

# Phenomenal growth in South African blueberry industry

The South African blueberry industry is in a period of robust growth, due to high demand from the UK and the EU for blueberries, in particular, as well as nascent domestic interest. It has been bolstered by a similar (if earlier) growth spurt in Australia, where many of the new cultivars used in the South African blueberry industry were developed.



elizadean via [pixabay](#)

Three companies dominate blueberry production in South Africa: Berryworld South Africa, United Exports and Haygrove SA, an affiliate of UK-based Haygrove.

Each company provides its growers with its own line of licensed blueberry plants, mostly focusing on low chill unit blueberries. Berryworld South Africa has the licensing rights to plants developed by the University of Florida, like Snowchaser and Jewel, as well as new Australian varieties.

United Exports has invested in the Australian Early Blue breeding programme which is responsible for the OzBlu series. These plants are based on the Southern Highbush blueberry, an evergreen blueberry. The company produces blueberries worldwide (Chile, Peru, the USA, Morocco) and in South Africa, United Exports has about 20 producers, roughly equally divided between traditional berry-producing regions in the south and newer regions like Gauteng, Limpopo, and Northwest Province. United Exports has been involved in stonefruit, citrus and table grape production for 15 years and new blueberry producers for the company in South Africa come from this pool of growers.

Spreading its production geographically and growing the berries out of the rainy season in each area, United Exports is able to produce blueberries in South Africa 52 weeks of the year, says Roger Horak, managing director of United Exports. “Production is increasing dramatically, driven by demand. There has been phenomenal growth domestically; we hope to develop the local market through our Ozblu brand. Our varieties are very similar throughout the year, therefore, we provide the consumer with a similar product and a consistent experience.”

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