

Setting Vietnamese Retailers up for Blueberry Success

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*An update on activities from the levy-funded project
'Berries Trade Development and Market Access project (MT23004)'*

Vietnam's decision to grant market access for Australian fresh blueberries in October 2025 created an important new opportunity for growers and exporters. The Australian Government estimates that the market could be worth approximately \$4 million in its first year and \$22 million within five years.

However, gaining access is only the first step. The long-term success of Australian blueberries in Vietnam will depend on whether the fruit reaches consumers in the premium condition they expect. Temperature fluctuations, poor handling, weak stock rotation or an unattractive retail display can quickly reduce shelf life, increase waste and undermine confidence in the Australian offer.

To support the new trade pathway, Berries Australia has developed a comprehensive suite of bilingual training materials for Vietnamese importers, buyers, distribution teams and supermarket staff. The program follows Australian blueberries from the farm through harvesting, pre-cooling, grading, packing, air freight, arrival in Vietnam, in-store cold storage and retail display.

A central message is that blueberry quality must be protected continuously to deliver the best consumer experience. Fruit is cooled rapidly after harvest, and then the temperature must be maintained as close as possible to the recommended chilled range throughout transport, receiving, storage and retail display. Staff are also trained to protect airflow, keep packs dry, handle fruit gently and store blueberries away from strong-smelling products.

The retail excellence component translates these technical requirements into simple daily actions. The key messages include:

- Presenting Australian blueberries in a clearly defined refrigerated berry destination, with pack sizes grouped logically, labels facing forward and Australian origin messaging easy to see

- Encouraging staff to maintain full but uncluttered displays
- Applying strict first-in, first-out stock (FIFO) rotation
- Immediately removing packs that are wet, crushed, leaking, soft or mouldy

Research shows that product sampling and clear descriptions of the fruit's sweetness, crunch, and Australian provenance can also help shoppers understand its premium value, so the training includes valuable resources to help staff sell the fruit in person in their store.

The training was delivered in person in Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi by Jenny Van de Meeberg, Head of Trade for Berries Australia, alongside complementary training from Australian Table Grapes. Delivering the two programs together provided greater value to Vietnamese retailers, attracted a broader attendance and reinforced consistent cold-chain and merchandising practices across two important Australian fresh-fruit categories.

By investing in retail capability from the outset, the industry is helping ensure that consumers experience Australian blueberries as they were intended: fresh, firm, flavourful and unmistakably premium.

The materials developed include a comprehensive Cold Chain Training pack, a session dedicated to Merchandising Retail Excellence, a back-of-store poster, a 4-page Merchandising Guide and recipe postcards for use with sampling activities in stores, all in Vietnamese.



Retail staff from Central Retail, Farmers' Market, Klever Fruit, Mega Market and Win Commerce were trained in both Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City All photos credit: Berries Australia



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