preferred season dates and make them available to all outlets publishing Florida blueberry information for overall uniformity.

The tactics are broken down into feasibility by operation size (Table 1). Growers wishing to implement any of the following tactics can choose from the recommendations on this table, but there may be opportunities within each tactic for growers of all operation sizes to modify for their needs. For growers that use a marketer, some of these tactics may need to be adopted by the marketer in place of the grower.



**Table 1. Recommended marketing tactics for growers and FBGA**

Operation Size	Suggested Tactics
Small growers (1-20 acres)	6,13,15,17,20
Large growers (more than 20 acres)	6,9,10,11,13,15,16,17,18,20
FBGA	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,14,15,16,17,18,19,20

**Fresh from Florida**

Consumers indicate strong, positive attitudes toward the Fresh from Florida logo, as opposed to a label only with a state origin. Seventy-one percent of people surveyed say they prefer a label with a Fresh from Florida logo printed on it, as opposed to just the growing region (Taylor, Rumble, & Anderson, 2016). The Fresh from Florida labeling preference is coupled with low consumer knowledge of the Florida blueberry season. Fresh from Florida (FFF) has specialized tactics in place for several commodities that have helped to increase the awareness of their growing seasons. It is recommended that FFF be the vehicle to help increase the awareness of the growing season. Based on FFF’s expert recommendations, seasonality is best communicated while the crop is in stores. Some communications prior to the season may be beneficial, with the main call to action for consumers existing during the season.

Several TV commercials are already in place for blueberries in specialized markets. The commercials feature blueberry pancakes and a salad containing blueberries in 15-and 30-second spots. More tactics suggested by FFF experts are below, separated by tactics for FBGA and for individual growers. For Fresh from Florida to implement any of these tactics for the industry, the FBGA should consider and industry-wide financial commitment to FFF to allow for the creative work to be done by FFF.

**Florida Blueberry Growers Association Tactics leveraging Fresh from Florida**

**1. Digital campaign**

- Suggested for: FBGA
- A digital campaign is a marketing campaign done through the Internet
  - Includes social media, websites, and marketing through mobile phones
  - Allows for quick reactions to market fluctuations
- FFF’s experience is that consumers are conditioned to see a message and act soon after. It is better to capture a consumer’s attention when they can go and buy the product that same day
- Facebook
  - FFF already mentions blueberries during the season on FFF page
  - Ex: FFF featured a blueberry cobbler recipe in 2015
  - Opportunity exists for FBGA to utilize Facebook ads to specifically target consumers through FFF channels
  - Facebook ads show up in consumer Facebook news feeds as information or links to other websites
    - Can target specific demographic groups at different times
    - Ad clicks should link to the BlueberriesfromFlorida.com webpage
  - Cost varies: FFF will do the work, but the ads must be paid for by FBGA
- Banner Ads
  - Buy advertising space in the banner area of websites
  - Epicurean.com, Recipes.com, allrecipes.com, etc.
  - Targets people who are in relevant geographic areas with a call to action



- Typical budget is \$28,000 for the season
- Pros: Reach a high amount of the target population, can change the ad messages depending on how the crop looks during the season
- Cons: May miss older demographics if they are not visiting these digital sites, each online advertising venture costs the industry money that could be spent elsewhere
- Online Food Bloggers
  - FBGA (with FFF help) can contract paid bloggers to write about experiences with Florida blueberries either in stores, restaurants, or in their recipes
  - Bloggers will post recipes and their opinions of the recipes during the Florida season with special reference to Florida blueberries
  - Establish partnerships with restaurants to get Florida blueberries featured on menus with the FFF logo as special menu items
    - FFF will help promote Florida blueberries in restaurants, regardless of blogger input
- Pros: Bloggers write about their first-hand experiences with Florida blueberries during the season to entice people to go try the recipe or the menu item, benefits Florida blueberries as well as Florida-based restaurants
- Cons: May be expensive to contract the paid bloggers, may be difficult to commit restaurants to add new menu items

## 2. Kids in the Kitchen promotion through Family Features

- Suggested for: FBGA
- Has been done already, but Family Features guarantees 3 million impressions with a \$10,000 budget
  - The cost associated with the Family Features promotion will be incurred by FBGA
- Previous publication includes mostly recipes and write-ups briefly mentioning the health benefits of blueberries
  - <http://marketers.familyfeatures.com/>
- Revamp this existing project to include more health benefits and a stronger emphasis on the growing season, along with recipes
  - FFF provides the recipes and photos
  - Family Features writes the copy and places all of the features
- Features are distributed by newspapers, magazines, blogs, and social media throughout Florida and the East Coast
- Reaches parents and their kids which are two large markets for blueberries
- Pros: Family Features does all of the work to compile and disseminate the promotional materials, Family Features is able to reach a large media network
- Cons: Distributed through a third party, so there is more cost involved than distributing through FBGA

## 3. Chef Justin

- Suggested for: FBGA
- Chef Justin Timineri is an international culinary ambassador who represents Florida
  - He is the chef on a television series called “How to Do Florida”
  - The cooking segment on his show focuses on demonstrating how to use Florida’s agricultural offerings in different recipes
- Work with FFF to produce clips of Chef Justin speaking about several different ways to use Florida blueberries with direct emphasis on the fruit being in season
- Can be distributed through two channels:
  - Social media: FBGA can use Facebook or email blasts to distribute the video
    - Short Instagram clips may be a possibility to reach further



- Earned media: This can be a clip distributed to major media outlets in Florida and the East Coast to run on morning news shows in cooking or health segments
  - Clip will be accompanied by an incentive for the media outlets to run the clip
- Possibly use Chef Justin as an interviewee for satellite tours for any earned media opportunities beyond the video clips
- Pros: Chef Justin has experience with Florida cuisine and has done several features for Florida commodities
- Cons: Segments must be creative enough to capture the attention of social media users and news outlets, incentives may be costly for the industry

#### 4. In-store promotions

- Suggested for: FBGA
- Blueberry sampling opportunities
  - Use an external company to set up sampling tables in major grocery stores during the season, directing people to buy Florida blueberries
  - May be used to reach non-buyers more effectively than other methods
  - With a \$15,000 budget, a group identified by FFF will coordinate the sampling for FBGA in major retail stores
- Cart promotional cards
  - Front-inside of shopping cart basket can feature a message informing consumers about blueberries being in season
  - For 1,400 retail stores in Florida, budget is \$50,000 per month
- Pros: These promotions reach the consumer at the source, can encourage immediate purchases
- Cons: Florida blueberries must be available and clearly labeled at the stores where these promotions run

#### 5. Billboards

- Suggested for: FBGA
- These are placed on major roadways in Florida with the simple call to action that Florida blueberries are currently in season
  - Consumers are urged to go to their nearest store and buy blueberries while they are in season
- Based on previous FFF campaigns these billboards work well
- Typical budget for billboards is \$50,000 for the season
  - The cost of securing the billboards will be incurred by FBGA
- Pros: High visibility, reach a lot of people with one billboard, target Floridians and tourists at the same time, there is a captive audience on the highways
- Cons: Expensive to rent, message must be succinct for travelers passing by

### *Individual Grower Tactics leveraging Fresh from Florida*

#### 6. Labeling

- Suggested for: Small growers, large growers, and FBGA
- Several large marketers do not want to incur the costs of adding the FFF logo printing on their labels for the short season
- If enough of the industry has interest in using FFF logos on their products and will join as an industry, FFF will cover the cost of the labels for participating growers
  - Growers and marketers in Florida qualify for rebates when using the FFF logo on their packaging to offset the cost
- FFF provides stickers of the logo that can be placed on top of the clamshell packaging to accompany existing labeling



- Could include closure stickers for clamshells that do not impose on the marketer label
  - Only use the closures when needed
  - Will improve the ability to differentiate between Chilean, Georgia, and Florida berries
  - Individual marketers or packers can request the labels from by calling either an FBGA representative or FFF directly
- Pros: Opportunity to use these for just a few weeks at a time when volume is really heavy to move fruit out of the stores or to differentiate Florida berries in transitional periods, labels will increase consumer recognition of Florida blueberries, the recognition from the labels will lead to increased demand for Florida blueberries
- Cons: Requires individual growers and marketers to take extra steps to get the labels from either FBGA or FFF and placing them on their packs

### Industry and Grower tactics

These tactics will span a continuum of feasibility, from large marketers to FBGA to individual growers. Special attention must be paid to retailers, along with the consumers, to move larger volumes of berries and increase awareness of the Florida season.

#### 7. Maintain a dedicated marketing arm for FBGA

- Suggested for: FBGA
- Responsible for communicating with FFF campaign and growers to coordinate tactics
- On-hand prior and during the season to handle all media requests, email pushes, grower questions, etc.
- Possibility to leverage with University of Florida to hire an intern for class credit or industry experience to keep costs low
- Pros: This person's, or committee's, main role is to implement all marketing for Blueberries from Florida.
- Cons: Cost may be a factor for a paid marketing position.

#### 8. Develop a platform for growers to communicate volume information

- Suggested for: FBGA
- A platform currently in the works for the FBGA website
- Valuable resource for growers and marketers to increase communications and ensure higher prices for longer
- Pros: Marketers and growers will be more informed about the current market volumes so that prices will not dip due to misinformation
- Cons: May be difficult to get information from all growers and marketers, as this will be another step they must take in their buying and selling process

### Retailer-targeted Tactics

#### 9. Retail incentive program

- Suggested for: Large growers and FBGA
- Buy ads in grocery store and other retail publications
  - print and online through apps and email
- \$5,000 per ad on average
- The ads will feature blueberries, along with the FFF logo
- Advertised items will be accompanied by a FFF sign in stores to increase recognition
- Pros: Consumers that receive advertisement publications from their grocery store will see that blueberries are in season while they plan their grocery lists, prepares consumers to look for the FFF logo with their blueberry purchase



- Cons: Only reaches people who actively seek information before their grocery shopping trips

#### 10. Retail communications

- Suggested for: Small growers, large growers, and FBGA
- Purchase advertising space in retail publications
  - The Packer, Produce News, Progressive Grocer
  - Growers of all sizes can advertise, with emphasis on the Florida season
    - Marketers will coordinate the advertising for their growers, under either the marketer label or the individual farm
  - FBGA may put a blanket advertisement out for the Florida industry
- Write articles for these publications that are similar to the customer publications, but with more emphasis on the seasonality and first domestic blueberry angle
  - Purpose is to inform retailers when and why to start looking for Florida blueberries to put in their store
- Establish a database of email addresses for produce buyers to use for email pushes to retailers
  - Use the email list to inform retailers of any changes to supply during the Florida season
- Pros: Direct contact with retailers before and during the Florida blueberry season, extended reach about Florida's season to different retailers in other states
- Cons: Retail publications may be dispersed to regions where Florida blueberries are not sent, the supply of berries must be adequate enough that interested retailers can receive them in a timely manner

#### *Consumer-targeted Tactics*

#### 11. End-consumer communications

- Suggested for: Large growers and FBGA
- Purchase advertisements in magazines
  - Florida Food and Wine, Southern Living, Garden and Gun, Better Homes and Gardens, Family Circle, Florida Trend, Parents, Coastal Living, Taste of the South, Southern Lady, Food Network
  - Local publications
    - Magazines and newspapers close to the grower's location
- Request articles to be written about Florida blueberries
  - Articles may include recipes, information about the unique growing season, information about the health benefits, or a feature on a Florida blueberry farmer
- Guest writers including chefs and health professionals can write the submissions to be printed as an incentive for the publication
- Pros: Reach a variety of consumers in different geographic areas
- Cons: Advertising in magazines requires prior planning
  - This may be difficult to gauge how the season will unfold early enough in advance for the publication deadlines
  - Cost is also a consideration, as each publication requires an advertising fee

#### 12. Industry social media pages

- Suggested for: FBGA
- Promote Blueberries from Florida social media accounts on the Blueberries from Florida website
  - Links to the social media sites need to be prominently displayed on the Blueberries from Florida website for consumers who land there before finding the social media sites
    - The existing links are hard to find on the website
  - Links to social media should also be added to the "Blueberry Fans" tab on the FBGA website





- All social media sites should reiterate information about the Florida blueberry season prior to and during the season
- Blueberries from Florida.com should prominently display the Florida blueberry season
- FBGA should provide all infographics and information that is posted via the Blueberries from Florida social media to growers to reach more people
- UF PIE Center has created an outreach video to communicate the Florida season to consumers
  - Use this pre-made video leading up to the Florida blueberry season on FBGA social media platforms to inform consumers about when to look for Florida blueberries
- <https://youtu.be/K3bCwb8Nrmk>
- All social media posts should continue to include a link to the Blueberries from Florida website with more information on the topic as
  - The majority of consumers indicated they would like to visit a website for more information on Florida blueberries
- Pros: Presence by FBGA on social media sites allows for engagement with consumers, can reach large groups with less cost than traditional advertising, opportunity for engagement with consumers beyond paid advertising, can utilize existing web content
- Cons: Requires someone to plan and monitor content to be posted at specific times

### 13. Individual grower social media pages

- Suggested for: Small and large growers
- Opportunities to engage with customers year round
- Focus on opportunities close to and during the Florida season
- Includes Facebook business pages and Instagram accounts
  - A Facebook business page can be created for users to “like” the business and receive updates as followers of the grower’s page
    - Two-way communication can occur between growers and consumers
    - Growers can connect with consumers and update them on the crop progress
  - Instagram relies heavily on pictures
    - The grower can post pictures of their field, family, and employees
    - Connect consumers to the farm that their blueberries come from
- Posts will include recipes, countdowns to the season, contests, daily pictures during harvest, grower spotlights to give more insight to the industry, U-pick information
  - Contests could include recipes, first pick of the season selfies, blueberries on the beach pictures, creative “brewberry” pairings with beer, etc.
- UF PIE Center has created an outreach video to communicate the Florida season to consumers
  - Use the pre-made video leading up to the Florida blueberry season on grower social media platforms to inform consumers about when to look for Florida blueberries
- <https://youtu.be/K3bCwb8Nrmk>
- More information on beginning these social media accounts is included in Appendix 2
- Pros: Allows growers to reach further than their local community, expands recognition of the grower as well as for the blueberry industry
- Cons: Requires someone to plan and monitor content to be posted at specific times, requires knowledge of social media platforms

### 14. Spokesperson

- Suggested for: FBGA
- Engage a personality to be the “face” of Florida blueberries
  - Could be a grower, doctor, nutritionist, or an animated character
    - Similar to the Aunty Oxidant character for the Blueberry Festival



- Serves as a personal connection for consumers to the industry
- Role is to give health benefit information and recipes at events and on social media
  - Act as the voice of earned media campaigns
  - Appear on children’s communications, depending on the chosen spokesperson
  - Use brochures and flyers from PIE Center or UF/IFAS to reach people with health benefit information, like the one in this link
  - <http://www.piecenter.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/blueberry-flyer1.pdf>
- Encompass an industry slogan
  - The United States Highbush Blueberry Council calls blueberries “little blue dynamos”
  - A Florida-specific slogan could be a great way to differentiate Florida blueberries, bringing in the ‘first domestic blueberry’ angle
- Recruit UF/IFAS students to create a creative character or slogan for the industry
- Pros: Gives a face to the FBGA and the blueberry industry, children and adults will be able to identify which blueberries are from Florida easily, opens avenues for more marketing based on this character or spokesperson
- Cons: May require compensation for the spokesperson, requires a creative team to create the character

### 15. Email pushes

- Suggested for: Small growers, large growers, and FBGA
- Establish a database of loyal consumers through login information at BlueberriesfromFlorida.com or Blueberries from Florida social media
- Individual growers can use their social media platforms or U-pick registries to establish their databases
  - Offer a sign-up section to inform visitors of when to get the freshest blueberries from Florida
- Email consumers on the Blueberries from Florida list when the first big volume amount comes into retail stores
  - Requires communication between marketers to know when the first big volumes move to stores to make sure the blueberries are there if people go looking for them
  - Send out messages every week while blueberries are still in season as reminders
  - Remind people to buy blueberries for special occasions or to put on their weekly shopping lists
- Individual growers can email loyal consumers when their harvests go to market and encourage them to look for their blueberries in stores
- Send email blasts from FBGA and individual growers to retailers prior to their consumer email blast
  - Purpose is to inform blueberry buyers to start looking to buy Florida blueberries
  - Reach the retailers with blueberry information before they have to seek the next big volume out themselves
- Pros: Inform interested consumers about Florida blueberry availability as soon as the berries are headed in to the market, retailers receive the information they need about the Florida blueberry volume before they have to seek it out on their own, email messages can be modified to react to changes in the volume during the season
- Cons: Requires growers and marketers to utilize the volume reporting service through FBGA to give accurate information to consumers and retailers

### 16. Earned media opportunities

- Suggested for: Large growers and FBGA
- Create news-worthy promotional pieces for large media channels and newspapers in Florida and the East Coast



- News releases promoting the first domestic blueberry entering the market
  - Encourage consumers to buy Florida blueberries when they come into season
  - Promote health benefits and new research
- Send video segments using the industry-chosen spokesperson about health benefits or recipes to media outlets
- Video segments encourage the opportunity for interviews or live segments promoting blueberries with special emphasis on the Florida season
- Accompany news releases and video segments with blueberry goodie-baskets for editors as extra incentives to include the story
  - Blueberry pies or fresh blueberry packs to radio hosts, news anchors, or local leaders
- Distribute news releases and video segments via PR Newswire or other public relations distribution networks
- Major news outlets in Florida can be identified here:  
<http://easymedialist.com/usa/state/florida.html>
- Pros: Advertising is not paid for, the media coverage is a result of the interest from the media outlet in the segment if they chose to view it, small and large media outlets and newspapers have large reaches in their communities
- Cons: Incentive or story must be great enough to garner media interest, media coverage is not guaranteed and may vary between locations

## 17. Agritourism

- Suggested for: Small growers, large growers, and FBGA
- Florida has a growing agritourism industry that appeals to both Florida residents and visitors
- According to the Florida Agritourism Association, additional to laws regarding the Florida agritourism industry in 2013 resulted in less regulations and more legal protection for Florida agritourism businesses
  - Less legal liability now exists on risks associated with the operation if there is signage posted on the land
  - For more information on these laws, visit <http://operator.visitfloridafarms.com/>
- U-Picks:
  - visitor.visitfloridafarms.com currently has four growers displayed on the website when searching for “blueberries” specifically
  - Opportunity for growers to add their names to this site if they are Florida Agritourism Association members
  - BlueberriesfromFlorida.com has several U-picks listed, but the opportunity exists to add more growers
  - Promote U-pick operations on Blueberries from Florida and grower social media accounts throughout the season
  - Partner with local schools for farm tour field trips
  - Some U-pick operations may be eligible for temporary harvest season signs
    - <http://visitor.visitfloridafarms.com/directional-signage-opportunities-for-agritourism/>
  - Materials for beginning a U-pick operation included in Appendix 1
    - Experiences with blueberries provide personal connections with the crop and can encourage more buying
  - Visit Florida and the Florida Agritourism Association established a full resource toolkit to aide in the development of agritourism efforts at individual farms
    - [https://issuu.com/destincom/docs/fata\\_tourism\\_guide\\_2015](https://issuu.com/destincom/docs/fata_tourism_guide_2015)
- Interactive map of blueberry offerings other than U-pick:



- Create a map of places where people can find fresh blueberry pies, blueberry wine, blueberry cocktails, etc. to place on either the Florida Agritourism Association website or the BlueberriesfromFlorida.com site along with the existing U-pick tab
- Promote the blueberry interactive map through industry social media
- Use the Historic Redlands Trail as a reference
  - A website devoted to restaurants, orchards, and farms in South Florida
  - Includes information on all of the members and directions to their operations
  - <http://www.redlandtrail.com/>
- Pros: Agritourism increases the chances for consumers to have experiences with blueberries which may lead to more demand for Florida blueberries, provides more opportunities for growers of all sizes to promote their operations
- Cons: Industry must be willing to have visitors at their operations, growers will have to comply with the safety standards set for agribusiness operations

### 18. Restaurant partnerships

- Suggested for: Larger growers and FBGA
- Develop blueberry recipes and drinks to be served on special menus in Florida restaurants or bakeries
- Feature the Florida blueberry as the main attraction along with the Fresh from Florida logo on the menu sheet
- Offer incentives to the restaurants by promoting their businesses on the Blueberries from Florida Facebook page and website
- Pay bloggers to write about Florida blueberry offerings around the state
- Promote the restaurants and special menus through willing hotels and local businesses in the area
  - Encourage tourists to try the special offerings during the season
  - Spring break, Easter, summertime
  - Target the “locavore” tourist by promoting local produce available in local restaurants
- Pros: Consumers see blueberries used in new recipes, consumers that may not have tried blueberries are exposed to them in recipes by chefs instead of buying them alone
- Cons: The offerings promoting Florida blueberries will only be available for a short period of time, Florida blueberry volume must be great enough to support the restaurant’s demand

### 19. Establish a presence at health events in Florida and on the East Coast

- Suggested for: FBGA
- Running groups hold large racing events from March through May
- Community events are common during March through May in cities in Florida
  - Combine presence at running group or community events with a social media contest to promote the growing season
    - Contests could include blueberry recipes, taking a picture with Florida blueberries in an impressive location and using a hashtag to enter, showing how blueberries power workouts or healthy choices
  - Contestants’ friends will see the posts and become aware that Florida blueberries are in season
  - Set up a booth at races with information about the blueberry growing season, taste trials, and health benefits
  - The outreach materials created through the PIE Center may be used as the starting materials for these events
    - Florida blueberry season video: <https://youtu.be/K3bCwb8Nrmk>



- Health benefits flyer: <http://www.piecenter.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/blueberry-flyer1.pdf>
  - Target senior citizens with health benefit information at senior centers by connecting with community outreach coordinators
    - Senior citizens may not have as much access to social media or the Internet as younger consumers, so going to them with the pertinent information may be helpful
  - Pros: Community health events, running events, and senior citizen centers are captive audiences for disseminating health benefit information to increase demand of Florida blueberries
  - Cons: A team must be responsible for researching and attending events with brochures on health benefits and the Florida blueberry season
- 20. Add recipes featured by Fresh from Florida to the FBGA website and individual grower social media pages**
- Suggested for: Small growers, large growers, and FBGA
  - When FFF posts recipes, FBGA and individual growers are encouraged to share these recipes on websites and social media pages
  - More people will see the recipe if it is posted through FBGA's online sites and individual grower social media sites
  - Pros: More people are exposed to recipes featuring new ways to use blueberries, increases traffic to the FBGA website and individual grower sites, strengthens the bond between FBGA, individual growers, and FFF from the consumers' views
  - Cons: Someone must be vigilant in communicating with FFF to receive the recipes, someone must be knowledgeable about and willing to update the FBGA website and grower social media sites

## Definitions of Commonly-Used Words

- **Grower:** Any person who produces blueberries as a part of a blueberry operation in Florida.
- **Retailer:** The entity that sells blueberries to the end-consumer in stores. Includes big-box retailers, such as Walmart, or grocery stores, such as Publix.
- **Marketer:** Refers to the person or company that works as an intermediary between the grower and the retailer or wholesaler. The marketer buys blueberries from the grower with the intent to sell them to the retail or wholesale market. Another role of the marketer is often to manage marketing and public relations tasks including all communications with consumers through social media and traditional media.
- **Consumer:** The end-buyer of blueberries. May be a consumer at a retail store, U-pick, or farmers market. This person does not have the intent to resell blueberries to another consumer.
- **Competitive advantage:** Any condition that puts the company or industry in a favorable position compared to other industry players, such as Chile or Georgia.
- **Competitive disadvantage:** Any condition that puts the business at risk of losing customers or market share to another player in the industry.
- **Utilized production:** Crops that were harvested and then marketed both domestically and internationally.
- **Wholesaler:** Person or company that buys blueberries to sell to food service companies, restaurants, or other big-volume buyers.



## Appendix 1: U-pick Information

Florida Direct Farm Business Guide:

[http://nationalaglawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/assets/articles/FL\\_directfarm.pdf](http://nationalaglawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/assets/articles/FL_directfarm.pdf)

- Provides information about the administrative agencies that have authority over direct sales of agriculture
- Provides a checklist for operating direct sales of agricultural products
- Pertinent sections include Structuring the Business, Setting up the Direct Farm Business, Managing and Marketing the Direct Farm Business, Taxation, Labor and Employment, Regulation by Product, and Fruits and Vegetables

Marketing Processed Agricultural Products in Florida: Steps to Take

<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/fy1225>

- Provides information on Cottage Food Products that do not require a licensed kitchen
- Provides links to permits for food production managers and facilities
- Discusses the approval process for manufactured foods and labeling of processed foods and nutrition facts
- Examples of processed products for blueberries: <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/fs268>



## Appendix 2: Information on suggested social media

The UF/IFAS Electronic Data Information source provides a full series for agriculturalists seeking to market through social media. This “Getting the Most out of Social Media” series can be found at [https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/topic\\_series\\_getting\\_the\\_most\\_out\\_of\\_social\\_media](https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/topic_series_getting_the_most_out_of_social_media)

The series of publications includes the following topics:

- What is Social Media?
- Creating a Social Media Plan
- Successfully Using Social Media
- Good Practices When Using Social Media

Using the publications together as a guide to beginning a social media marketing campaign is helpful for those unfamiliar with the nuances of using social media for business. The following section discusses several social media platforms and their benefits. The social media site an individual grower decides to use will depend on his or her business goals.

Facebook Business page:

<https://www.facebook.com/business/learn/set-up-facebook-page>

- Step-by-step instructions to set up and run a Facebook business page
- Includes how to add people as administrators, build your followers, create posts and boost posts to reach more people

Twitter Business Page:

<https://business.twitter.com/en/basics/create-a-twitter-business-profile.html>

- Overview of creating a Twitter business profile
- Includes specific instructions on how to advertise on Twitter, if desired

Instagram Business Page:

<https://business.instagram.com/>

- Includes a how-to video for beginning an Instagram page
- Also offers information on advertising through Instagram and inspiration for posts

Pinterest Business Page:

<https://business.pinterest.com/en>

- Provides information for joining as a business
- Users can convert existing Pinterest accounts into a business account through this page
- Business pages on Instagram can promote their Pins to relevant audiences, much like advertising
- The business information page also features the Pinterest blog with useful information on using Pinterest successfully



## References

- Calfee, D. (2015). Florida blueberry industry still has some growing up to do. *Growing Produce*. Retrieved from <http://www.growingproduce.com/fruits/berries/florida-blueberry-industry-still-has-some-growing-up-to-do-opinion/>
- United States Department of Agriculture/ National Agricultural Statistics. (2015) *2014 blueberry statistics*. New Jersey. Retrieved from: [http://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics\\_by\\_State/New\\_Jersey/Publications/Blueberry\\_Statistics/2014%20Blueberry%20Statistics.pdf](http://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics_by_State/New_Jersey/Publications/Blueberry_Statistics/2014%20Blueberry%20Statistics.pdf)
- University of Florida/IFAS Center for Public Issues Education. (2016). About. Retrieved from <http://www.piecenter.com/about/>

