

REPORT

—Consolidation



## Britain's next top model?

LONDON—Berry Alliance NFP will provide growers with administration, packing and logistics services to supply direct to UK retailers.

by Martyn Fisher

**W**hat is believed to be the UK's first not-for-profit berry business that supports growers which supply direct to retailers has been launched. Berry Alliance NFP, a new supply chain model that provides growers worldwide with UK-based administration, packing and logistics services to supply direct to British supermarkets, began its first direct supply programme with a major retailer in January. It is hoped that the NFP model will take out significant costs compared to traditional, third party procurement supply.

Berry Alliance is headed up by Pascal Simian, formerly berry procurement director at Wellpak, with over 17 years' experience. He said: "Major retailers are moving toward direct supply from growers but growers often lack the UK infrastructure to supply them efficiently. Berry Alliance will fill this gap and the service is targeted at retailers with high-volume supply requirements to enable the model to work most effectively."



He continued: "Consultation's been a crucial part of the process in developing Berry Alliance into a robust model that supports both ends of the supply chain. By working from UK stock holdings we've solved retailers' biggest challenge, the ability to respond to consumer demand for a product that takes time to import."

Berry Alliance is a partner company in the service ecosystem of independent businesses comprising Wellpak, Ackio and Elision. Unlike retailers, which have only one outlet to sell fruit, Berry Alliance says it has multiple options from which to source the product and multiple outlets through which to sell on surplus. Simian said that as well as removing the effort involved in establishing relationships with growers, Berry Alliance will "alleviate the financial hit otherwise incurred by the retailer due to flux in consumer demand".

.....  
 LEFT & ABOVE—Berry Alliance aims to put berry growers in touch with retailers and help both to respond more quickly to consumer demand

The contract to supply exists between the grower and the retailer, with Berry Alliance acting as contract manager. Supply chain savings are passed on as better prices to the retailer, and enhanced returns to the grower.

Steve Sadler, former senior berry buyer at IPL who is now commercial manager for Berry Alliance, said: "Having come from IPL, I've seen this model work well. Berry Alliance is perfectly suited to retailers in the UK – they naturally want to source direct from growers but have learnt that this can be a laborious, costly and wasteful. Berry Alliance is a turn-key solution that's easy to adopt." 



**Branded Canadian blueberries have been launched in the UK under the Bart 'n' Lainy label. Following a trial last year, the blueberries are now available in 540g jars and can be sourced directly from Bart 'n' Lainy owner Nicholas and Knight, or through two independent retailers – Hider Foods and Vic's Good Food.**

**"We've known about these small berries and the spectacular Canadian wilderness where they grow for many years and it has become a bit of a personal mission to bring them over here," said co-founder Mike Nicholas. "For a long time we have wanted to use our experience and expertise to market our own brand. We chose Canadian Wild Blueberries because they have a fantastic reputation, we know the growers well and because it is an exciting challenge to bring something entirely new to the UK."**