



Watermelon Update

NATIONAL WATERMELON PROMOTION BOARD

Third Generation Watermelon Industry Worker and Importer Christian Murillo Elected to Lead Board



NWPB held its biannual board meeting in Nashville, TN on Wednesday, February 23 during which board member Christian Murillo was elected President by his peers. Prior to this nomination, Murillo (District 6, Nogales, AZ) served as Vice President, Foodservice Committee Chair, and has been a member of the Board since 2018.

“As President, I plan to spread my knowledge of all the great things about watermelon in order to impact those around me,” said Christian Murillo, NWPB Board President. “Watermelon is hands down the best fruit, and it's available all year long thanks to domestic producers, handlers and importers that make it all happen.”

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Murillo Elected Continued

In addition to his work with the NWPB, Murillo also currently serves as Executive Member of the National Watermelon Association, the Vice President for the Western Watermelon Association, and a board member for the Fresh Produce Association of the Americas. Murillo is a third-generation watermelon industry worker and is Vice President of Sales and Operations for his family-owned business, Cactus Melon Distributors in Nogales, AZ.

“Christian is a true champion for the watermelon industry,” said Mark Arney, Executive Director, NWPB. “He embodies what it means to be leader and his passion for educating people about the benefits of watermelon is apparent in everything he does – we’re thrilled to have him serve as President.”



Southeast Produce Council’s Southern Exposure

NWPB once again participated in the Southeast Produce Council’s annual “Southern Exposure” expo March 4th and 5th in Lake Buena Vista, FL. This year, along with retail and foodservice workshops, NWPB’s Mark Arney (pictured, left middle), Juliemar Rosado (far right), Megan McKenna (far left) and Retail Account Manager Sheila Carden (right middle) provided retail and foodservice attendees with information on how to keep watermelon top of mind on menus and in grocery stores. As an exhibitor, the NWPB also interacted with many retailers on use of the whole watermelon opportunities. The show provided the perfect setting in which to engage with retailers, media, and the foodservice industry about materials and information NWPB has available for them in retail and foodservice promotion and education. Every year, the expo sets records for overall attendance as well as for participation by the retail and foodservice sectors of the fresh produce industry.



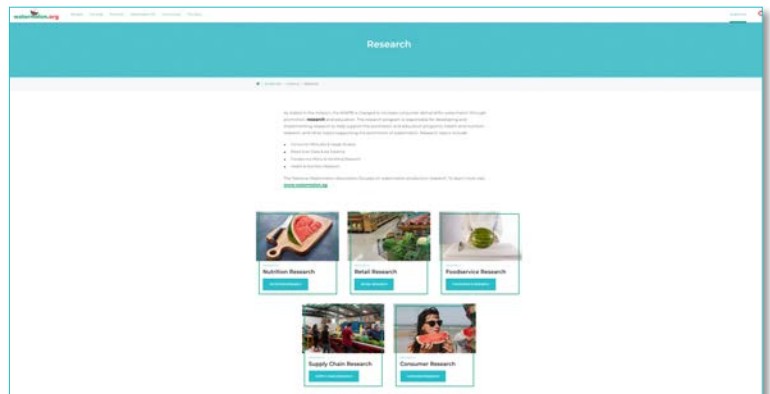
2022-2023 Department Overviews

Following committee calls in January and February, the Board approved the 2022/2023 budget at the Board Meeting in February in Nashville, TN. Here is an overview of each program for the fiscal year beginning April 1st.

Research Program

The Research Committee is responsible for developing and implementing research to help the promotion and education programs, health and nutrition research, and other topics to support the mission of increasing demand for watermelon. The Research Program creates the foundation for all of the other programs. The National Watermelon Association is charged with production research so as not to duplicate efforts, the Board does not invest in production research. Guided by strategic input from the Board, the research program includes:

- **Supply Chain Research:** Analytical tools use AMS Market News data to track FOB, movement, origin and more
- **Consumer Research:** Summer survey to measure attitudes and awareness of watermelon benchmarking against prior years
- **Retail Research:** IRI Scan Data and Numerator Retail Advertising Tracking
- **Foodservice Research:** Consumer and Operator Watermelon at Foodservice surveys
- **Econometric Evaluation:** USDA mandated research to take place every 5 years with the goal to better understand the effect the Board has had on the marketplace



To learn more about each program and the resources available, please visit the links above.

Nutrition Research rounds out the program. In 2021, the request for proposals was revamped and the areas of interest were updated to be more relevant to current trends and follow recent watermelon nutrition research results. The budget ceiling for human nutrition research projects was also raised to make the investments more worthwhile. Two nutrition research projects were funded:

- Dose Response Effect of Watermelon Consumption on Ambulatory Blood Pressure in Adults with Pre-hypertension: A Randomized Controlled Pilot Trail, Illinois Institute of Technology: The primary goal of the proposed project is to evaluate the dose-response effects of watermelon flesh in regulating blood pressure in individuals with pre-hypertension.
- Evaluating the association of watermelon consumption with nutrient intake, diet quality, and physiological parameters in children and adults, Nutrition Impact LLC: The objective of this study

is to determine intake of watermelon and assess association with diet quality, energy and nutrient intake, and physiological parameters in children and adults.

Lastly, budget has been allocated to leverage the results of published research studies through targeted media relations to promote the results of the studies. For any questions on the Research Program, please reach out to Mark Arney at marney@watermelon.org.

Retail & International Marketing Program

The Marketing Committee is responsible for developing and implementing an effective retail and international marketing campaign. This includes retail, trade and consumer promotions.

The purpose of this plan is to energize domestic and international retail markets to create continued, year-round awareness. Getting watermelon into the hands of consumers of all ages, including millennial and Gen-Z shoppers, requires NWPB to build and maintain relationships with retailers domestically as well as in international markets.

NWPB continues prospecting additional digital avenues to the program to reach the consumer within their path to purchase. New this year, NWPB plans to work with mobile media company Genesis to provide “App>Less” immersive storytelling and guaranteed engagement. These opportunities not only align with the strategic plan recommendations, it also tracks with current and future shopper habits that continue shifting heading into 2022 and 2023.

Additionally, NWPB has begun implementing commerce-enable recipes. As the number of consumers buying groceries online continues to rise, engaging with those shoppers and making it simple to add watermelon to their online carts is critical. By implementing shoppable recipe tech (Chicory) on Watermelon.org, NWPB will open up all recipes and ingredients to be shopped directly on the website - connecting consumers to retailers with just a few clicks.

NWPB plans to have a presence at conferences, events and regional produce shows. Regional shows allow for quality “face time” time with retailers, wholesalers, dieticians, and other industry professionals in attendance. At this time, all shows are presumed to be in-person events.

- Retail Shows as Exhibitors:
 - Viva Fresh Expo (Apr)
 - West Coast Produce Expo (June)
 - New England Produce Show (Aug)
 - New York Produce Show (Dec)
 - Southern Exposure (Southeast Produce Council) (Mar 2023)





The ever-changing promotional opportunities at retail are now more robust and include in-store, digital, and social media marketing components, providing customer reach for product and nutrition education beyond the brick and mortar element. NWPB will continue supporting retailers by contracting with merchandising representatives that manage various retail accounts across the US and Canada. Throughout the year, this team aims to keep watermelon top of mind year-round while establishing new connections. They are also a direct line to retailers’ needs as it pertains to watermelon promotion and education throughout the year.

2021’s retail merchandising contest – the 13th iteration since its’ inception – encourages retailers to incorporate social and digital media and marketing efforts in addition to in-store displays. The contest started in July to honor National Watermelon Month and ran throughout the month of August to encourage and identify retailers who are showcasing watermelon’s benefits including health, value and versatility. For its 14th year, NWPB plans to continue this format.

Finally, NWPB will continue its promotional efforts in its current international markets of Japan and Canada as well as explore additional export market opportunities available. Programs implemented include but are not limited to retail and foodservice activations as well as consumer, digital and social media communications.

If you have any questions on the Retail and International Marketing Program, please reach out to Juliemar Rosado at jrosado@watermelon.org.


Foodservice Program

The Foodservice Committee is responsible for developing and implementing an effective foodservice campaign. The campaign’s goal is placing more watermelon on menus, year-round, to move more watermelon through the supply chain but to also help keep watermelon top-of-mind with consumers. The Board reaches this goal through pitching media, sponsoring events, including those reaching culinary students, and supporting operators. The program is built from strategic direction from the Board, research findings, both internal and external, and industry trends.


Foodservice Media is what the industry reads to be inspired by their peers. The Board looks for operator success stories



with watermelon, pitches it to the media and uses it to inspire other operators to menu more watermelon. Additionally, the media program creates valuable content for use across the foodservice program.

- International Foodservice Editorial Council (IFEC): The organization to reach foodservice media with watermelon education and inspiration. Annual membership provides opportunity year-round but attendance and sponsorship at the annual Bubble Party (attached to the Restaurant Show in May) and the conference (in October or November) create in-person relationship building touch-points.
- [Culinary Institute of American \(CIA\) Watermelon ProChef Series](#) : Content created by the CIA and shared on their social channels and digital platforms provides inspiring watermelon recipes from this premier culinary institution. All of the content is available for Board use.
- [Year-Round Watermelon Story](#): To continue to tell the story of where watermelon comes from and connect it to cuisines, the Board will add another growing area to this content. The project will include images, video and dialog.
- Paid Media: In addition to earned media through IFEC, the Board invests in paid media to keep watermelon in foodservice publications year-round.
- Digital Outreach: [Watermelon.org/foodservice](#) is an amazing resource for foodservice, as well as any industry member who sell to foodservice.


The Board sponsors foodservice events to reach different audiences and fill the pipeline with operator leads. Noncommercial operators are reached through:

- National Association of College & University Food Services: Reaching the next generation of consumers through this organization.
- School Nutrition Association and [Healthy School Recipes](#) : Also reaching future consumers through K-12 Foodservice.

Predominantly commercial operators (national and regional quick service, casual and higher-end chains) are reached through:

- Flavor Experience: Flavor is one of the most exciting, trend-forward events for marketing and culinary decision makers. The 2021 operator survey revealed 95% of attendees were likely to procure new items based on Flavor sponsor offering!
- Beverage Menu Outreach – Opportunities are still being vetted but research and trends show this is an important audience for watermelon usage.

The Board's one distributor-facing event that is evolving into more of an operator event is the International Fresh Produce Association (formerly PMA) Foodservice Show. The Foodservice Show is the largest fresh produce foodservice show in North America.

Lastly, this year the Board will invest in [FoodOvation Exchanges](#) , one to reach noncommercial operators and another to reach commercial operators. In addition to networking opportunities, FoodOvation is built around 12, 45-minute, 1-on-1 ideation sessions with operators (ranked by preference ahead of the conference). This event takes the relationships established at Flavor Experience to the next level.

Chain Support & Promotions is just that. The Board supports chains through ideation sessions, going to their kitchens and showcasing how to handle and use watermelon on their menus. Promotions support those menu items and keep watermelon messages in front of consumers. A partnership for a StarChef Watermelon Discovery Week will place watermelon on restaurant menus in eight markets across the county. Recipes, photography and chef profiles will be available for the Board to use with media and at events. The in-restaurant promotion will be supported with menu messages and a social media contest.

Lastly, the Board reaches up and coming chefs with the Culinary Education program. The Board hosts Watermelon Culinary Curriculum for use in the classroom but it is also accredited with 5 continuing education hours through the American Culinary Federation (ACF). The Board will work with ACF to help promote this resource. Back after a two year hiatus, the Center for the Advancement of Foodservice Educators will host their annual conference in June. The Board will sponsor a lunch panel on the future of food.

If you have any questions on the Foodservice Program, please reach out to Megan McKenna at mmckenna@watermelon.org.

Communications Program

The **Communications Committee** is responsible for communicating the Board's message to **educate, influence and advertise** watermelon's **health, value, convenience and versatility** message to consumers in order to encourage demand. Communications targets consumer education through traditional & digital media, events and partnerships.

It's clear that there is still a major opportunity to educate consumers on the value of watermelon to drive consumption and purchases. With a primary **focus on value and versatility**, supported by **health messaging**, efforts in 2022 will be to educate audiences about the value benefits of watermelon by **using the whole watermelon**.

The *Use the Whole Watermelon* story will be updated with fresh branding and a new campaign landing page where consumers can virtually break down a watermelon to understand its parts, its benefits and how to use each delicious piece. Refreshed and on-trend instructional and inspirational videos will visualize the butchery and cooking process. These virtual experiences will be packaged for consumers and professional audiences like media and dietitians, as well as challenge influencer partners to share inspiration year-long. Paid social and streaming ads will reach targeted audiences to direct them back to the landing page and continue the journey.



Since watermelon is for everyone, messaging will focus on connecting with different audiences and diversifying content, channels and partners to reach multi-generations:

- Gen Z: Quick, value-based video content shared on TikTok and Instagram
- Millennials: User-generated and influencer content shared on Instagram, TikTok and Facebook
- Gen X: Informative and helpful content shared on Facebook, YouTube and Pinterest
- Boomers: Detailed, informative content shared on Facebook, YouTube and Pinterest

Use the Whole Watermelon is the ultimate encapsulation for telling the watermelon value and sustainability story, allowing NWPB to combat purchase barriers and double down on **multi-use, zero-waste** and **rind education**. The sustainability message specifically refers to lessening a consumer's food waste footprint by using the whole watermelon, creating less waste at home and less waste going to landfills.

Other major activations for the year include the following programs:

- Influencer partnership program with dietitians, fitness and foodie experts
- Consumer events return including the Marine Corps Marathon
- Jump with Jill digital tour nationwide in-school outreach for students and advertising of Teacher Toolkit resources to educators
- Media monitoring for earned media placements in print and video, paid feature placements of watermelon stories
- Watermelon.org website content and @WatermelonBoard social media editorial calendars deliver fresh content every week of the year
- Broadcasting TV commercial content moves from YouTube to Hulu and Spotify
- New watermelon asset creation in photography and video, with new recipes, product shots, lifestyle shots and recipe/how-to videos as well as new Grower Story videos

There is much more that the Communications program works at throughout the year to keep watermelon top of mind for consumers. Reach out to Stephanie Barlow if you'd like to share any comments, feedback or suggestions (particularly if there are any events in your area!) at sbarlow@watermelon.org.



Watermelon on the Menu

Haven Kitchen located inside The Wave Hotel in Central Florida featuring Mediterranean dishes with a Floridian spin serves a Lobster and Burrata appetizer with sourdough, pickled watermelon, green goddess dressing and spiced pumpkin.



Curious Plot Board of Advisors Meeting


Communications agency partner Curious Plot invited NWPB to a Board of Advisors meeting in April for a round table discussion on the topic of watermelon rind/using the whole watermelon. The session provided valuable strategic counsel and perspective on watermelon rind use, feasibility and future research potential to encourage watermelon rind consumption and commercialization uses. Curious Plot's Advisory Board is made up of the following experts:

- David Parker - Agribusiness Executive Consultant
- Jeff Naan - Trade & Policy Expert
- Ted Priebe - Ag & Food Marketing Executive
- Kevin Kester - Association Leadership, California Rancher & Wine Grape Producer
- Danita Rodibaugh - Livestock Farmer & Association Leadership
- Marianne Smith Edge - Dietitian and Food Industry Leader
- Heidi Nelson - Ag & Food Marketing Expert
- George Hoffman - Food Supply Chain Expert
- Randy Marten - Milling & Food Executive
- Gregg Halverson - Owner, Black Gold Farms



Affecting Watermelon Demand Webinar



As a follow-up to the presentation of Affecting Watermelon Demand during the National Watermelon Association Convention, the Board hosted a webinar for those who could not attend in-person. The results-based presentation covered research, communications, marketing and foodservice, highlighting success stories from the last few years. The presentation concluded with tools available to the industry at watermelon.org, how to leverage those resources and examples of watermelon industry members using them in their businesses. [If you missed the webinar, it is available to watch here.](#)  If you have any questions, please reach out to Mark Arney at marny@watermelon.org.

Watermelon Photoshoot



Tapping in to the final days of winter, NWPB partnered with Ten Acre Marketing to execute a wintertime watermelon lifestyle photo and video shoot in snowy North Dakota. The previous Watermelon social media and industry campaign work was with TAM, and this next step of building a wintertime watermelon story is to show just what that looks like, from creating a holiday grazing board with friends in the kitchen, to enjoying watermelon slices on a snowy afternoon in a hot tub for sweet refreshments. While we are still waiting on the final images and videos, that will be shared in late 2022, we are excited to visually illustrate the inspirational and educational benefits of watermelon all year long.



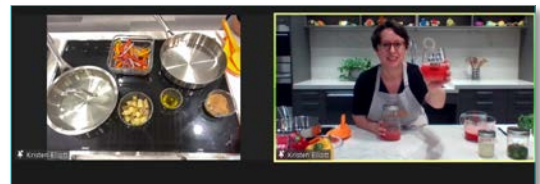
Texas & Georgia State Academy Events

The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (AND) is the world's largest organization of nutrition and dietetics practitioners, representing more than 112,000 credentialed practitioners — registered dietitian nutritionists, nutrition and dietetics technicians, registered, and other food and nutrition professionals holding undergraduate and advanced degrees in nutrition and dietetics, and students — and is committed to improving health and advancing the profession of nutrition and dietetics through research, education and advocacy.



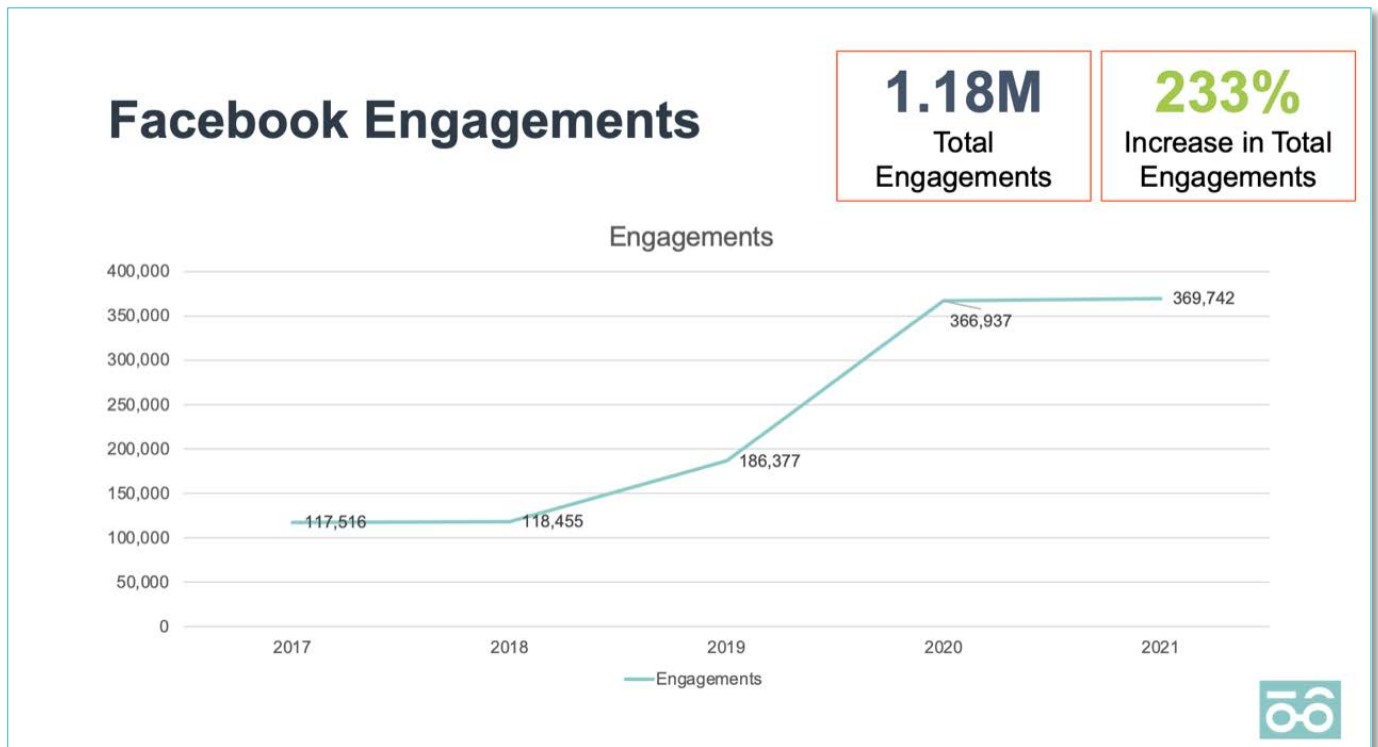
The AND has state chapters who meet annually, and as such provide an opportunity to promote the Registered Dietitian Toolkit to this influential community. Printed copies of the toolkit will be in the in-person Texas event attendee bag to 300, taking place in April 2022, and in March the Georgia virtual event is hosting a watermelon cook-along demonstration and RD toolkit promotion. The Georgia recipes demonstrated will be a Mexican Baja Breakfast Burrito with

Watermelon Salsa, a Watermelon Margarita and a Watermelon Fresca Punch.



Facebook Engagements – 5 Year Results

The graph below shows the increase in @WatermelonBoard Facebook engagements from 2017 to 2021. As you can see, more than 1.1M actions including comments, likes or shares took place in the last 5 years!



NWPB Connections

Watermelon Queen Media Training – Orlando, FL – April 9 – 10

Viva Fresh Expo – Dallas, TX – April 21 – 23

