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Dr. Ronald Prior was awarded the Jim Joseph Award by the North American Blueberry Council at their recent meeting in St. Louis, Mo. This award was presented by the Highbush Blueberry Industry in recognition of Dr. Prior's outstanding contribution to nutrition research and for his efforts to expand awareness of the healthfulness of fruits and vegetables.

Dr. Prior currently lives in Searcy, Ark. He grew up in Wauneta in southwestern Nebraska and received his bachelors degree from the University of Nebraska in 1967. He then went to Cornell University in Ithaca, N.Y., where he received his Ph.D. in nutrition with minors in biochemistry and physiology. His graduate training was followed by two years of post-doctoral training in Comparative Gastroenterology through the College of Veterinary Medicine at Cornell University.

Dr. Prior was with the Agricultural Research Service of the USDA for 35 years. He was located at the Roman L. Hruska Meat Animal Research Center in Clay Center, Neb., for 12 years and then moved to the USDA Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging at Tufts University in Boston, Mass.

Dr. Prior published the first manuscript on antioxidants in fruits and vegetables in 1996. Blueberries were among the highest fresh foods in antioxidant capacity. This observation led to increased interest and research into the health benefits of blueberries.

The number of health related manuscripts from scientists studying blueberries was over 110 in 2011 compared to less than 10 in 1996. During this same period of time, the value of the utilized Highbush blueberry production increased from less than $100 million to over $720 million in 2011 based in USDA/ERS data.

In 2000 Dr. Prior moved to the USDA Arkansas Children's Nutrition Center in Little Rock, Ark., where he continued his research on blueberries and other fruits and vegetables.

In 2006, Dr. Prior was ranked as the top-cited author in agricultural sciences by Science Watch.

In May of 2010 Dr. Prior retired from the USDA, but he continues to serve as adjunct professor in the Dept. of Food Science at the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville and to consult with organizations on matters related to antioxidant phytochemicals and nutrition.

In June 2012, Dr. Prior received recognition for the “Most Cited Paper of 2009,” published in the Health, Nutrition and Food Section of the Journal of Food Science. Dr. Prior has published more than 220 articles in peer reviewed scientific journals during his career.