

The International Blueberry Organization (IBO) has announced that the forthcoming IBO Summit will take place in Lublin, Poland from 3-5 July, 2023.

The IBO hopes to support the growth of a sector which was worth \$2.1 billion in 2019, according to the USDA, while at the same time highlighting Ukraine's blueberry industry in a show of solidarity.

With in-person trips to some of the world's largest blueberry farms, the Summit will be sharing the experiences of some of Poland's leading blueberry growers, with the emphasis on examining how production can be further improved and consumption levels increased globally.

## **Soaring consumption**

Blueberries have been commercially grown in Poland for over 45 years. At present, the planted area is close to 11,000 hectares and annual production is in the order of 55,000 tons, a large proportion of which is exported.

While blueberry imports to Poland have increased, domestic consumption has soared over recent years, fueled by better off-season availability and the hugely successful promotional campaign "Time for Polish Superfruit".

Dominika Kozarzewska, from the IBO and the Polish Blueberry Promotion Foundation, said: "We want delegates to profit from the rich experience of the Polish berry industry and learn how blueberries have become a lifestyle product for millions of Poles."

"We will provide valuable insights on boosting consumption and share why Polish consumers have started to value taste above everything else."

## **In-person visits**

The 2023 Summit will include a visit to Ochoża blueberry farm, one of the biggest organic blueberry production sites in the world with a planted area totaling 110 ha, including 30 ha under tunnels.

Delegates will also get the chance to visit the Karczmiska Blueberry Factory test farm, which focuses on Northern Highbush varieties, and the Polskie Jagody Producer Organization, whose production covers 130 ha.

An optional trip is also available to visit Wilczewscy Blueberry Farm, the largest blueberry farm in Europe.

## **The blueberry capital**

A scenic city in south-eastern Poland with over 700 years of history, Lublin is situated at the crossroads between Eastern and Western Europe. It is also the capital of Poland's main soft fruit production region.

"Our success as growers can be attributed, among other things, to the region's unique climate," Kozarzewska continued.

"We are very active as growers and we see our responsibility as expanding the market not just being passive participants. That is Poland's most distinctive feature as a blueberry producer at the moment."

## **Ukraine solidarity**

Following Russia's aggression in Ukraine, the IBO will also be expressing solidarity for the Ukrainian blueberry industry by way of showcasing it during the Summit.

Iryna Kukhtina, President of the Ukrainian Berries Association, said: "Despite the war in Ukraine and the damage done to some farms, the blueberry industry of Ukraine is working - all farms where it is possible started spring work on the fields. Even this year we will have blueberry exports."

"Moreover, we are starting the recovery and working towards further development of our industry already now. We are very happy to be a part of the 2023 IBO Summit".

Kozarzewska added: "We want to work together to make blueberries popular worldwide and at the same time we want to support the industry in Ukraine by giving them the opportunity to show the world what they are doing in terms of blueberry production."

Don't miss the chance to participate in the IBO Summit 2023! For more information, please visit <https://www.internationalblueberry.org/>