

Enhancing Health Professional Engagement

Insights from 'Health and Nutrition Information for the Berry Industry (MT21000)'

Jutta Wright, FOODiQ Global

The FOODiQ Global (formerly Nutrition Research Australia) team have concluded their appointment to the 2-year strategic levy investment project, Health and Nutrition Information for the Berry Industry (MT21000), part of the Blueberry, Raspberry and Blackberry Funds.

Successfully meeting project outcomes, some of the key outputs from the project has included the development of seven health professional (HP) resources including evidence summary fact sheet, consumer friendly fact sheet, infographics, social tiles and an educational animation, all housed on the FOODiQ Health Professional Berries Hub.

Additionally, the team developed and executed three educational activities including a key opinion leader (KOL) online event, Dietitians' Conference and dedicated FOODiQ HP webinar.

In January 2024, a final digital outreach campaign effectively disseminated the resources and hub to HPs through targeted social media campaigns, email outreach communications to HP organisations, and engagement with key opinion leaders (KOLs). The project successfully met all intermediate and end-of- project outcomes, with educational events receiving high ratings for information, usefulness, and engagement. Over the past year the project has amassed a sizeable HP database of nearly 1200 engaged subscribers.

As a result of these efforts, the project significantly increased HP knowledge of the nutrition and health benefits of berries, leading to a notable rise in their intent to recommend berries to clients. Specifically, at project end, over two-thirds of HCPs report that are aware of nutrition and health benefits of berries which increased by over a third during the project, and three in every four HPs reporting they recommend berries 'always or often' to their clients compared to just over half (58%) at baseline.

All HP who accessed the resources reported them to be useful. The resources played a pivotal role in enhancing HP familiarity and confidence, with those accessing the resources demonstrating nearly twice the confidence in discussing berry nutrition and health benefits compared to those who did not.

The impact of the project is evident in the substantial increase in HP recommendation rates for berries to clients, indicating a clear correlation between resource access and recommendation behaviour. However, despite the resources' perceived usefulness, the proportion of participants accessing them was lower than anticipated, highlighting the need for further awareness campaigns to maximise resource utilisation.

These findings underscore the importance of driving awareness among HPs as a crucial strategy for promoting berry consumption and driving industry growth. While the project has made significant strides in educating this influential stakeholder group, continued investment is recommended to sustain and expand these efforts.

Post-project recommendations to Hort Innovation include short-, medium-, and long-term strategic investment opportunities. Short to medium-term strategies focus on maintaining engagement with the existing HP database while expanding communication efforts to reach a broader spectrum of HPs, including fitness professionals.

Medium to longer-term strategies involve investing in research to strengthen the evidence base supporting berries, particularly lesser-researched varieties such as raspberries and blackberries. Additionally, a targeted campaign highlighting the journey from 'Paddock to Plate' aims to address concerns surrounding pesticide usage, further promoting berry consumption.

