

General Manager's report 2015



Activities are shown within financial year (1 April – 31 March).

Note: Change of GM in June, report does not include Bill Floyd's activities for the last two months of his management (his work at that moment mainly went into the organization of the take-over, transmission of knowledge and conference questions).

1. Promotion

I. Austria Juice NPDU

Austria Juice sponsored the IBA for developing a strategy which may help to increase sales for Austria Juice and thus increase the sales potential of blackcurrant growers.

Achievements 2015:

- A project of a one-day symposium bringing together researchers and processors on an international level has been worked out and was supposed to take place in 2017 in Dijon, France. The same sort of meeting should afterwards be included in the framework of each IBA conference. Its aim was to initiate the creation of new products. The project was too ambitious to be realized with limited financial resources, and has to be changed.

Planned 2016:

- Austria Juice and the IBA work on the creation of a working group within

the IBA: this New Product Development Unit will have to define countries and types of new products to be developed. A yearly cooking contest for hobby cooks, bloggers and professionals is the basic idea.

II. New Holland Blackcurrant Food Heroes

New Holland sponsored the IBA for the Food Heroes project. A new section in our website has been created, showing the various uses of blackcurrants in cooking.

Achievements 2015:

- Together with the creation of the new website, the recipe section has changed. It has been improved by classifying the recipes and including New Holland's logo on each page. Further recipes have been added into the collection over the months.

Planned 2016:

- New Holland continues to support this project. The IBA will steadily increase the number of recipes and highlight them also on the IBA facebook pages. Blackcurrant, before being transformed into a nutraceutical, is a wonderful berry with flavours that can be used in many kinds of food. Bringing people to cook with blackcurrants will slowly increase the demand in the fresh fruit or IQF market.

III. Communication

The IBA's first aim is to facilitate communication in the global blackcurrant family, and spread knowledge about blackcurrant – the best berry for life.

Achievements 2015:

- Since October 2015, the GM sends a short newsletter every two months to a database of over 700 people. Anyone can contribute to it, and anyone can register for it on the website. No confidential information is being spread through the newsletter.
- 3 facebook pages have been launched:

- English version: Blackcurrant – best berry for life
- German version: Cassis – lecker gesund
- French version: Cassis – petite baie contre stress et tensions

Planned 2016:

- Increase the database of subscribers to the newsletter.
- Improve the facebook posting frequency.
- Increase the number of followers of the facebook pages. Facebook is the most used social media at the moment and allows us to spread general knowledge about blackcurrants all over the world. Two main themes to develop: health benefits and food/drinks with blackcurrants.
- Raise sponsorship for improving the work on facebook and newsletters.

iV. Website

Given the technological changes and evolution of all means of communication over the past few years, our website needed to be refreshed.

Achievements 2015:

- Change of the name: www.internationalblackcurrantassociation.com has become www.blackcurrant-iba.com
- Change of the website host (financial improvement: cost has decreased by 700%)
- Change of the look: new template
- Internal administration by the GM instead of an external company. Gain: being more reactive, reducing costs.
- Introduction of a limited access to confidential information for IBA members by registration.
- New section on health benefits of blackcurrants

Planned 2016:

- Old sections to be improved (country association info, recipe section etc.)
- New sections to be added:
 - Agronomy and plant breeding sector group information
 - New Product Development Unit

- Press work
- Improvement of the SEO (search engine optimization) for being more visible

V. Media

Our impact on traditional media is quite low: press work cannot be well done on an international level for small organizations with limited time and resources like ours.

Achievements 2015:

- Putting together all the former media releases in one section of the website and adding new articles and links.
- Answering enquiries of different press people, collecting their data.

Planned 2016:

- Collecting names and addresses of journalists from all over the world to keep updated with our newsletters/press releases.
- Give support to countries/growers for improving their work with press on a local level (more efficient!).
- Further develop the media releases and section dedicated to press on the website.

2. Executive (Governance & Administration)

The General Manager's work is to look after the good administration of our association, whether financial or other matters are concerned. It is the General Manager's responsibility to keep the IBA in a sound financial situation, ensure payments of membership fees and secure sponsorship income which is vital for the IBA.

Achievements 2015:

- The IBA's rules of association had to be reviewed (last update in 2012) after some changes. The introduction of individual membership possibilities and fees need to be specified in these rules. Preparation of this point of the agenda with the IBA Board for the Annual General Meeting and vote.
- The interval of IBA conferences seemed not to suit any more, and bi-annual conferences are seen to be more interesting and valuable. This makes a few changes necessary in the administration of the IBA by the Board and Executive and needs to be voted in the AGM. Preparation of this point of the agenda with the IBA Board.
- Most of the traditional sponsors continue to support the work of the IBA. Other sponsorship opportunities have been identified and are under discussion or will be discussed.

Planned 2016:

- Keep the amount of time spent on general matters stable to be able to concentrate further on promotion.
- Raise new sponsorships.
- Significantly increase the number of individual members of the IBA.

3. Conferences

The IBA conferences are traditionally hosted in one of the member countries and organized by this country's association. The role of the General Manager is to support the organizing team and make information before and after the conferences available to the IBA members.

Achievements 2015:

- Presentations from the conference in Vilnius + pictures available on the IBA website.
- Support for the organization of the conference in Ashford.

Planned 2016:

- As in former years, make presentations from the conference in Ashford +

pictures available on the IBA website as close to the conference as possible, especially the data on global blackcurrant production sponsored by Weremczuk.

- No conference planned in 2017.

4. Country Associations

9 countries have country associations and were members of the IBA in 2015: Denmark, France, Germany, Lithuania, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland and United Kingdom. Changes: Lithuania cannot afford membership in the IBA for 2016. Japan has created a country association and has become member of the IBA in 2016.

Several other countries grow blackcurrants commercially or have research institutes, but have no associations like in the 10 countries mentioned above.

Achievements 2015:

- A breakdown of information about each member country has been realised.
- Contacts have been established with Austria and China.
- A change in the IBA's rules of association has been elaborated, enabling people and organizations from these countries to become members of the IBA individually, unless a country association is formed.
- Lists of members of each country association have been collected and put into a common IBA database. Membership cards have been issued.

Planned 2016:

- Improve the information available about member countries on the website.
- Monitor developments in other countries and assist those who want to establish an association.

5. Agronomy, Plant Breeding, Health & Science

Achievements 2015:

- The Agronomy & Plant Breeding sector group of the IBA sponsored by Bayer has been formalized, data collected on pest control, plant protection products and blackcurrant varieties from all over the world. The working group will come together and decide for a strategy of sharing this information and topics to be discussed over the next years.
- A new section about “blackcurrant – the stress hero” has been developed on our website.

Planned 2016:

- Develop a new section on agronomy and plant breeding available for our members on our website.
- Significantly improve the health section of the website and make the wonderful health benefits of blackcurrants known to the people through facebook.

Stefanie Sharma,

General Manager IBA