

# STATE OF MICHIGAN



## DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

### MICHIGAN COMMISSION OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT RESOLUTION HONORING

#### **MICHIGAN BLUEBERRY GROWERS ASSOCIATION / MBG MARKETING 75<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY**

WHEREAS, in the 1920s, the cultivating of blueberries in Michigan was initiated by Stanley Johnston, a young horticulturist at the Michigan State University Experiment Station; and

WHEREAS, the Michigan Blueberry Growers Association was established in 1936 to organize growers in the new blueberry business for the purpose of addressing their mutual needs and marketing their berries as a group; and

WHEREAS, the 1950s and 1960s brought much growth to the Association and its first full-time General Manager, William "Bill" Donald was appointed in 1950; and under his guidance, membership grew to over 400 growers; and

WHEREAS, Peter Holbien was General Manager from 1962 until 1983, a time that encouraged growth and expansion of warehouse capacity, survived the 1972 devastating frost to southwest Michigan, and moved forward with mechanization and modernization; and

WHEREAS, in 1983, John Sheford became General Manager and oversaw the geographical expansion of the Association and development of key process marketing relationships with Cherry Central Cooperative and Pro-Fac Cooperative; led continued development of their export business; and recruited Georgia and Florida growers to join Michigan Blueberry Growers Association; and

WHEREAS, in 1989, the Association changed its name to MBG Marketing to convey a more diverse business image, which was complete with continued developments on the international front and expansion at home; and

WHEREAS, MBG was Michigan's Exporter of the Year in 1993, with increased promotional activity, including the opening of "The Blueberry Store" in South Haven and the addition of a winter fresh sales program, marketing off-season for South American blueberry growers in Chile, and direct investment in product development; and

WHEREAS, in 1995, Kirk McCreary was named General Manager (later CEO) and built a state-of-the-art fruit receiving, pre-cooling, and shipping facility in Alma; initiated a call for action for more stringent food safety and quality initiatives in the processed fruit arena; led MBG into the Naturipe Farms partnership; built a facility in Grand Junction; and developed innovative technology to track production from field to consumer; and

WHEREAS, Frank Bragg became the new CEO in 2006, forming Naturipe Foods to market frozen fruit direct to customers; and refining new millennium market strategies, including development of a grower certification program, membership expansion, plant expansions and renovations, and a product development kitchen for value-added market opportunities; and

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Michigan Commission of Agriculture and Rural Development recognizes MBG Marketing as the world's leader in the blueberry industry; and

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the Michigan Commission of Agriculture and Rural Development hereby congratulates MBG Marketing on seventy-five years of growth and success in the blueberry industry and expects that MBG Marketing will continue to have an even greater impact on the agriculture industry in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and beyond.

Adopted, November 9, 2011  
Lansing, Michigan

  
Don Coe  
Commission Chair