

NATIONAL WATERMELON PROMOTION BOARD



FISCAL YEAR 2020-2021
ANNUAL REPORT

Statement of Financial Position

National Watermelon Promotion Board

Statements of Financial Position

<i>March 31,</i>	2021	2020
Assets		
Current Assets		
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 1,468,214	\$ 1,229,742
Assessments receivable	24,725	-
MAP receivable	13,657	2,355
Prepaid expenses and other assets	51,518	71,796
Certificates of deposit	495,127	704,000
Total Current Assets	2,053,241	2,007,893
Property and Equipment, Net	111,892	157,814
Deposits	5,007	5,007
Total Assets	\$ 2,170,140	\$ 2,170,714
Liabilities and Net Assets		
Current Liabilities		
Accounts payable and accrued expenses	\$ 97,270	\$ 29,502
Accrued payroll and related expenses	113,438	110,865
Capital lease obligations	8,973	8,681
Total Current Liabilities	219,681	149,048
Long-Term Liabilities		
Capital lease obligations, less current portion	761	9,735
Total Liabilities	220,442	158,783
Commitments and Contingencies (Notes 5 and 8)		
Net Assets Without Donor Restrictions		
Board-designated for frozen reserve	704,000	704,000
Undesignated	1,245,698	1,307,931
Total Net Assets Without Donor Restrictions	1,949,698	2,011,931
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$ 2,170,140	\$ 2,170,714

See accompanying notes to financial statements.

Statement of Activities

National Watermelon Promotion Board

Statements of Activities

<i>Year ended March 31,</i>	2021	2020
Revenues		
Assessments - domestic	\$ 2,228,417	\$ 2,272,774
Assessments - import	1,125,355	1,032,171
MAP revenue	204,334	222,610
Interest and other income	38,495	51,800
Total Revenues	3,596,601	3,579,355
Expenses		
Program expenses	3,100,203	3,236,707
General and administrative expenses	558,631	584,277
Total Expenses	3,658,834	3,820,984
Change in Net Assets Without Donor Restrictions	(62,233)	(241,629)
Net Assets Without Donor Restrictions, beginning of year	2,011,931	2,253,560
Net Assets Without Donor Restrictions, end of year	\$ 1,949,698	\$ 2,011,931

See accompanying notes to financial statements.

Statement of Cash Flows

National Watermelon Promotion Board

Statements of Cash Flows

<i>Year ended March 31,</i>	2021	2020
Cash Flows from Operating Activities		
Change in net assets without donor restrictions	\$ (62,233)	\$ (241,629)
Adjustments to reconcile change in net assets without donor restrictions to net cash provided by (used in) operating activities:		
Depreciation and amortization	45,458	12,179
Loss on disposal of equipment	464	6,533
Cash provided by (used for):		
Assessment receivable	(24,725)	123,601
MAP receivable	(11,302)	76,306
Prepaid expenses and other assets	20,278	22,190
Accounts payable and accrued expenses	67,768	(40,244)
Accrued payroll and related expenses	2,573	5,724
Net Cash Provided by (Used in) Operating Activities	38,281	(35,340)
Cash Flows from Investing Activities		
Purchase of equipment	-	(110,218)
Proceeds from sale of equipment	-	500
Purchase of certificates of deposit	(495,127)	(1,042,003)
Proceeds from maturity of certificates of deposit	704,000	1,036,000
Net Cash Provided by (Used in) Investing Activities	208,873	(115,721)
Cash Flows from Financing Activities		
Payments on capital lease obligation	(8,682)	(8,553)
Increase (Decrease) in Cash and Cash Equivalents	238,472	(159,614)
Cash and Cash Equivalents, beginning of year	1,229,742	1,389,356
Cash and Cash Equivalents, end of year	\$ 1,468,214	\$ 1,229,742
Supplemental Disclosure of Cash Flow Information		
Cash paid for interest	\$ 480	\$ 209
Non-Cash Investing and Financing Activity		
Computer equipment acquired through capital lease	\$ -	\$ 26,124

See accompanying notes to financial statements.

Independent Auditor's Report



Tel: 407-841-6930
Fax: 407-841-6347
www.bdo.com

450 South Orange Avenue
Suite 550
Orlando, FL 32801

Independent Auditor's Report

Board of Directors
National Watermelon Promotion Board

Report on the Financial Statements

Opinion

We have audited the accompanying financial statements of National Watermelon Promotion Board (the Board), which comprise the statements of financial position as of March 31, 2021 and 2020, and the related statements of activities, cash flows, and functional expenses for the years then ended, and the related notes to the financial statements.

In our opinion, the financial statements referred to above present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Board as of March 31, 2021 and 2020, and the changes in its net assets and its cash flows for the years then ended, in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America.

Basis for Opinion

We conducted our audits in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America (GAAS) and the standards applicable to financial audits contained in *Government Auditing Standards*, issued by the Comptroller General of the United States. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the *Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements* section of our report. We are required to be independent of the Board and to meet our other ethical responsibilities, in accordance with the relevant ethical requirements relating to our audits. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinion.

Responsibilities of Management for the Financial Statements

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America, and for the design, implementation, and maintenance of internal control relevant to the preparation and fair presentation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, management is required to evaluate whether there are conditions or events, considered in the aggregate, that raise substantial doubt about the Board's ability to continue as a going concern within one year after the date that the financial statements are issued or available to be issued.

Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance but is not absolute assurance

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Independent Auditor's Report



and therefore is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with GAAS and *Government Auditing Standards* will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control. Misstatements are considered material if there is a substantial likelihood that, individually or in the aggregate, they would influence the judgment made by a reasonable user based on the financial statements.

In performing an audit in accordance with GAAS and *Government Auditing Standards*, we:

- Exercise professional judgment and maintain professional skepticism throughout the audit.
- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, and design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks. Such procedures include examining, on a test basis, evidence regarding the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the Board's internal control. Accordingly, no such opinion is expressed.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of significant accounting estimates made by management, as well as evaluate the overall presentation of the financial statements.
- Conclude whether, in our judgment, there are conditions or events, considered in the aggregate, that raise substantial doubt about the Board's ability to continue as a going concern for a reasonable period of time.

We are required to communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit, significant audit findings, and certain internal control-related matters that we identified during the audit.

Other Matters

Other Reporting Required by Government Auditing Standards

In accordance with *Government Auditing Standards*, we have also issued our report dated August 5, 2021 on our consideration of the Board's internal control over financial reporting and on our tests of its compliance with certain provisions of laws, regulations, contracts, and grant agreements and other matters. The purpose of that report is solely to describe the scope of our testing of internal control over financial reporting and compliance and the results of that testing, and not to provide an opinion on the effectiveness of the Board's internal control over financial reporting or on compliance. That report is an integral part of an audit performed in accordance with *Government Auditing Standards* in considering the Board's internal control over financial reporting and compliance.

BDO USA LLP

Certified Public Accountants
August 5, 2021



Program Highlights & Successes

2020-2021 FISCAL YEAR

THE FOLLOWING HIGHLIGHTS ARE NOT INCLUSIVE
RESULTS OF ALL PROGRAM ELEMENTS

Communications

Press Outreach

- PR campaign goal to educate and inspire consumers, media, influencers, educators and health professionals through a *Watermelon Back to Basics 2.0* theme, leveraging 2019 theme and building on consumers' knowledge
- Monitored consumer media outreach activities allowing us to move beyond regular mentions in the news and earn more robust watermelon coverage.
- Photography for recipe, carvings and cuts shots for use on watermelon.org, social media and asset library, including:
 - Older recipes and carvings that needed updated photography: Breakfast a Go Go parfait, Watermelon Tiki Mask, the Watermelon Baby Carriage and the Watermelon Vase.
 - Newly created Breakfast Banana Split, Kids Grazing Board, Watermelon Limeade, Go Red Watermelon Salad, Tajin Mexican Fruit Salad, Simple Watermelon Slushie, Watermelon Poptails, Christmas Cookie Cutouts and a Watermelon Frog Carving
 - New cuts on creative backgrounds and backdrops
 - Photoshoot was featured in story *Behind the scenes with the National Watermelon Promotion Board* - The Produce News (4,683 impressions)
- Family Features paid releases in 2020-2021:
 - 2 premium food releases:
 - "Kid-Friendly Creativity in the Kitchen"
 - 1,100 print and online placements with more than 170M total impressions, \$646,373 total ad equivalency and ROI of 118:1
 - Case study from Family Features - "A Successful Content Strategy During a Crisis" highlighting this release
 - "Add Fruity Flavors and Fun to Holiday Desserts"
 - 1,085 print and online placements and ROI of 114:1
 - Created a 4:36 sizzle reel of watermelon media coverage highlights for 2020 year
 - Worked with segment producer of CBS Sunday Morning to provide timely resources and contacts for watermelon segment. Aired August 23, 2020 with 5.92M viewers.

Advertising

- Shot new TV commercial content focusing on both wellness and happiness, to be advertised on YouTube and other streaming content channels
 - Watermelon Warrior - whimsical spot that is more cinematic in feeling and specifically aimed at caregivers, the demographic that our pre-roll commercials performed best with.
 - Watermelon Wellness – One full 30-second video and four 15-second seasonally-inspired videos, advertising to coincide with Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter promoting life's simple pleasures throughout the different seasons.
- In February and March, 2021, advertised the fresh new content at Watermelon.org's Educator section to 'teacher influentials' through TheMailbox.com (who also owns Learning Magazine). The ads accompany newsletters to their 400,000 teachers and the specialized whole page e-blasts go to 35,000 teachers each month. Additionally, The Mailbox posted about the resources on their Facebook page to reach over 200,000 followers (paid to boost for amplification)

Consumer Communications

- Added Nutrition Research Library on Watermelon.org that sources scientific research papers providing more details on the role that watermelon may play in promoting good health. Categories of research topics are organized into the following: Lycopene, Citrulline, Food Chemistry, Bioavailability, Antioxidant Activity, Inflammation, Body Weight, Cardiovascular, Diabetes, Arthritis, Exercise & Athletic Performance, Skincare, Antiviral and Satiety. <https://www.watermelon.org/audiences/industry/research/nutrition-research/>

Communications

- Educator Content on Watermelon.org
 - Update and revision to the 50+ J. Slice and Friends worksheets in the Teacher Toolkit section of watermelon.org, with PDF activities ranging from Language Arts and Science to Geography and Math, using watermelon parts and pieces as teaching tools
<https://www.watermelon.org/audiences/educators/teacher-toolkits/>
- Jump with Jill – Children’s Outreach and Education: Music-based nutrition education program sponsorship, action pack distribution and lesson plan portal
 - Digital Live Tour - The Jump with Jill team transitioned to make a digital version of the show they are calling #JumpWithJillDigitalTour filled with brand new content made while they are off stage - unplugged songs, dances, workouts, activities, and tutorials. They are also reposting previous content that teachers can utilize to create their online coursework for students. With everyone at home, the Jump with Jill metrics are higher than ever.
 - Jump with Jill Multimedia Lesson Plan Portal with new standards-matched lesson plans and activity sheets. Aims to provide teachers – or caregivers facilitating the work of teachers – with important curriculum objectives and explosively entertaining videos through applications to healthy foods and exercise. All the lesson plans are developed using the EATS instructional model. The five lessons available range in target grade level and subject areas:
<https://www.watermelon.org/audiences/educators/jump-with-jill-lesson-plans/>.
 - “Action Pack” card deck featuring physical activities as a game in watermelon colors: 150 packs
 - Total media impressions: 1.1M
- 4-H virtual day camp hosted by the UF/IFAS Extension office of Marion County’s 4-H Youth Development extension agent. The one-hour camp was hosted on Zoom and had over 30 kids registered. The NWPB element was simple: explain your career, the education needed for your position, and how it impacts/is important to the watermelon industry.

Special Events

- Media Master Classes went virtual. Changed NYC-based freelance summertime media event to a virtual version for the at-home world of media and influencers to educate, inform and inspire watermelon content and coverage. The reinvention of the media event turned into three separate virtual events with three different topics, three different presenters with three sets of recipe ideas, sending out three different curated boxes for the media to utilize for their Watermelon Master Classes. Hosted 60 food editors from top consumer pubs including Eating Well, Food & Wine, Popsugar and Shape and garnered 15 articles and nearly 40 social media posts.
 - July 15, 2020 - Watermelon Wellness with Pam Smith, RDN featuring Salted Watermelon Waju, Watermelon Overnight Oats, Watermelon Poke Salad and a Watermelon Yogurt Smoothie
 - July 22, 2020 - The Ultimate Watermelon Workshop with cookbook authors Mark Scarbrough and Bruce Weinstein, creating Thai-inspired Watermelon Rind Salad, Curried Wheatberry Watermelon Salad and Watermelon, and Prosciutto and Mozzarella Skewers
 - August 5, 2020 - Summer Sips Watermelon Cocktails with Jordan Catapano from This Girls Walks into a Bar, mixing a Watermelon Rose Sangria, Watermelon Gimlet and a Summer into Fall Cocktail
- FNCE Virtual Expo - Dietitian education, inspiration and “edutainment”. Culinary demo, highlighting RD Toolkit, Zero Food Waste and Watermelon Flavor Pairings. Being virtual, the event had a historic 13,775 attendees, all earning continuing education credits. Sponsored Chef Abbie Gellman for a culinary watermelon demo, a 45-minute video followed by a Zoom Q&A in our booth. Sharing the new RD toolkit to these influencers was the main goal in participating. Offered resources including recipes, videos, zero food waste, watermelon flavor pairings and a Pop Quiz, gaining 1,000 names for *What About Watermelon?* e-newsletter. The event will be live until summer 2021; attendees will have the opportunity to revisit learning sessions and research reviews, view culinary demo video and explore exhibitor booths of resources.

Communications

- 45th Marine Corps Marathon Virtual Event

- Queen Paige Huntington recorded cheer messages that will be programmed in the official app, so runners will hear her words of support at different mile markers on their runs
- A watermelon carving time lapse video of the 45th MCM logo premiered was promoted MCM weekend and beyond
- Several pre- and post-workout watermelon recipes shared on the MCM social media channels
- Digital event bag promotes watermelon “at the finish line” for all runners to refresh and rehydrate after completing their race

Digital Communications

- Recipe & Carving Contest - Watermelon Recipe & Carving Challenge received 200 entries and with the help of influencer partners earned 2.3M impressions and 109K engagements (meaning clicks/likes/comments)
- "How do you WINTERmelon" consumer social campaign utilizing influencer partnerships and earned media PR tactics to visualize watermelon in the winter usage ideas and versatility benefits. Ran December 1, 2020 to March 1, 2021 and activated to raise demand for watermelon in the winter, earned 191 posts, over 63K impressions and 9K engagements. Also ran advertorial in *The Produce News* to promote to industry, as a result campaign was amplified by 5 industry social accounts.
- Social media platforms Y/Y results for @WatermelonBoard channels:
 - Facebook: Nearly 14 million impressions, 357,333 post engagements, and 102,474 post link clicks; 23% increase in Fans
 - Instagram: Over 11 million impressions, 52,258 post engagements and 1,661 profile clicks. These impressions were helped by the recipe contest over the summer; 64% increase in Followers
 - Pinterest: The main driver to the Watermelon.org website with 7.3 million impressions, 306,369 engagements, and 34,511 outbound clicks; 12% increase in Followers
 - Twitter: 619,856 impressions, 25,681 tweet engagements fueled by specific Twitter-humor and trendy content that grows organic posts that out-perform paid boosts; 6% increase in Followers
 - Media Monitoring: Total tracked impressions of watermelon inclusion in stories in traditional and online newspapers, magazines and websites: 6,519,784,963
 - Total social engagements saw 19% increase
- Watermelon.org website: Editorial calendar for content across all social channels
- Watermelon.org website saw 6% Year over Year increase
- What About Watermelon? consumer e-newsletter distributed 10 issues per year – 14.5% average open rate average and 3.2% click through rate
- LinkedIn gained 318 followers

Industry Outreach and Communications

- Hosted first Zoom meeting for the queen coordinators to see who is doing what online and how we can share, help, amplify, and extend that reach during stay-at-home order. (April 2020)
- Zoom Watermelon Queen Media Training: The virtual session was used to review the resource guide for watermelon promotion, including education about watermelon itself and guidance for promotion in the at-home world. Topics included watermelon 101 information such as cultivation, types and varieties and fun facts, as well as reviewing health benefits, usage ideas and selection tips: everything a watermelon queen may choose to include in promotional videos and online outreach. (June 2020)
- Sponsored a virtual *Communications Coaching Session* for our Watermelon Queens hosted by Carmine and Vanessa Gallo of Gallo Communications. This interactive class was different than past 'Telling the Watermelon Story' sessions and focused on building connections, practicing communications techniques, and learning tools and tips as life skills the girls will take beyond their watermelon promotion years. (January 2021)
- Watermelon Update e-newsletter distributed 11x/year to more than 600 key industry and assessment-paying organizations with a pdf version under on website

Communications

- American Heart Association heart checkmark certification for fresh watermelon PLUs: seedless, seeded, mini watermelon
- Alliance for Food and Farming – paid members
- Participated in several industry events throughout the year, including:
 - Earned Media Mastery Summit to learn and network with 35+ world-class public relations experts, authors and journalists
 - First-ever virtual tradeshow and conference for the produce industry online at *United Fresh Live!* hosted by the United Fresh Produce Association
 - Completed the Cornell certificate virtual program “Leading Through Crisis: The Path Forward for the Fresh Produce Industry,” covering Values Driven Leadership, VUCA Leadership (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, Ambiguous), Planning Supply Chains for Resiliency, Communicating through Crisis and finally a State of the Industry: Forecast for the Future series.
 - Participated in Summer Meet Ups – Virtual Networking Event
 - Submitted and won Produce Marketing Excellence Award from Produce Business Magazine for 2019 Fit Foodie event campaign
 - Ag Relations Council Golden Arc Award Winner for Watermelon.org
 - National Agri-Marketing Association (NAMA) 1st Place Regional Winner for website in consumer website design and 1st Place Regional Winner for promotional watermelon tweet in social media
- NWPB executive committee members and staff attended a development session to address key communication topics on how to answer transparent and uncomplicated questions on behalf of the watermelon industry, improving overall Board dynamics and effectiveness. Carmine and Vanessa Gallo of Gallo Communications conducted the communications coaching session on November 18th.
- Photoshoot on November 30th to create an image library of staff photos working with watermelon to portray in the virtual business world what it’s like to work with members of Team Watermelon on programs of NWPB research, promotion and education.
- Received coverage for partnership with Health Family Project
 - The Packer (34,702)
 - Produce Blue Book (23,504)
 - Progressive Grocer (60,540)
- Trade releases – Five press releases to trade publications that earned the following coverage:
 - April 2020 - *Watermelon Board Boosts Efforts to Increase Consumer Demand* Total Est. UVPM: 106,837
 - Produce Blue Book (24,110)
 - Fresh Plaza (5,393)
 - The Packer (30,968)
 - Perishable News (14,478)
 - Supermarket Perimeter (6,039)
 - The Produce News (4,683)
 - Southeast Produce Weekly (724)
 - The Shelby Report (20,442)
 - June 2020 – *Watermelon Board Pivots Nutrition Education Strategy to Digital Model* - Total Est. UVPM: 70,571+
 - Perishable News (14,478)
 - The Packer (30,968)
 - The Produce News (4,683)
 - VSCNews (UVPM unknown)
 - The Shelby Report (20,442)
 - July 2020 – *Watermelon Board Launches 2020 Recipe & Carving Challenge* - Total Est. UVPM: 130,210
 - The Packer (30,968)
 - FreshPlaza (73,787)

Communications

- Produce News (4,683)
- Perishable News (14,478)
- California Ag Network (UVPK unknown)
- Vegetables West (6,294)
- September 2020 - *Watermelon Master Classes for Media Educate, Inform and Inspire* - Total Est. UVPK: 104,833
 - Perishable News (15,214)
 - The Produce News (6,232)
 - The Shelby Report (25,943)
 - FreshPlaza (4,782)
 - The Packer (34,702)
 - AndNowUKnow (17,960)
- October 2020 - *Watermelon Board Fall/Winter Marketing Tactics* - Total Est. UVPK: 38,970
 - The Packer (13,027)
 - The Shelby Report (25,943)

Influencers and Experts

- Influencer Calibration and Audit – evaluated influencer marketing program, looking at partnerships over the past two years to evaluate not just reach and engagement but overall value and strategic alignment. Recommendations such as revisions to tracking and reporting procedures implemented. Also empowering partners with more watermelon messaging and education so that they can serve as advocates beyond their sponsored posts.
- Influencer Posts - 9 influencer partners specializing in diet & nutrition, parenting & lifestyle, fitness, food and family created over 20 new social media posts
 - Ana Quincoces
 - Anne Mauney, RD of the Fannetastic Food
 - Chrissy Carrol, RD of Snacking in Sneakers
 - Jennifer Fisher of The Fit Fork
 - Lori Taylor of The Produce Moms
 - Kim Rose, RD
 - Pam Smith, RD
 - Ross Chastain
 - Produce for Kids/Healthy Family Project

Retail Operations & International Marketing

Tradeshow and Conference Participation

Regional shows normally allow for quality “face time” time with retailers, wholesalers, dietitians, and other industry professionals in attendance. Most of the produce shows scheduled deferred to 2021 as a result of the pandemic:

- *Retail Shows as Exhibitors:*
 - Viva Fresh Expo (April) – **Deferred to 2021**
 - West Coast Produce Expo (May) – **Virtual**
 - New England Produce Show (Aug) – **Deferred to 2021**
 - New York Produce Show (Dec) – **Virtual**
 - Southeast Produce Council (Feb 2021) – **In person**
 - United Fresh 365 Live! – **Virtual**
 - *A Taste of Culinary Nutrition from Around the World* – Culinary Nutrition Collaborative event (Co-sponsored with Communications and Foodservice) – **Virtual**
- *Attending/Networking Opportunities:*
 - PMA Fresh Summit (Oct) – **Virtual**

Retail Advertising & Educational Pieces

- New retail kit available in physical and digital (on website) formats on the retailers’ section of watermelon.org.
- Ongoing collateral material development
 - Developed PLU labels, generic social media posts, translated two kits (Retail and How to Use the Whole Watermelon) to French Canadian
- Advertised and provided editorial content in various trade media to keep watermelon top of mind year-round and promote retail merchandising contest
- Ads and content included digital e-newsletters and banner ads

Retail Promotions & Marketing

- Shifted Retail Display Contest from only display submissions to a merchandising contest that could include displays but also encouraged mixed marketing tactics. Judging criteria included overall merchandising and creativity, use of print, online, in-store and social media, etc. Winners to be announced in Watermelon Update.
 - Retail display contest received approximately 220 entries from domestic and Canadian retailers as well as commissaries
 - Prizing format shifted to Grand prize, 2nd, 3rd, 4th places awarded and 4 honorable mentions
 - Incentives for the first 25 entries
 - Quote from Grand Prize Winner: “...We pride ourselves in being fresh, friendly and local and it was a tremendous amount of fun to get creative with fresh watermelon – a customer favorite! Our team not only put together an eye-catching watermelon display, but we included fun and educational information to accompany it both in store and online as well. We are thrilled to be recognized as first place winners - but perhaps the biggest prize of all was watching how this display put a smile on our customers’ faces as they entered our store.”
- Regional account managers (4 US, 1 Canada) fulfilled approximately 57 promotional agreements that included but were not limited to:
 - Recipe videos and other digital promotions posted on various social media platforms
 - Retail Dietitian promotional programs
 - Elevated exposure in circular ads
 - Support during retailers’ critical promotional periods
 - Joint partnerships with other brands and commodities
 - Internal retailer contests
 - Merchandising materials and educational support, per individual retailer request

Retail Operations & International Marketing

- Supported approximately 26 domestic watermelon queen promotions including video production, digital and social media programs
- Launched two Ibotta Shopping App campaigns
 - July 2020 results – Over the course of 3 days, the offers had:
 - Over 4 million total brand impressions
 - Almost all of those impressions were new redeemers
 - 30,305 offers redeemed, 28,326 redemptions were new redeemers
 - The watermelon offer was also featured on KraftHeinz's Athenos brand campaign
 - Watermelons --> Athenos Splash Page funnel
 - 137,289 Watermelons customers were served Athenos splash page
 - 12,304 added Athenos offer from the splash page
 - 1,844 customers redeemed Athenos from that splash page unlock Athenos
 - Watermelons Splash Page funnel
 - 187,089 Athenos customers were served Watermelons splash page
 - 26,177 added the Watermelons offer from the splash page
 - 3,977 customers redeemed Watermelons offer from that splash page unlock
 - March 2021 results – completed over 3 weeks from March 4 to March 21 resulted in approximately 55,000 redemptions, equating to actual product sold nationally that was incentivized by the offers
 - The offer was also split between new redeemers and past redeemers.
 - Of the 55,000 redemptions, most were new redeemers.
 - The offer resulted in a reach of over 21 million impressions
- Fexy Media Recipe Round-Up campaign
 - NWPB received high visibility throughout the two-month campaign duration totaling:
 - 2.26MM impressions, 61.8K page views across branded content (editorial and custom), 73K email newsletter opens, 145.7K social media impressions

International Marketing

Market Access Program funding was facilitated directly through Foreign Agricultural Service and totaled \$202,051

- Canadian PR efforts developed digital-focused program, considering COVID-19 related restrictions and opportunities, as more consumers spent time online. Program targeted primary Canadian shoppers in Ontario, BC, Alberta and Quebec. Also collaborated with FAS Canada office on appropriate Prenez goût aux États digital program opportunities targeting the French-Canadian audience.
 - **Ambassador Program:** 4 influencers created customized content highlighting NWPB key messages and shared with their online communities
 - **Social Media Program:** Argyle created various content pieces under 3 distinct themes, which were promoted to relevant Canadian audiences through a paid media strategy
 - **Online Media Partnerships:** Working in collaboration with influential news sites, Argyle co-created an editorial-style advertorial piece and watermelon recipe hub. Content was featured on media partners' sites and shared via social channels to increase reach and engagement. Highlights and Results:
 - Continued to build rapport for the NWPB with Canadian influencers through both our ambassador program and online media partnerships
 - The program achieved over 10.7 million social media impressions, exceeding 2019 results (9.3 million) by 15% and 2020 goals (3.5 million) by 205%
- In Japan, US watermelon promotions ran in eight foodservice establishments in Kanagawa, Miyazaki and Osaka prefectures for the month of August
 - Restaurants offered menu items that ranged from cocktails to gelato
 - Results:
 - Combined, the promotion resulted in over 2.6 million yen (approximately \$25,000 USD) in sales

Foodservice

Foodservice Committee

The Foodservice Committee is responsible for developing and implementing an effective foodservice marketing campaign. Built on a foundation of research, this includes outreach to culinary, marketing, purchasing and nutrition decision-makers with foodservice organizations through foodservice media, industry events, promotions, menu ideation sessions, culinary schools and organizations with the ultimate goal of getting more watermelon on foodservice menus.

Foodservice Program Wins 2020 Produce Business Marketing Excellence Award

Watermelon: Plant-Forward Menu Solution program's goal was to position watermelon in new applications on menus in response to the plant forward macrotrend. The results included educating and inspiring distributors and operators about watermelon's versatility, a regional chain highlighting roasted watermelon in an LTO and great foodservice media coverage highlighting the LTO.

Foodservice Media

Public Relations/Content Creation

- Distribute press releases, conduct follow-up and targeted pitching related to publications' editorial calendars.
 - Although editorial calendars shifted in 2020 the NWPB continued to see watermelon covered in foodservice media. As menu innovation continues these educational messages and inspiring watermelon usages help to grow watermelon on menus.
 - Foodservice Director's Recipe Report which goes to more than 100,000 recipients, was focused on seasonal flavors - one spun towards health featuring Watermelon Boba Tea and the other on Bowls with the Thai Watermelon Rind Noodle Salad. Both of these recipes come from our ongoing work with the Culinary Institute of America (CIA).
 - Gold Medal Classroom, through the Center for the Advancement of Foodservice Educators, is a publication for culinary educators. In this feature about thinking like a butcher when it comes to produce, messaging included basic cutting steps for watermelon, different shapes watermelon can be cut into, but ultimately how to use the whole product. This newsletter goes to more than 2,000.
 - Trade media outreach highlighted foodservice promotions and received good pick-up.
- International Foodservice Editorial Council (IFEC) (members are editors from foodservice publications across the U.S.)
 - The NWPB sponsored the IFEC's Spring Board Meeting. Half of the board (6) are editors from various foodservice publications. The sponsorship included collateral material distribution. One of the editors even made one of the cocktail recipes for the virtual board meeting!
 - The Board attended and sponsored IFEC's Annual Conference that took place virtually in October 2020. The Board speaks directly to chefs through these influential publications.
 - The conference included an industry panel where the Board sponsored Chef Jason Knoll from Another Broken Egg. Chef Jason spoke to current industry opportunities and trends and highlighted watermelon in his remarks.
 - The Board had 13, 15-minute meetings with editors to pitch story ideas for 2021.
 - Finally, Megan McKenna, senior director of marketing and foodservice, serves on the IFEC Board to better stay connected with editors throughout the year.
- Invest in a photo shoot to shoot 3-5 menu items to use with media and use in future collateral and PR outreach as well as post on the website.
 - NWPB now has a cohesive set of type (whole fruit, wedge and slice) and format photos to use in marketing, communications and digital efforts moving forward:
 - Seedless (previously shot)
 - Seeded
 - Mini (previously shot)
 - Yellow

Foodservice

- Fresh cut
- Juice
- Puree
- Partnered shoot took place in September:
 - Watermelon Bruschetta
 - ad Moon Rising (cocktail)

Media Partnerships - Culinary Institute of America (CIA) Digital Media Partnership

- Recipe creation with images and videos
 - The Board shot new recipe videos with Chef Mai Pham of Star Ginger Asian Grill and Noodle Bar.
 - Icy Spicy Thai Watermelon Mojitos
 - Watermelon Ice Pop
 - Watermelon Sushi with Fried Shallots, Red Perilla and Thai Spices
 - Shrimp and Watermelon Poke Bowl
 - Shaking Beef with Wilted Watercress and Watermelon
- Content Distribution (CIA website, channels) and Marketing (e-blast, social) (numbers include event webcast results)
 - 88,642 total video views on all platforms
 - 10,861 ciaprochef.org/watermelon site sessions
 - 96 newsletter placements reaching 1.8 million subscribers
- Worlds of Flavor Webcast Sponsorship: November 10-13
 - Watermelon videos were played 13 times
 - 18,100 live webcast views
 - 1 eblast with logo sent to approximately 800 attendees
 - Logo recognition on conference webcast webpage
- Global Plant-Forward Culinary Summit Webcast Sponsorship: March 30-April 1
 - Watermelon videos were played 9 times
 - 13,575 live webcast views
 - 2 ebasts with logo sent to approximately 1,000 attendees each
 - Logo recognition on conference webcast webpage
- NWPB pitches these recipes to foodservice media and often they are picked up due to the CIA's notoriety.

Advertising

- Partnership with Healthy School Recipes (HSR) to reach K-12 Foodservice:
 - Sponsored HSR July e-newsletter that went to 657 emails including the watermelon culinary skills guide
 - Open rate was similar to the industry average at 34%, but click rate was about double the average peer performance at 12%.
 - The newsletter really brought the culinary skills guide to people's attention, boosting downloads significantly. This guide is the second most-downloaded skills guide on the website
 - Featured on HSR Facebook (reached 878, 47 reactions), Twitter (reached 442, 26 reactions) and Instagram (reached 378, 10 reactions)
- Increased paid media (print and digital) to get educational and inspirational messages in front of foodservice decision-makers traditionally reached at events.
 - In addition to recipe inspiration, messaging included year-round, menu research, and savory and beverage menu item operator endorsements.
 - The investment reached foodservice professionals nearly a million times and provided great leads.

Foodservice

Foodservice Industry Events

Registered Dietitian Outreach

- Co-sponsored the opening happy hour with communications and marketing, Culinary Nutrition Collaborative virtual event in February, A Taste of Culinary Nutrition from Around the World
 - 120 dietitians attended an online lecture and culinary demonstration (Thai Watermelon Salad and Watermelon Turmeric Smoothie) that spotlighted watermelon year-round usage
 - In addition to attendees, website, email and social promotion increased the reach
 - The event itself was *Best Practices for Culturally Sensitive Recipe Development* presented by Breana Killeen PHP, RD, of *EatingWell* Magazine and educated on culturally appropriate recipe creation

Distributor Outreach

- Sponsored PMA Foodservice Delivered
 - PMA Foodservice shifted to a virtual format the end of July, 2020.
 - More than 3,000 guests attended the free event. One in four registrants came from a buyer company.
 - The NWPB was a part of the Fresh Ideas in Produce Solutions Sampling. Solutions Sampling was visited more than 2,600 times.
 - Hosted a Chef's Table Breakout, *For the Love of Watermelon*, the NWPB highlighted watermelon's versatility and availability for menus, linking source regions to menu items using watermelon.

Operator Outreach

- Sponsored The Flavor Experience
 - The Flavor Experience shifted to a virtual format in December, 2020.
 - More than 400 attendees made it comparable to in-person event.
 - Watermelon was included in insightful presentations multiple times.
 - Watermelon Board page featured year-round information, menu ideation, the Supplier Database, and research.
 - 5-minute solutions-themed video highlighting watermelon as a solution on salad and beverage menus.
 - The Board also had a live demo presentation.
 - Demo featured recipes highlighting the flavors of source regions throughout the year: Grilled Watermelon Mexican Caesar Salad, Watermelon Aqua Fresca, Watermelon BBQ Ribs with Watermelon BBQ Sauce and Watermelon Rind Slaw and a Watermelon Blueberry Lemonade
 - Dishes highlight trends like global flavors, immunity and comfort
 - A live comment from a contact at Olive Garden said, "So many uses for the delicious watermelon."
 - Board had 5-minute "speed dates" with operators including Cooper's Hawk, The Cheesecake Factory and Buffalo Wild Wings, to name a few
- Marketing & Innovation Leadership Exchange (MILE) was rescheduled to September 2021 in Sun Valley, ID, but added networking calls that are taking place quarterly.
- The Board partnered with StarChef to execute a Curated Sampling Campaign (a recipe contest) to reach foodservice in place of an in-person event. The contest was broken into three categories; savory, pastry and bar.
 - To be accepted as a contestant, 252 operators answered a short survey about watermelon.
 - The audience included independent, multi-unit, hotel, education and catering companies and most were executive chefs, corporate chefs, pastry chefs and bartenders.
 - The survey found 99% of respondents said they would use watermelon on their menu while 48% said they use it on their menu year-round.
 - 38 finalists recipes received
 - The winners per category were:

Foodservice

- Savory
 - Drew Ward of Artisanal Brewing Ventures with Charred Watermelon Soup, Chile-Lime Shrimp, Pickled Watermelon Rind, Jalapeno Crema
- Pasty
 - Rochelle Cooper of Think Food Group with Rosewater Pavlova, Watermelon Rosé Sorbet, Sweet Cured Cucumber, Kiwi, Watermelon Chia, Lime, Mint
- Bar
 - Trudy Thomas of Gaylord Opryland with Smoke & Water: Ole Smoky Moonshine, Orange, Watermelon, Lemon, American Malt, Pink Sea Salt
- Winners were shared on StarChefs' digital and social channels, reaching more than 50,000 foodservice professionals.
- Recipes will be used in outreach moving forward including on the website, pitched to media and potentially served during events.
- United Fresh Virtual Booth and Marketing Meet-up Sponsorship taking place November 2020 (split with Marketing)
- Partnered with Chef's Roll to educate and inspire foodservice professionals with how to process watermelon and recipes highlighting the different formats.
 - Chef's Roll's own, Chef Mikel Anthony, demonstrated different procurement techniques:
 - Watermelon Cubed for Yield
 - Watermelon Wedge Cuts
 - Watermelon Puree & Juice
 - Watermelon Rind Cuts
 - Chef Kerrie Hills, Executive Chef of The Red Door Restaurant & Wine Bar and The Wellington Steak & Martini Lounge in California demonstrated:
 - Korean BBQ Watermelon Steak with Cucumber Salad (wedge)
 - Watermelon Lassi with Spiced Citrus Watermelon Jerky Garnish (juice)
 - Watermelon Rind Latkes (grated rind)
 - Chef Joshua McFadden, James Beard Award winning author of *Six Seasons: A New Way with Vegetables* rounded out the series with:
 - Watermelon Granita with Pickled Watermelon Rind (diced rind)
 - Grilled Watermelon Ceviche (cubes)
 - Watermelon Salsa Borracha with Grilled Skirt Steak (puree)
- All of the content was marketed via chefsroll.com, and Chef's Roll social channels (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, TikTok, and YouTube) providing direct access to over 1MM+ hospitality and foodservice professionals.
- The Board can also use the material on the website, with media, in culinary schools, etc.

Foodservice Support & Promotions

- Engage chains who do not use watermelon or help those who do to expand watermelon menu items through education and ideation sessions on and off-site
 - There was a need to address the operational shift of increased takeaway and delivery so *Delivering Happiness with Watermelon* was created using research, handling information and recipe inspiration to reach foodservice
 - This new tool was used in direct outreach to chains and was highlighted in outreach focused on regional and national chains
- Board supports foodservice operators with menu ideation – 2 completed in 2020/2021
 - Even when stretched thin, operators recognize the importance of new and exciting menu items and watermelon's consumer appeal.

Foodservice

- Reviewed menu and pantry lists to develop concepts that fit the brand without adding many new SKUs.
- For chains with small culinary teams, the Board helped narrow down the concepts and demonstrate the selections in one of their restaurants or test kitchen to help them understand how to execute the recipes successfully.
- This is not limited to food menus but also includes beverage ideation.
- Promotions support Limited Time Opportunities (LTO) with funds to move more of the menu item and get watermelon messages in front of consumers
- Promotions were present in 700 restaurants across 35 states.
- The Board worked with the following foodservice operators:
 - Another Broken Egg – Chain wide usage in 74 outlets included a fruit side and Watermelon Cucumber Cooler. The promotion started earlier in the year (March 17) and, for the first time, the chain tested a savory application, Tacos Verano with Watermelon Salsa.
 - First Watch - Running June 1 through the end of August in 380 locations, the Watermelon Wake Up juice scored an 86/100 on Datassentials SCORES report, a monthly report that tracks and ranks new menu items. Promotions included in-store chalkboards, e-blast, blog post and social.
 - Nektar - Expanded social media promotional elements including Instagram Live and Stories with Nektar founder Alexis Schulze and Board beverage consultant Tony Pereyra, amplified on Board channels. Offerings in 165 units included a smoothie and juice, running from June 15 until Labor Day weekend.
 - Robeks – Custom graphics on Instagram and Facebook promoting the Wailea Watermelon Smoothie, a customer favorite, in 84 locations.
- Sponsored Spring FoodOvation to reach Commercial Foodservice operators in March 2021
 - 80 foodservice professionals in attendance
 - Pitched 15 operators representing more than 5,000 restaurants in the US
 - During 45-min. meetings, operators were walked through flavor pairings, 4 recipes and 2 beverage samples
 - Examples of operators include Walk On's Sports Bistreaux, Tropical Smoothie and Fat Brands
 - This event led to menu ideations and promotions in 2021

Foodservice Ongoing Opportunities

- New yield tool, Working with Watermelon, built from yield study allowing operators to switch between watermelon sizes with ease
 - Operator research told us watermelon is viewed as easy to prep, there was an information gap on how to plan for different size watermelon throughout the year
 - The Board worked with a home economist to understand the yield from key watermelon sizes in cubes, wedges, juice, etc. as well as yield information on the rind.
 - This new resource will live on the website and be used with culinary schools, operators at on-site presentations and shared with the foodservice media.

Culinary Education

- Continue to promote the American Culinary Federation (ACF) accredited, Watermelon Culinary Curriculum
 - Less than 4 years since launch the Watermelon Culinary Curriculum has been submitted for ACF credit by current chefs more than 800 times, nearly 240 times in this FY.
 - These numbers do not account for the numerous times the curriculum has been used by culinary educators in their classrooms across the country.
 - 99% said the curriculum met or exceeded their expectations.
 - This tool was even more valuable since many schools moved to virtual learning.
 - Digital ads executed with ACF August, October, November, and December
- Sponsor Center for the Advancement of Foodservice Educators (CAFÉ) Annual Conference
 - CAFÉ conference postponed until June 2021 but smaller digital partnership to promote the curriculum via their e-blasts, social, etc.

Research

The National Watermelon Promotion Board's mission is to increase consumer demand for watermelon through promotion, research and education programs. The Research Committee is responsible for developing and implementing research to help the promotion and education programs, health and nutrition research, and other topics supporting the promotion of watermelon.

Consumer Research – Aimpoint Research

Each year the NWPB measures consumers' attitudes and usage of watermelon and compares it to year-over-year results. The research delves into topics such as:

- Purchase behavior
- Food safety
- Quality
- Health and nutrition

Consumer research helps to focus consumer outreach and findings are used to educate retail and foodservice contacts to understand consumers' attitudes toward watermelon.

Summer Key Findings

This survey took place in August 2020.

- Taste and watermelon's refreshing quality are the main reasons watermelon is purchased.
 - Watermelon is on par with other non-melon fruits in terms of taste and freshness while outperforming other melons (cantaloupes and honeydews).
- Bananas, oranges, apples, and blueberries are viewed as better values and healthier than watermelon.
 - Lower value ratings may be driven by the perceived waste with watermelon. Perhaps providing more advice on cutting to maximize usage will reduce perceived waste.
 - Being good for hydration is the key health benefit of watermelon. There is an opportunity to expand knowledge of other health benefits. In fact, consumers would like to see health benefits displayed at the point of sale.
- Key barriers of watermelon purchase include being too big/inconvenient and messy.
 - Fresh cut watermelon is one potential way to overcome these barriers. However, consumers also perceive fresh cut as costing more, not tasting as good, not being safe, and not being truly fresh.
- Although many claim they know how to pick a watermelon, other data suggests a need and desire for assistance.
 - A third have experienced a quality issue and just over half want information on picking at the point of sale.
 - There may also be an opportunity to provide guidance to pick-up and delivery shoppers on how to pick a good watermelon.
- COVID-19 is likely impacting a few measures versus Summer 2019.
 - More washing of watermelon before consumption.
 - More pick-up/delivery grocery shopping.
 - Differences in how one might consider consuming watermelon in restaurants.

Winter Key Findings

This survey took place in March 2021.

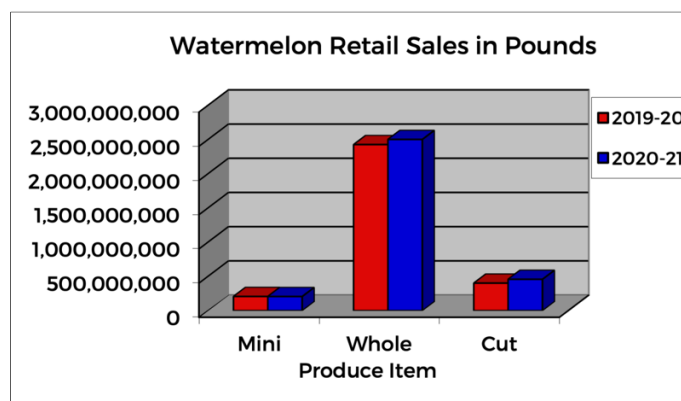
- Taste and watermelon's refreshing quality continue to be the main reasons watermelon is purchased.
 - Watermelon is on par with other non-melon fruits in terms of taste and freshness while outperforming other melons (cantaloupe and honeydew).

Research

- Bananas, oranges, apples, and blueberries are viewed as better values and healthier than watermelon.
 - Lower value ratings may be driven by the perceived waste with watermelon.
 - Being good for hydration is the key health benefit of watermelon. Consumers would like to see health benefits displayed at point of sale.
- Key barriers of watermelon purchase include being too big/inconvenient and messy.
 - Fresh cut watermelon is one potential way to overcome these barriers.
 - However, consumers also perceive fresh cut as costing more, not tasting as good, not being safe, and not being truly fresh.
- Although many claim they know how to pick a watermelon, other data suggests a need and desire for assistance.
 - A third have experienced a quality issue and just over half want information on picking at point of sale.
- There is an opportunity to provide guidance to pick-up and delivery shoppers on how to pick a good watermelon.
- COVID-19 is likely impacting a few measures versus previous studies that may lead to trends in the future.
 - More washing of watermelon before consumption especially among younger generations.
 - Decrease in percent of people who like the taste of certain fruits.
 - Decrease in purchases at farmers markets.
 - More pick-up/delivery grocery shopping especially among younger generations.
 - Differences in how one might consider consuming watermelon in restaurants.

Retail Scan Data – IRI, Inc.

NWPB contracts with a vendor to provide web-based access to watermelon retail sales and volume information on an ongoing basis. The information is collected at the retail check out (scanners) from stores representing approximately 80% of the traditional retail grocery sales in the United States. The Board publishes scan data reports compiled by a third-party vendor when the data is updated, every 4-6 weeks. There is an historical base that highlights trends in the retail grocery environment by region, types and formats. Below data is for year ending April 19, 2021 versus previous year.



Research

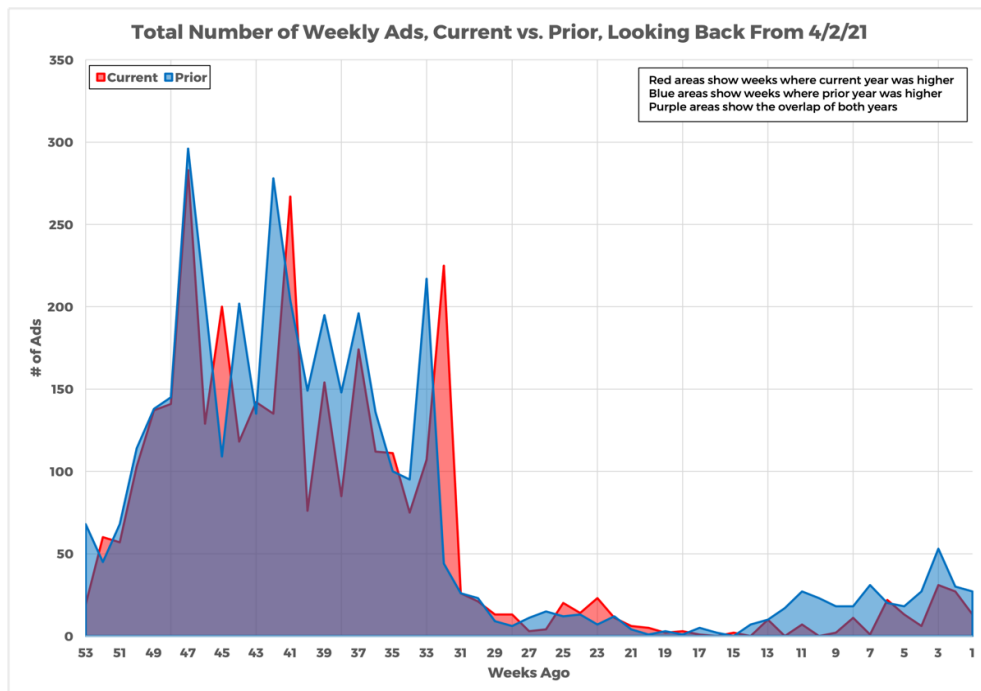
Retail Sales in Pounds				
	2019-20	2020-21	% Change	Sales Share
Mini	207,160,322	206,108,429	-0.5%	6.5%
Whole	2,427,527,912	2,502,664,393	3.1%	79.0%
Cut	401,985,360	458,300,290	14.0%	14.5%
Total	3,036,673,594	3,167,073,112	4.3%	100.0%

Retail Sales in USD				
	2019-20	2020-21	% Change	Sales Share
Mini	\$ 139,330,310	\$ 148,820,548	6.8%	7.5%
Whole	\$ 800,163,648	\$ 872,052,437	9.0%	43.7%
Cut	\$ 819,105,125	\$ 974,442,688	19.0%	48.8%
Total	\$ 1,758,599,083	\$ 1,995,315,673	13.5%	100.0%

Retail Ad Tracking – Numerator Promotions Intel

The ongoing work with Numerator Promotions Intel allows NWPB to have insights into promotional volume and pricing levels at retail. The database provides data, such as, store, market, price, product description and more over various time periods. Each week, NWPB updates the Retail Ad Tracking Report that utilizes this data to compare ad activity over the past 52 weeks to the year prior calculating price per each and pound for mini and whole watermelon. Ad volume for both periods, as well as price per each is calculated for all markets covered using an easy-to-grasp map. Further analysis changes the timeframe to the past four weeks in order to gauge how more recent periods compare.

Below data is from year ending April 2, 2021, versus previous year.



Research

Number of Ads & Dollar per Each for Current & Prior 52 Week Periods				
	Mini		Whole	
Term	Number of Ads	\$ per Each	Number of Ads	\$ per Each
Current	759	\$3.03	2,167	\$ 4.14
Prior	1,128	\$2.96	2,275	\$4.08
Number of Ads & Dollar per Pound for Current & Prior 52 Week Periods				
	Mini		Whole	
Term	Number of Ads	\$ per Pound	Number of Ads	\$ per Pound
Current	5	\$0.95	289	\$0.44
Prior	12	\$ 1.11	347	\$0.43

Budget Friendly Produce Study – IRI, Inc.

The NWPB funded a study through IRI to assess the cost of recommended daily servings of fresh produce. IRI completed an analysis to determine the lowest retail price for a consumer to purchase nine servings of fresh fruit and vegetables per day while having variety in his/her diet. Watermelon was the frontrunner for fruit throughout the study.

The research focused on these key questions:

- What is the lowest average retail price for a consumer to purchase nine servings of fresh fruits and vegetables per day while having variety in his/her diet
- What is the lowest average retail price for nine servings by season?
- What is the lowest average retail price for nine servings by region?

Parameters included:

- Spring/Summer is an aggregate of Q2 and Q3 2020
- Fall/Winter is an aggregate of Q4 2019 and Q1 2020
- 9 servings of Fruits and Vegetables include 4 servings of Fruit and 5 servings of Vegetables
- Serving size is defined as a ½ cup of the edible portion of a product

Total U.S. data showed that \$6.96 was the average retail price per servings of fruit and vegetables. More than 20 varieties of fruit were priced lower than the average \$.76 price per serving. Similarly, 18 varieties of vegetables were priced lower than the average \$0.79 per serving. Whole watermelon had the lowest cost per serving of fruit and whole potatoes had the lowest cost per serving of vegetables over the course of 52 weeks. When examining each IRI defined region over the course of 52 weeks, whole watermelon had the lowest cost per fruit serving in each region, while in vegetables whole potatoes had the lowest cost per serving in each region.

Retail prices for 9 servings varied between seasons, ranging from \$6.32 in the Spring/Summer to \$7.80 in the Fall/Winter. Fruits ranged from \$0.69 to \$0.86 per serving. Watermelons and Bananas appeared in the top two least expensive fruits per serving in both seasons. Depending on region, other fruits mentioned included cantaloupe and pineapple. South Central showed the lowest average price for nine servings for the year, with \$6.35, while the North East was the highest with \$7.59.

Research

Operator Omnibus – Datassential

The NWPB conducted an operator omnibus survey in August 2020 with Datassentials to gauge operators' preferences regarding watermelon on menus. The method was an online survey of 410 operators representing all foodservice verticals. Of the 410 surveyed, 254 currently offer or used to offer fresh watermelon and 156 have never offered fresh watermelon. Objectives were to measure watermelon penetration on menus and assess usage and interest for various watermelon applications, gauge operator readiness to include watermelon items on takeout and delivery menus, understand what types of support would motivate operators to menu more watermelon items. This research will be used to drive key messages with operators.

Research Highlights

- Fresh watermelon works best in slices or as a salad ingredient.
 - Smoothies, salsas, and desserts are also promising watermelon applications.
 - Watermelon is a good fit at on-sites, while restaurants (especially chains and QSRs) are less willing to adopt it.
 - However, restaurants are likely to use watermelon in alcoholic beverages.
- Operators are open to including watermelon on their takeout menu.
 - Roughly half of those who serve watermelon are already doing so.
 - Though being takeout-friendly is not a top attribute associated with watermelon, many operators can see themselves offering watermelon items on both their dine-in and takeout menus. This is especially true for watermelon salads and condiments (sauces, salsas, glazes).
- Recipe ideas can help boost positive perceptions of watermelon.
 - Watermelon is already viewed as affordable, easy to prep, and readily available from distributors.
 - However, some operators believe it's too seasonal and would not fit the menu or sell well.
 - New recipes that showcase watermelon's versatility would motivate operators to purchase.
 - Operators would also appreciate more consistent availability, although watermelon generally performs well in this area already.

SCORES Concept Testing – Datassential

Every month SCORES concepts testing tracks and tests all new menu items and LTOs launched by national chains with consumers, providing robust benchmarks to gauge proprietary concept tests against. SCORES was utilized by operators we worked with on innovation but not to the full budgeted amount. The Board also invested in reports on Ghost Kitchens and Virtual Brands and Seasonal LTOs to better understand the opportunity for watermelon in these foodservice topics. Watermelon was featured as a popular item for summer LTOs. Finally, the Board invested in a top-level MenuTrend analysis to have the most recent numbers pre-COVID, to compared to post-COVID numbers. Some highlights include:

- Watermelon is featured on 13.5% of menus, having grown 31% since 2017.
- Watermelon skews towards full-service restaurants, especially casual dining. Of casual dining operators, over 18% offer watermelon on the menu.
- Watermelon has grown across all segments, dayparts, regions of the US and restaurant types.

Nutrition Research – Various Organizations

Oregon State University

OSU will require an extension into winter 2022 to complete this project but it will stay within the originally budgeted amount.

Research

- **Food formulation studies with watermelon fruit, rind, and skin powders**
 - OSU put together a number of food prototypes using the watermelon rind/fiber product and are moving on to favorability evaluations with volunteers.
 - Foods developed in the spring and summer of 2021 included, simple additions into yogurt-based smoothies, baked muffins, pancakes, and bread (in the form of small rolls). These were generally found quite palatable.
 - Completed a larger dehydration/powdering run in May and June of 2021 to dry ten, 5-gallon buckets of watermelon rind/skin. Currently recruiting student volunteers to produce more product and want to recruit larger numbers of test subjects to provide a larger, more statistically significant group.
 - Should be completed by September 2021 but need an additional six months to complete this project. The manuscript should be submitted by then.
- **Gene expression analysis of mouse groups fed watermelon flesh, rind, skin, and supplemented groups fed arginine, citrulline, lycopene, and S-methyl methionine**
 - Successfully completed the animal study and then performed gene expression analysis in the fall and winter of 2020/2021, for the groups of mice fed the two control diets, the three watermelon products, and four watermelon-based ingredients (compounds): arginine, citrulline, lycopene, and S-methylmethionine.
 - The gene expression analysis seems to be showing us that feeding supplemental Arg or Cit to mice resembles the benefits of watermelon, whereas Lyc and S-MM does not.
 - The genome/statistical analysis should be completed in September/October 2021, and a paper submitted in January 2022.

Watermelon Nutrition Literature Review – Illinois Institute of Technology

The project has two main components:

- Research database organized for quick retrieval of current research
- Manuscript Review for peer-review publication

The primary areas of research will include diabetes, obesity, satiety, and cardiovascular disease. Secondary areas will be explored including gastrointestinal health/microbiome, cognitive health, skin and others as research is available. Once published (the paper had been accepted pending minor changes as of July 26, 2021), the content can be used in various programs, pending USDA approval. The project will help update the Nutrition Research RFP.

Newsmaker Survey - Wild Hive

The Board plans targeted media relations to promote the results of nutrition research studies, but due to the unknowns around studies and published work in 2020, the Board executed a Newsmaker Survey in December polling parents with the story angle on all the unexpected and silly ways kids make a mess. This story is relatable and engaging for parents, especially with kids spending more time at home than ever. How many parents are struggling to ensure their child is getting the proper nutrients in quarantine and not starting a dinner table fight with their siblings? Putting a spin on a purchase barrier, watermelon can be seen as a messy food, however, it is a fun food that children actually want to eat. The survey and subsequent release lead to 80 pieces of coverage with 5.4 billion in online readership.

Watermelon Market Report

Although not a budget item, the Board offers customized market analysis opportunities to help the industry with their business. These analytical tools for the watermelon industry use AMS Market News data to track FOB, movement, and more. New in 2020, the Watermelon Market Report provides an overview of the market each week. The straightforward report gives a high-level look at movement, source regions, and seedless FOB prices.

Industry

Watermelon Research & Promotion Plan Realignment Approved - Published in the Federal Register on September 14, 2020, the rule realigns the representation on the National Watermelon Promotion Board (Board) under the Agricultural Marketing Service's (AMS) regulations regarding a national research and promotion program for watermelons. This rule reduces the number of production districts and the number of importers on the Board, accordingly. This rule also makes administrative changes to other provisions of the Watermelon Research and Promotion Plan (Plan) and will go into effect on October 14, 2020.

