



Case Study

Blueberries



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This case study examines a 20-acre block of underperforming blueberries in Washington State. The grower was contemplating bulldozing the block. Instead, they approached AEA to see if we could save it.

Key Achievements:

- **5x increase** in fruit tonnage in one year



Background

The client is a large fruit farmer in Washington State, with thousands of acres under management, spread across a number of ranches. Each ranch is independently managed. This particular ranch is primarily planted into apples and cherries, with a single, 20-acre block of blueberries. That blueberry block had been getting steadily weaker, producing only 1 ton of fruit per acre before AEA's involvement. Prior to being planted in blueberries, the land had been used to graze cattle.

AEA's Solution

The client made a budget for ripping out the blueberry block, and approached AEA to see if we could save the block at comparable cost.

We suspected that something was wrong with the soil due its prior management history, and that was preventing the plant from uptaking nutrients. Our solution involved heavy doses of biology to reactivate the soil, soil primers to create a hospitable environment for biology, and our nutritional program informed by sap analysis. The program included:

- Spring mineral soil amendments
- Spring soil primer
- Foliar applications
- Fertigation
- Fall soil primer

Every application included much higher-than-normal rates of biological inoculants, and we made use of a wide range of inoculants throughout the season, to counter perceived deficiencies and add as much biological diversity as possible.



Results

As a result of AEA's program, the blueberry plants established a better relationship with the soil biology, allowing them to more effectively uptake nutrients and produce a larger crop.

That year, the grower harvested 5 tons per acre of fruit from the block, a 5x increase from the 1 ton per acre they had been harvesting in prior years. While by no means breaking any yield records, 5 tons per acre represented a significant turnaround in the block's status, and the beginning of a journey towards true health and productivity.

Most importantly, we accomplished the grower's goal of saving the block from the bulldozer while staying within their budget, and they were very happy with the results.



Conclusion

Crops often suffer due to the lingering effects of the management actions taken by previous stewards of the land. Although one rarely knows what exactly those past farmers have done, and therefore what exactly to correct, soil biology has the remarkable ability to mitigate soil toxins along with nutrient excesses and deficiencies and restore soil to a state of balance.

This particular blueberry block was planted into soil with a history of mismanagement, and was underperforming as a result. By creating a soil environment in which biology could thrive, and inoculating the soil with a broad diversity of microbial species, we were able to correct the soil's imbalances, save a block of blueberries from destruction, and meet the client's financial goals.

About Advancing Eco Agriculture

Advancing Eco Agriculture (AEA) helps farmers succeed by empowering them to grow crops that are more productive, resilient and profitable. We provide data-based agronomic consultation and a range of powerful liquid mineral nutrition and biological products.

AEA is dedicated to a whole-systems approach to revitalizing soil and plant health, looking beyond symptoms by diagnosing root causes and providing treatments. This approach, informed by more than 18 years of data and on-farm experience, increases yields and crop performance, reduces or eliminates the need for pesticides and fertilizers, and generates immediate economic returns for farmers.



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