



JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2024

Watermelon Update

NATIONAL WATERMELON PROMOTION BOARD

Dear Watermelon Industry Members,

Happy New Year to each of you!

First and foremost, I am honored to serve as Interim President of NWPB and represent all of you. This year holds great promise and potential for our industry.



As we transition from Christian Murillo's presidency, I'm pleased to share that he will remain on the Board as Ex Officio. The election for the new president will take place during our Spring Board Meeting in February, coinciding with the National Watermelon Association Convention in Scottsdale, AZ. In the meantime, I wanted to take this moment to update you on some significant developments within the NWPB.

One of the key focus points this year will be the potential assessment increase. You'll find comprehensive information on this matter in various articles featured in this edition of the Watermelon Update as well as a new dedicated webpage at watermelon.org/assessment. I encourage you all to familiarize yourselves with the details surrounding the assessment rate. Christian and I are committed to providing informative presentations and leading discussions on this topic at state and regional association gatherings, as well as at the upcoming National Watermelon Association Convention. If you are planning to attend the NWA convention, the NWPB assessment rate Town Hall will take place the morning of Friday, February 23.

In addition to these updates, our newsletter will now encompass more industry-specific initiatives, member spotlights, and update from NWA, and insights into Board operations. Alongside regular departmental updates, available resources, and the event news you are used to, we are introducing these new segments to better serve our industry. Recognizing the newsletter as pivotal means of sharing crucial information within our industry, it is imperative to read it regularly to stay informed and share it with your peers.

Please don't hesitate to contact me at president@watermelon.org for any questions or feedback you may have. I look forward to seeing you all soon.

Warm Regards,
Lee Wroten
NWPB Interim President

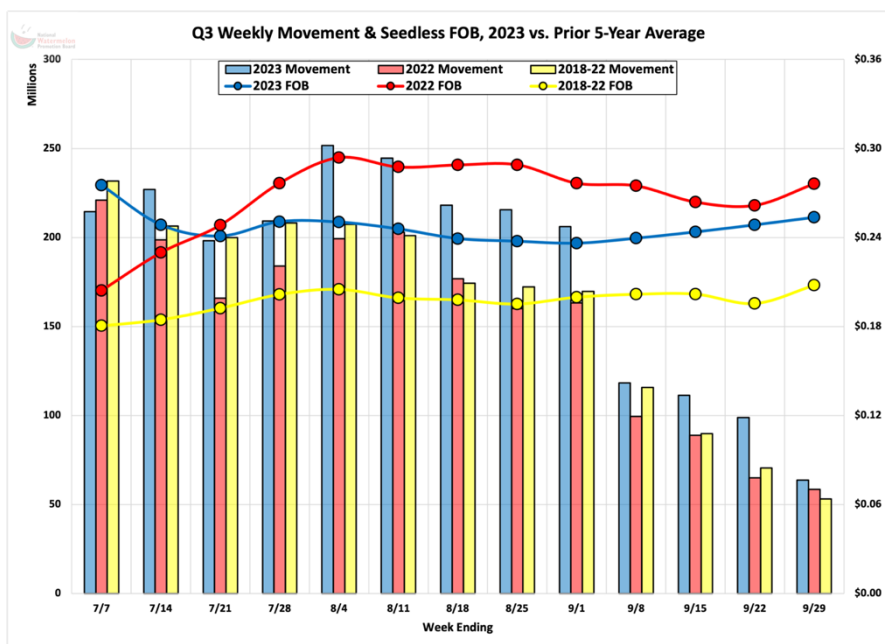
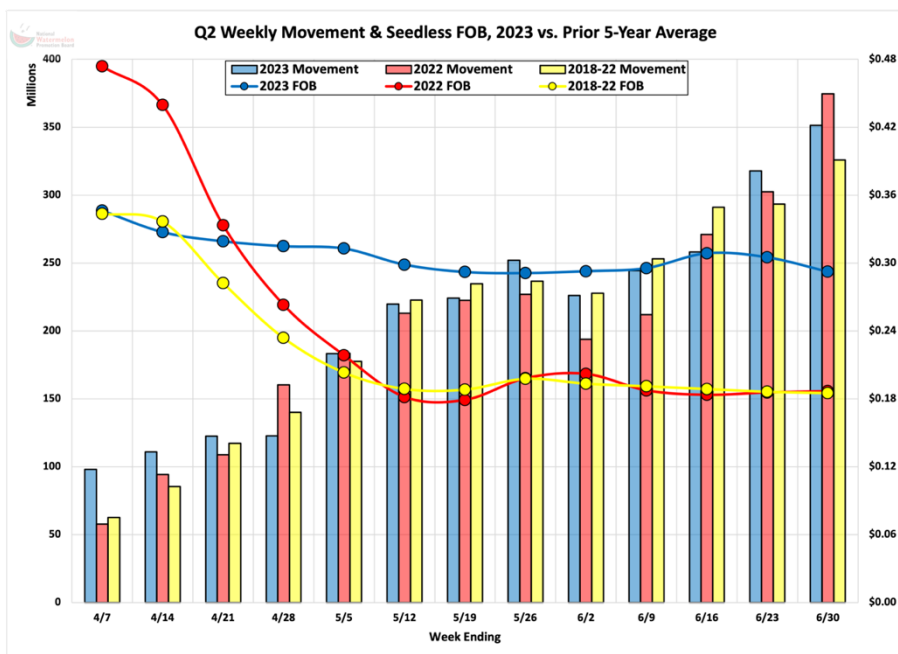


Supply and Pricing Analysis for Quarters 2 and 3 2023

Data freely provided by Agricultural Marketing Services (AMS) Market News Portal makes it easy to analyze how supply and pricing this year compares to past years. The following charts compare the second and third quarters of 2023 to 2022 and the prior five-year average.

The blue columns show weekly movement for 2023 and can be compared to the red or yellow columns showing 2022 and the five-year average, respectively. Color consistency carries over to seedless FOB pricing with the right-hand axis showing dollar per pound pricing. Starting with the latter we see prices coming in well above both 2022 and the average starting in late April. Movement was stronger at the start, but mostly fell in line with the average until we see back and forth over the final three weeks leading into the 4th of July.

In the third quarter we see that July featured fairly normal movement before taking off throughout August and most of September. FOB pricing throughout the quarter mostly tracked with the shape of the average, albeit, around a nickel higher for most weeks. These prices represent something of a midpoint between the average and what was exceptionally high pricing in 2022 spurred by shorter supply throughout much of July.



For more information visit the [Supply Chain Research](https://watermelon.org) page at watermelon.org or reach out to Jason Hanselman at jasonh116@gmail.com to request custom reports.



Camaraderie at State & Regional Conventions

The directors along with Ex Officio Christian Murillo, Interim President Lee Wroten, and Consultant Jason Hanselman divided up to cover the January Association Conventions. In addition to **connecting with many industry members**, Christian and Lee **presented on the Potential Assessment Increase**. Hanselman presented at Illiana Watermelon Association. NWPB Executive Director Mark Arney and Megan McKenna both attended Georgia Watermelon Association Convention, with McKenna helping to select the new GWA Brand Ambassador. Arney and McKenna also were also in attendance at South Carolina Watermelon Association Convention, while NWPB staff Juliemar Rosado and Rebekah Dossett visited in Western Watermelon Association Convention.



Industry Analyst Jason Hanselman and NWPB Communications Chair Blake Mouzin at Illiana Watermelon Convention



NWPB Ex Officio Christian Murillo, NWPB Executive Director Mark Arney and NWA President Hamilton Dicks at South Carolina Watermelon Association Convention



NWPB Secretary/Treasurer Kelly Partch, NWA Chairman John Gee, NWPB Director of Retail & International Marketing Juliemar Rosado, NWPB Director of Operations & Industry Affairs Rebekah Dossett and Ex Officio Christian Murillo at Western Watermelon Association Convention



NWPB Senior Director of Marketing & Foodservice Megan McKenna and NWPB Foodservice Committee Chair Rachel Syngo at Georgia Watermelon Association Convention



One Stop Resource for Potential Assessment Increase Information



Attention Watermelon Industry Members!

Attention watermelon industry members! We have created a one-stop resource for all you need to know about the potential assessment increase including the history of the assessment rate, inflation's impact, justification of the increase, growth of watermelon volume and FOB, proposed assessment levels and how those funds would be used. Look for presentations at all of the state and regional conventions as well as a Town Hall at NWA. All growers, shippers and importers should have received a postcard with a QR leading to this valuable resource. To learn more, visit watermelon.org/assessment.

NWA Nook: There's Still Time to Register for the National Convention – A Note from NWA Executive Director George Szczepanski

We hope to see you in Scottsdale in just a few weeks, from February 21-24th at the We-Ko-Pa Casino and Resort, for the NWA Convention. The more detailed schedule has been posted to the event website, and we're looking forward to seeing you, and enjoying a number of exciting events, including:

- A Thursday night dinner and reception outside where we'll embrace our Southwestern location and enjoy a Cowboy Barbecue, with music, cowboy games, and good food
- Friday Education that will feature sessions that look to the future of our industry, and also our first-ever Women's Leadership Session
- The Awards Banquet on Saturday night featuring the crowning of our 2024 National Watermelon Queen
- And of course, our famous live and silent auction

Check our [home page](#)  and [event website](#)  to see the latest information on the convention, and we'll see you in Scottsdale!



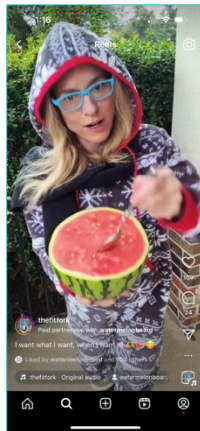
New York Produce Show

The Eastern Produce Council and *PRODUCE BUSINESS* magazine present the New York Produce Show each December in New York City. The four-day event includes networking opportunities, a one-day trade show, retail thought-leader breakfast panel, educational micro-sessions and more. Juliemar Rosado and Retail Account Manager Katie Manetti were in attendance to work the booth (pictured, right) and see retail and foodservice decision-makers. As an exhibitor, the NWPB interacted with many **retailers, media, wholesalers and the foodservice industry** about materials and information NWPB has available for them in promotion and retail education. **Megan McKenna was part of the planning group and on a panel at the Foodservice Forum** that took place the following day (pictured, left).

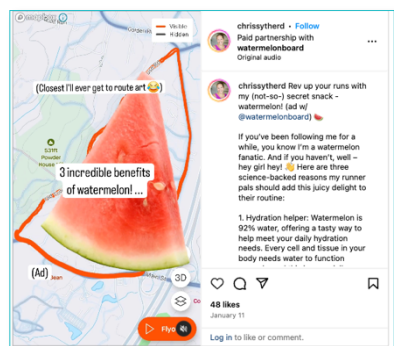


Influencer Partner Highlights – December & January

The Board partnered with **Mackenzie Burgess from Cheerful Choices** in December for a Watermelon and green grape Christmas tree (pictured, top right). The post was shared on Instagram and TikTok where it garnered 4,762 views and 445 engagements on Instagram and 14,249 views and 134 engagements on TikTok. It was also posted on Cheerful Choices' Pinterest Board as well as amplified on Board channels.



In December **The Fit Fork's Jennifer Fisher** posted a watermelon-inspired video about putting watermelon under the Christmas tree for Santa in lieu of cookies. In the new year, Jennifer came up with a quirky post in her pajamas about eating "whatever she wanted" with a popular audio voiceover (pictured, top left). Both posts included year round availability messaging and appeared on TikTok and Instagram platforms. While any engagement rate over 6% is considered incredibly high according to industry standards, Jennifer's engagement rate is **consistently over 10%**.



January saw the final Instagram Reel partnership post by **Chrissy Carroll of Snacking in Sneakers** on the topic of Watermelon Benefits for Runners (pictured, bottom). Chrissy's marathon training toolkit and focus on running coaching by a registered dietitian has provided highly motivating and engaging content for watermelon health messaging specific to the sports and fitness enthusiasts with a specialization in running over the past year.



2024 Assessment Due Dates

Please note the following due dates for 2024:

- Product handled in January, must be postmarked by March 1, and received by March 11
- Product handled in February, must be postmarked by March 30 and received by April 9
- Product handled in March, must be postmarked by April 30 and received by May 10

The full calendar can be found [here](#). At the same link handlers can file their online Handler's Report. Never used the online Handler's Report? Check out the step by step [Online Handler's Report Users Guide](#).





Industry Member Spotlight: Get to Know ...



Christian Murillo

Company: Cactus Melon

Years in the industry: 10 years

Years on the Board: 6 years, going on 7 as Ex Officio

What's your favorite thing about the Watermelon Industry?

The sense of family. Watermelon is mostly a generational family type of business/industry. Many connections that I have made over the years I find that sit similarly where I do when it comes to working for the family business. But the most important thing, the taste and the feeling watermelon gives you makes everything better!

What's your favorite item on your bucket list?

Going to Italy and China for a month each and learning to cook their authentic foods.



Lee Wroten

Company: Global Produce Sales

Time in the Industry: About 30 years if you include all the summers I spent harvesting and packing watermelons throughout high school and college.

Time on the Board: I am entering my 6th total year on the Board. I served from 2018 through 2021, and began a third term in 2023.

What's your favorite thing about the Watermelon Industry?

I love to watch the process over time of turning a raw piece of land into orderly rows of watermelons that provide employment and enjoyment for so many people. It's long days, and lots of worry over things we can't control, but when the chaos of harvest and shipping is all over I can look back and feel like I did something real. There's no other work like it.

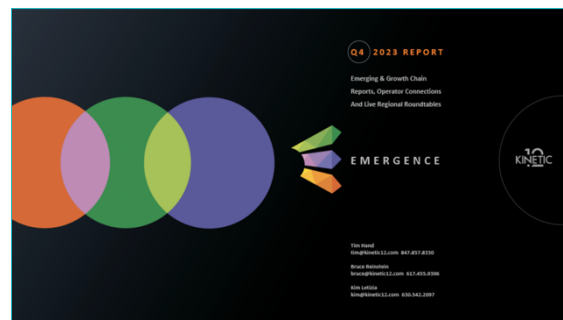
What's your favorite piece of technology?

The cell phone. When I was a kid, you had to go find a pay phone. Later, my first cell phone was the size of a briefcase and had to be plugged into the car to operate. Now I've got this little computer that fits in my pocket with which I can conduct about 80% of my business on. It has all kinds of tools and games on it, access to the entire internet, a good camera, and I can also call home with it.



Second Kinetic12 Emergence Meeting Offers 1-1 Time with Foodservice Operators

With **more than 20 chains, representing over 1,700 restaurants across the country**, the second Kinetic12 Emergence Meeting didn't disappoint! The meeting took place in early December in Dallas and although focused on centrally located brands, restaurant locations spanned coast-to-coast. As with all events, not all the brands are potential watermelon buyers but many are. When given the 1-on-1 time to connect, some attendees not expected, are open to further dialogue about menuing watermelon. Kinetic12 is a 12-month subscription program that offers research insights and introductions/meetings with more than 140 relevant emerging and growth chains with 20-500 restaurants across the country. Follow up is ongoing.



Genesis IMPULSE Results

From September 9 to October 6 2023, NWPB engaged a new digital retail experience with partner Genesis. The APP>LESS IMPULSE delivers guaranteed engagement with an immersive “app-like” experience without the need for download and install. APP>LESS is a pay-for-performance that ensures our content connects with relevant consumers.

New this year, the IMPULSE program targeted shoppers in and around Publix, Kroger and HEB stores. Once a consumer engages with the targeted ad, they are taken to a custom watermelon web experience, richly designed to deliver immersive and engaging information about nutrition, recipes and usage ideas. This year, it was an influencer-style recipe video for the watermelon kabobs. It was aimed to increase awareness and consumption of watermelon outside of the key summer season, focusing on nutritional benefits and year round availability. The program reached **27,785 unique consumers** who expressed interest via ad, clicked, and fully engaged with the content. The hyper-targeting geo-based strategy allowed for direct engagement at retail with shoppers in/around the selected retail stores and had a total of **over 2 million impressions**. Best of all, a QR code was created to take you to the web page and remains active after the promotion period, so scan and explore for yourself!



Become a Director of the NWPB

The Board of Directors is nominated by industry peers. Nominations are submitted to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), and the Secretary of Agriculture makes the final appointments to the NWPB. The Board oversees all aspects of the Board, including setting policy and deciding how the Board's budget is invested in research, promotion and education programs. The USDA's Agriculture Marketing Service monitors the Board's operations. All Directors are required to attend two meetings each year.

This year Districts 2, 3, and Importers are up for nomination. Check out the [2024 District Map](#) to see the geographic area for each district. Below is the schedule for the nominations teleconferences on Wednesday, February 14th:

- **District 2:** 10 a.m. EST (to nominate four qualified watermelon producers and four qualified watermelon handlers to fill open positions)
- **District 3:** 11 a.m. EST (to nominate four qualified watermelon producers and four qualified watermelon handlers to fill open positions)
- **Importers:** 1 p.m. EST (to nominate ten qualified watermelon importers to fill open positions)



All qualified watermelon industry members are encouraged to attend and vote to nominate their representatives. Proxy voting will be accepted. To learn more click on the links above for each district's press release regarding nominations. The newly appointed Board members term of office will begin on January 1, 2025, and end December 31, 2027.

To receive the teleconference information or with other questions, reach out to Rebekah Dossett at rdossett@watermelon.org or Andrea Smith at asmith@watermelon.org.



ChefsUSA Partnered Demos

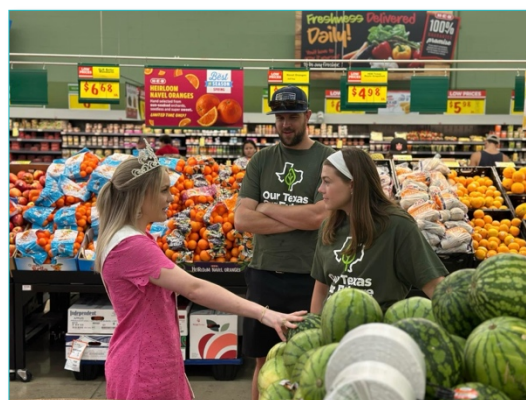


NWPB once again conducted partnered **sampling demonstrations** through ChefsUSA. ChefsUSA uses professional chefs with experience at their demonstrations as well as display and distribute point-of-sale materials. NWPB was fortunate enough to partner with wine companies to maximize coverage of demonstrations completed from April to June 2023. Additionally, secondary displays were set up in the stores to support the sampling events. Overall, **133 demonstrations where Fire & Ice Watermelon Salsa** was sampled were completed in Georgia, North Carolina, Texas and Virginia at Kroger, Mariano's, Publix and Harris Teeter.



Watermelon Queens Continue to Shine at Retail

NWPB's retail promotional grant fund to support each of the national, state and regional associations' watermelon queen programs continues to invigorate the program's reach and impact, particularly at retail. To date, it has supported a total of **over 30 promotions**, the majority being retail and commissary in-store promotions that often include in-store sampling, watermelon eating contests and distribution of point-of-sale materials!

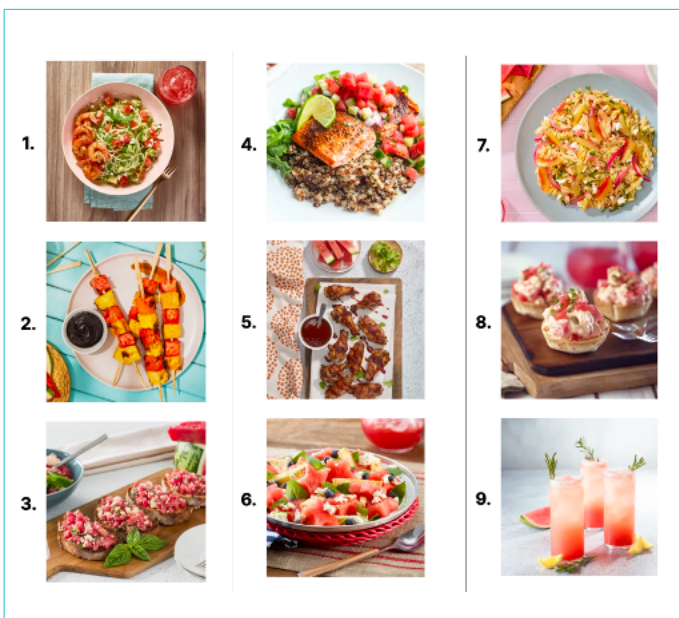




Grocery Shopii

New this year, NWPB worked with Grocery Shopii, a tech company that implements shoppable recipes to independent retailers.

Their technology is currently implemented in 250 IGA stores nationally, Reasor's and Sendik's. In Summer 2023, 14 Watermelon Board recipes were highlighted on the Inspiration page. This is where customers land when clicking on Recipe to Table from their grocer's site. In addition, three Watermelon Board recipes were utilized in three different campaigns at Reasor's. For each campaign the recipe image and company logo were on the Reasor's homepage web-slider which contained a link to the corresponding recipe. More watermelon recipes were featured in the fall and the company has added more independent retailers to their roster. Pictured are the top nine recipes from earlier this year.



“Wintermelon” Resources Available to the Industry

Promoting watermelon in the winter is made easier by a free “wintermelon” toolkit – available to all retailers, media and industry members. Housed at <https://www.watermelon.org/wintermelon-toolkit/>, the toolkit contains winter watermelon images, recipes, sample social media posts and seasonally-appropriate health and nutrition messages. All assets are in support of year-round watermelon education, promotion and sales and are free to download and use. For more information or questions about the Wintermelon Toolkit, contact Senior Director of Communications Stephanie Barlow at sbarlow@watermelon.org.





NWPB Committees Met to Pre-Approve 2024/2025 Programs

Each year the NWPB committees, made up of Board Members and advisors, meet to approve programs ahead of the full Board at the spring Board Meeting in conjunction with the National Watermelon Association Convention. The committee meetings took place as follows:

- Communications Committee: January 30th at 2 p.m. eastern
- Marketing Committee: January 31st at 3 p.m. eastern
- Foodservice Committee: January 31st at 1 p.m. eastern
- Research Committee: January 31st at 11 a.m. eastern



Watermelon on the Menu

Summer House on the Lake – a California cuisine-inspired restaurant with locations in Las Vegas, Chicago, North Bethesda and Disney Springs in Lake Buena Vista, FL – is currently offering **Ahi Tuna and Watermelon Tostadas** on their “raw and chilled” menu. The dish also includes avocado, Thai chili, crisp corn tortilla and - according to a Disney Springs server - is already one of the most popular menu items on their menu since opening in late December.



NWPB Connections

MarDel Watermelon Association Convention – Cambridge, MD – February 2 & 3

Flavor Foray – Charleston, SC – February 5 – 7

Gulf Coast Watermelon Association Convention – Biloxi, MS – February 9 & 10

Social Media Marketing World – San Diego, CA – February 18 – 21

National Watermelon Association Convention – Scottsdale, AZ – February 21 – 25

North Carolina Watermelon Association Convention – Wrightsville Beach, SC – March 1 & 2

Watermelon UPDATE