

PROPOSAL FOR A BLACKBERRY RESEARCH & PROMOTION PROGRAM REQUEST FOR COMMENTS

The Blackberry R&P Working Group seeks comments and suggestions from stakeholders in the blackberry industry, especially U.S. producers, on the draft proposal for a Blackberry Research and Promotion Program it has developed over the last few months. Some of the main points of the Proposal are summarized below. For a more complete summary, see the Proposal fact sheet (on the web at <http://www.raspberrblackberry.com/webdocs/RPfactsheet12-20-2010.pdf>) or request a copy of the draft proposal by emailing info@raspberrblackberry.com.

Key Features of the Draft Proposal

- The mission of the Blackberry Research and Promotion Program is “to increase awareness and consumption of blackberries.” The program would operate under the auspices of the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service and be financed entirely by industry assessments.
- Only fresh-market blackberries to be sold in the U.S. are included in the proposal at this time.
- The proposed threshold for domestic producers who would vote in the referendum and be assessed by this program is growers who produce and sell at least 30,000 lbs/year of fresh-market blackberries.
- All persons or entities importing any quantity of fresh-market blackberries into the U.S. would also vote and be assessed. There is no minimum threshold.
- Each eligible domestic producer and importer of blackberries is entitled to cast one ballot in the referendum. (Foreign producers do not vote.) The Working Group has proposed that the referendum must be approved both by at least 51% of producers and importers, representing at least 65% of production.
- The proposed Council is composed of 13 members, each serving 3-year terms:
 - 5 grower members, one from each of the five leading fresh blackberry producing states
 - 2 additional grower members, one Eastern and one Western
 - 1 at-large member, who could be a grower, researcher, consumer representative, or other
 - 3 blackberry importers
 - 2 foreign producers
- The proposed assessment rate is \$.01/lb (a penny per pound). It is estimated that at current production levels, this would raise between \$1.25 million and 1.5 million annually.

PLEASE RESPOND TO THE QUESTIONS BELOW AND ON THE BACK OF THIS PAGE.

Your responses will be kept anonymous.

Would you vote for this proposal as it now stands? Yes No

If not, what changes would be necessary for it to gain your support?

Including blackberries raised for processing in the program has both advantages and disadvantages. If processing blackberries were to be included, they would likely be assessed at a lower rate. Growers already paying assessments to a state commission, as in Oregon, would likely have all or a portion of their assessment "forgiven."

Do you think processing blackberries should be included? Yes No

Comments on this option:

Marketers/first handlers could also be assessed (and thereby gain representation on the council).

If you are a marketer/first handler, would you favor this option? Yes No

If you are a grower, would you favor this option? Yes No

If yes, what would you consider an appropriate and acceptable level of assessment?

The R & P program can choose to use the funds raised through assessments in many ways, such as:

- **Research:** production, packaging, handling, market, nutrition
- **Information programs:** consumer, industry, trade, food safety
- **Promotion:** nutrition messaging, advertising, media relations, sales development, etc. to a variety of audiences

What do you think are the best or highest priority uses of funds that the program would raise?

Please provide the following stakeholder information about yourself (company or farm).

U.S. blackberry producer in _____ state.

I raise approximately

_____ lbs. annually for fresh market

_____ lbs. annually for processing

Non-U.S. blackberry producer raising approximately

_____ lbs. annually for fresh market

_____ lbs. annually for processing

Importer handling approximately _____ lbs. annually for fresh market

_____ lbs. annually for processing

_____ lbs. annually of processed blackberries

Domestic first handler of approximately _____ lbs. annually.

Other: _____

Other comments & suggestions: