

Berry Scotland Newsletter

Number 1

February 2003

This newsletter has been published to keep the Scottish berry industry informed of events and activities of the Berry Scotland Programme.

Berry Programme Gets Off The Ground

The Berry Scotland Programme has brought together an unique group of experts from health, agriculture and the food industry in an attempt to increase production, sales and consumption of home grown soft fruits. Scotland currently has one of the worst health records in Europe and increasing berry consumption could help to reduce these disease figures and bring the Scottish population closer to achieving the target of eating 5 portions of fruit and vegetables per day. The Scottish Berry Industry are also set to benefit from a higher profile, an increased demand and a push to develop new products from Scottish fruit. Further aims include investigation into the range of berries and growing areas in Scotland and facilitation of a more co-ordinated approach towards Scottish research into the health benefits of berries.

Back in 1996, publication of the Scottish Diet Action Plan saw an opportunity for collaboration between professionals to promote cultivation and consumption of berries. The then "Scottish Berry Project" group embarked on a fact finding trip to Finland where a successful Finnish Berry Project had resulted in an increased awareness of the health benefits of berries, increased consumption to around 6kg per person per year and the launch of seven new berry products.

After several years of searching for financial support for a berry project in Scotland, last year the Scottish Executive agreed to support the project as a joint initiative by the health department and SEERAD. The 2 years of funding is to support a scientific co-ordinator to pull together the scientific knowledge on health benefits and bioactive compounds found in berries. The co-ordinator will also help facilitate new research in Scotland, work with product developers to identify new health products, and investigate outlets where berry consumption could be increased, for example in schools, canteens and local authorities.

Already confirmed for the 21st February is a research meeting of Scottish scientists who have an interest in finding out more about how the bioactive compounds in berries can help prevent disease and promote health. The health message will be a crucial marketing point in the promotion of berries now and in the future.

The Berry Scotland Board are also working on a berry promotion week for this summer and hope to work with as many other organisations as possible to make this a success. For example, retailers, community food groups, restaurants, canteens and schools could all get involved.

Our new website can be found at
www.berryscotland.com

Please bear with us as we develop this website over the coming months. It is hoped this site will be of interest to the general public, growers, food companies, research institutes, health promotion workers, and schools.

Current contents:

- Information on Berry Scotland board members
- Health Benefits of berries
- Product development ideas (presentation given to food companies at the Scottish Enterprise Health Enhancing Foods seminar on 18th September 2002)

Future contents:

- Current research and health "news"
- Information on the Scottish soft fruit industry
- Space for individual growers to display their details including dates for PYO for example.



Scotfruit



Saltire Fruits Ltd



Contact us

The scientific co-ordinator is Julie Beattie and she can be contacted at: Centre for Public Health Nutrition Research, Department of Medicine, Ninewells Hospital & Medical School, Dundee DD1 9SY Tel 01382 496447 email j.beattie@dundee.ac.uk

Should you not wish to continue receiving our newsletter please contact Julie Beattie by email, letter or telephone (see contact details above).

Profile: Anne Thomson

Managing Director of Ella Drinks & Marketing Consultant with Gallagher Associates

Anne has gained a wealth of knowledge and experience in product development and marketing from her previous work on well known brands for an American advertising agency in London. She then worked for Shell UK in market research and retail in both London and Glasgow before moving back to Scotland to work with the Scottish food and drink industry and other commercial sectors as a consultant in product development and market research. When she couldn't persuade any existing Scottish companies to develop a product using Scottish fruit she decided to do it herself, and hence *Bouvrage*, a raspberry juice made from Scottish berries was launched in 1999.

She is an invaluable member of the Berry Scotland team with the experience and expertise to help other food companies in Scotland develop and market value added products made from the quality primary produce of Scotland. Such products would allow local produce to feature in the diets of the UK consumer, bringing benefits to the Scottish economy including jobs, skills and investment.

As a farmer's daughter from Angus she feels that farming needs to be in touch with what consumer markets seek and be driven more by the market rather than by subsidies or big business. This in the long term would give farms more control over their businesses and lead to stronger rural development.

Berries one of the richest sources of antioxidants

The action of antioxidants in the body are thought to be one of the mechanisms by which plant-based foods can protect us from heart disease and cancer. A recent Norwegian study found that berries contained some of the highest levels of total antioxidants found in fruits. *Halvorsen et al (2002) Journal of Nutrition 132:461*

Middle-aged men with high intake of fruits, berries and vegetables have lower death rate

A Finnish study examined the diets of 2641 Finnish men 13 years ago then in 2002 went back to examine their health status. The results showed that the men whose diets were high in fruits, berries and vegetables had reduced mortality rates.

Rissanen et al (2003) Journal of Nutrition 133:199

The Berry Scotland Board Members are:

Professor Annie Anderson	Professor of Food Choice, University of Dundee. 01382 496442 a.s.anderson@dundee.ac.uk
Professor Phil Hanlon	Public Health Institute of Scotland
Professor Mike Lean	Professor of Human Nutrition, University of Glasgow 0141 2114686 mej1g@clinmed.gla.ac.uk
Mr Andrew Logan	Farmer & Director of Scotfruit. 01334 652808 logantarv@aol.com
Mr Hector MacLean	Surveyor & Consultant in Rural Diversification 01575 540302 hectormaclean@compuserve.com
Mr Ronnie McNicol	Director of ReDeva 01382 561251 ronnie.mcnicol@redeva.com
Mr Ewan Pate	Farmer & Director of Saltire Fruits 01382 504637 ewan.pate@virgin.net
Ms Anne Thomson	MD Ella Drinks & Marketing Consultant Gallagher Associates 01786 834342 anne.thomson@sol.co.uk
Professor James Dunbar (founder member)	Department of Rural Health Flinders & Deakin University Australia jdunbar99@hotmail.com

Frozen just as good as fresh

A research group in Glasgow concluded that levels of vitamin C and phenolic antioxidant compounds were very similar in frozen and fresh Scottish Glen Ample raspberries. *Mullen et al (2002) Journal of Agricultural & Food Chemistry 50:5197*

SCRI news: a small part of their recent work

Recent research at SCRI has shown that not only is the juice from soft fruit a source of antioxidants but the pulp (cell wall material) also contains significant levels. This shows that the whole fruit must be considered in any research and also the importance of eating the whole fruit.

SCRI has recently begun an EC funded collaborative research project entitled *Domestication of Northern Berries*. This is in conjunction with Scandinavian and Russian research institutes and Scandinavian and Scottish industries. Domestication of selected northern berries is the aim, particularly cloudberry. The project encompasses agronomic studies focusing on the restoration and reuse of used peatlands as fruit growth sites and will involve the SCRI as the partner responsible for the isolation, characterisation and *in vitro* modelling of bioactive components.

Dr Derek Stewart

Latest Research