



Watermelon Update

NATIONAL WATERMELON PROMOTION BOARD



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Fresno Bros' Watermelon Fest

A Juicy Celebration with the National Watermelon Queen & Fun-Filled Family Activities

Canadian retail Fresno Bros requested a combination of different program elements made available by NWPB's Retail division. Their exciting U.S. watermelon promotion included the National Watermelon Queen who visited select stores and July 20th and 21st. Each event was packed with family-friendly activities including watermelon bowling, relay races, coloring contests, seed spitting competitions and more.



Fresno Bros' Watermelon Fest Continued

The highlight of each visit was customers competing in each store's watermelon eating contest! The promotion created in-store excitement, drove traffic to participating stores and increased direct and impulse watermelon sales. This is the 8th year Fresno Bros has undertaken an in-store promotion featuring U.S. watermelon and the National Watermelon Queen.



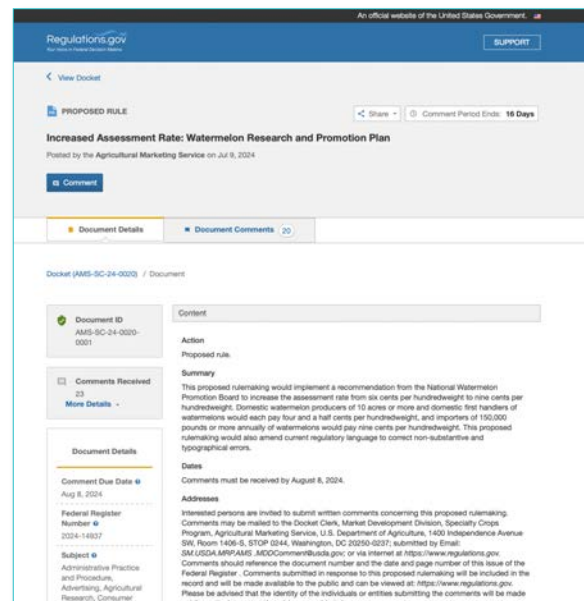
Assessment Increase Public Comment Period Live Through August 8

Following a favorable report on industry support, the Board voted to propose a 3 cent per hundredweight increase to the Board's assessment level in February 2024. This change means a total assessment of 9 cents per hundredweight. This amount is split between growers and shippers and paid in total by importers.

The Board staff, overseen by the Executive Committee, submitted all necessary documentation to the USDA for the Rulemaking Process which includes a 30-day comment period. The Watermelon Board assessment increase public comment period is **now live**. During the comment period running through August 8, 2024, **industry members are encouraged to share their opinions on the potential assessment increase.**

As a reminder at watermelon.org/assessment, you will find all you need to know about the potential assessment increase including more on the Board, the history of the assessment rate, inflation's impact, justification of the increase, including the growth of watermelon volume and FOB, proposed assessment levels and how those funds would be spent to promote watermelon.

If you have questions or would like to discuss this potential increase please reach out to Lee Wroten at president@watermelon.org.



The screenshot shows the 'Regulations.gov' website interface. The main heading is 'Increased Assessment Rate: Watermelon Research and Promotion Plan'. Below this, it states 'Posted by the Agricultural Marketing Service on Jul 9, 2024'. There is a 'Comment' button and a 'Document Comments' count of 20. The 'Document Details' section includes: Document ID: AMS-SC-24-0020-0001, Comments Received: 23, Document Due Date: Aug 8, 2024, Federal Register Number: 2024-14837, and Subject: Administrative Practice and Procedure, Advertising, Agricultural Research, Consumer. The 'Content' section includes a 'Proposed rule' and a 'Summary' which states: 'This proposed rulemaking would implement a recommendation from the National Watermelon Promotion Board to increase the assessment rate from six cents per hundredweight to nine cents per hundredweight. Domestic watermelon producers of 10 acres or more and domestic first handlers of watermelons would each pay four and a half cents per hundredweight, and importers of 150,000 pounds or more annually of watermelons would pay nine cents per hundredweight. This proposed rulemaking would also amend current regulatory language to correct non-substantive and typographical errors.' The 'Dates' section states 'Comments must be received by August 8, 2024.' The 'Addresses' section provides contact information for the Docket Clerk, Market Development Division, Specialty Crops Program, Agricultural Marketing Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Room 1406-G, STOP 0244, Washington, DC 20250-0225, and provides email and internet contact information.

Industry Member Spotlight: Get to Know Jason Van Groningen

Name: Jason Van Groningen

Company: Van Groningen & Sons Inc.

Time in the Industry: Involved in the industry since 1996

Time on the Board: In my second year on the Board

What's your favorite thing about the Watermelon Industry? The ever changing innovation

What's your favorite item on your bucket list? Just completed a bucket list item of getting my pilot's license

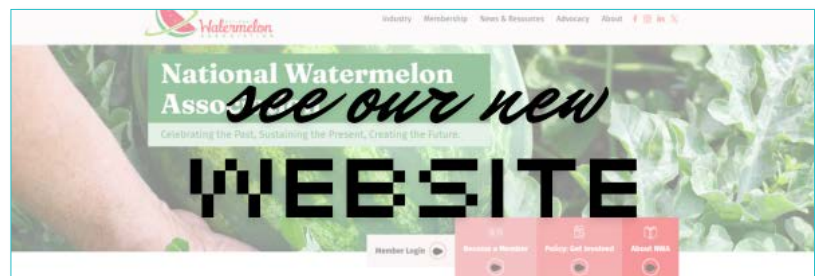


NWA Nook: New Website

The National Watermelon Association is proud to **announce the launch of our newly redesigned website!** This new site symbolizes our dedication to improving member services and transparent communication.

Visit the site to see information like:

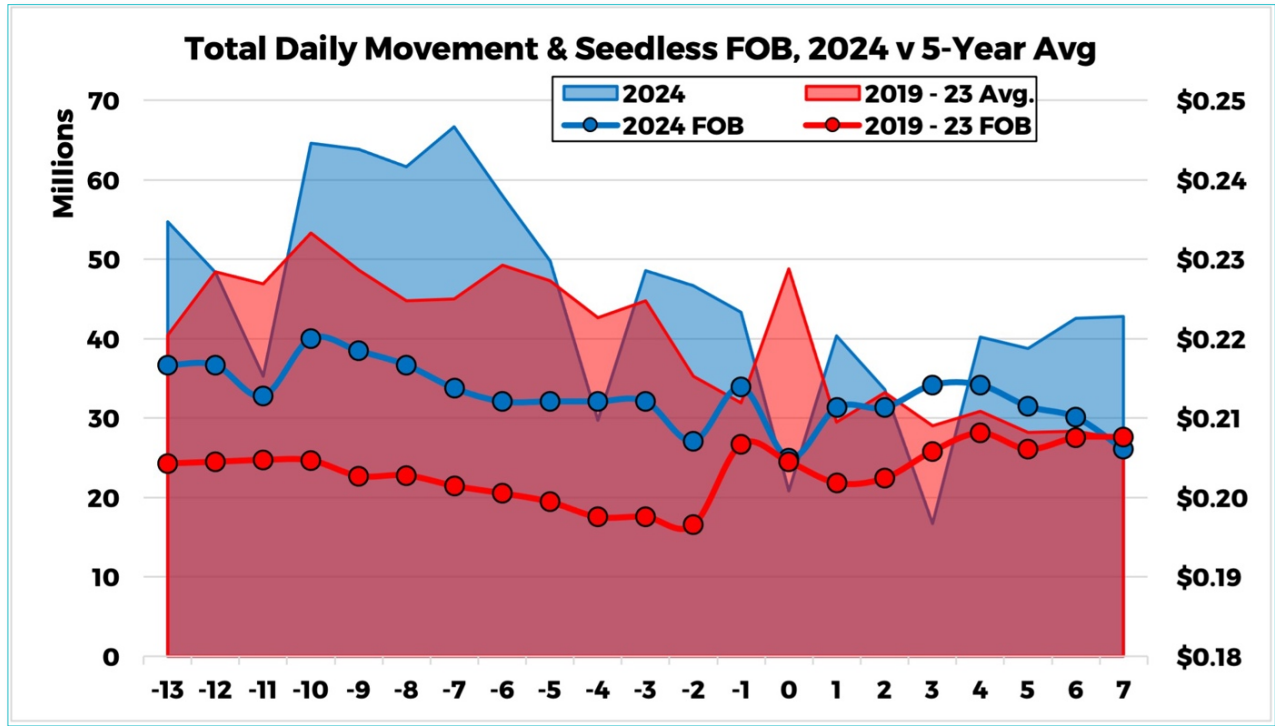
- In-depth public policy platforms.
- Comprehensive membership information.
- Access to our research portal with funded studies.
- Up-to-date news and industry updates.
- Archives such as the Watermelon Hall of Fame and Future Watermelon Farm Leaders.
- Details about our National Watermelon Queen and her role.
- Much more!



Our new website is a significant step forward in our mission to serve the watermelon industry. We are grateful to TenAcre Marketing for their exceptional work in creating this fantastic resource for our members and the public. Visit us today at watermelon.ag!



Fourth of July 2024 Market Recap



Fourth of July remains the most voluminous time of year for watermelon movement. Data from the AMS Market News Portal shows that from 2019 to 2023, the two weeks leading into the holiday and the week following averaged roughly 834 million pounds shipped. Movement in 2024 was nearly 14% higher at 947 million pounds. Seedless FOB prices have averaged 20.3 cents per pound during the prior five years with 2024 coming in couple pennies higher at 22.5. This year's pricing was 18.2% lower than last year, but 10.9% above average.

Ad-tracking data from USDA shows retail ad activity in 2024 was higher than we have seen since 2019. Inflationary pressure the past two years showed signs of cooling as prices for individual larger watermelon (\$5.00) fell nearly 7% from last year (\$5.36), and were a mere 1.4% higher than 2022 (\$4.93). Per each price for Minis (\$3.60) was in line with 2023 (\$3.45) and 2022 (\$3.50), while all three were a good bit above the earlier years in the timeframe.

Circana retail scan data provides insight on sales at retail. Breaking it down by category, wholes were up 41 million pounds from average, which represents an increase of 8%. Mini and Fresh Cut were also up compared to average at 16% and 28%, respectively. Most markets around the country featured above average sales, though New Mexico, parts of Texas and half of the Great Lakes were a little slower.

[View the full report here](#) to find regional breakdowns for each of the primary shipping regions, as well as market-level comparisons for ads and sales at retail.

IFPA Foodservice Show: K-12 Foodservice Forum, Media Coverage and More

The International Fresh Produce Association's (IFPA) Foodservice Conference, in its 43rd year, brought together more than 2,200 attendees with more than 1,000 buyers. The receptions, speakers and exhibition featured so many trend-forward fresh produce items for foodservice. New IFPA Technomic data was shared that dives into fresh produce's opportunity on menus with limited service, full service, travel and leisure, and education (K-12 and college and university) bubbling to the top.

The NWPB sponsored the K-12 Foodservice Forum hosting more than 100 K-12 foodservice decision makers, from county and state level directors to the new deputy undersecretary. Newly appointed USDA Deputy Under Secretary for Food and Nutrition Service Cindy Long (pictured, right with Megan McKenna) reminded attendees K-12 foodservice is the "largest restaurant in any town." More than 30 million children participate in the National School Lunch Program daily.



The first night, the Board focused on Using the Whole Watermelon serving Watermelon and Corn Salad and **Roasted Watermelon Rind**. The closing breakfast offered Watermelon and Yogurt Two Ways, with **Watermelon Dippers** and **the Red, White and Blue Parfait**. The directors were delighted by the recipes but inspired to think differently about watermelon by the roasted watermelon rind. They are excited about the rind nutrition study in the works, but the next step is to see what kids think of eating watermelon rind! Many K-12 attendees said it was their favorite bite and included it in an expo debrief highlighting what caught the attendees' attention during the show – not to mention it being teased on the Foodservice Show's Exhibitor Blog. Sourcing and handling watermelon were the main questions received. With the school year opposite the domestic season and some districts not even having knives back of house, there are some distinct barriers for watermelon in K-12 Foodservice. With that said, not only can this group move more watermelon, but they are feeding the next generation of consumers.



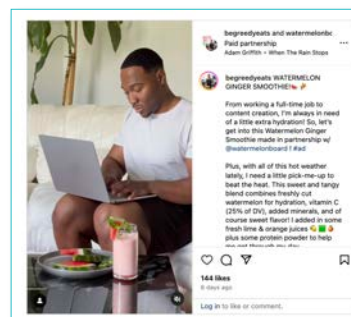
In addition to the sponsored elements, Megan McKenna, Senior Director of Marketing and Foodservice, serves on the Foodservice Committee who met to kick off the conference. Megan also volunteered to be a mentor for a Career Pathways Student. **Produce Business highlighted watermelon in the July cover story**, coinciding with the Foodservice Show, *The Art of Produce*, quoting Megan and the Board's consulting chef, Rebecca Piezer. Receptions and networking opportunities connected the Board with others from different foodservice segments such as Sodexo, ProAct, Jason's Deli, University of Massachusetts, Cava, and Denny's.



Influencer Partner Updates

Check out some of the many posts that partners of the **Simply Watermelon consumer campaign** are sharing across their social media channels, racking up engagements, views and impressions to reach more consumers with watermelon education!

- Tess Han @ForkToFuel - How to Select the Perfect Watermelon
- Bill Roberts @Cook_At_Home_Dad - Grilled Watermelon Cinnamon Slices and Ginger Smoothie
- Aaron Dodson @BeGreedyEats - Watermelon Ginger Smoothie
- Tiffany Malone of @TiffanyMalonee - Watermelon Sorbet
- Alyssa Heim of @TalkTheMock - Non-Alcoholic Watermelon Basil Margarita



Retail Merchandising Contest

Have your retailers show their merchandising talents, both those in-store and in print/digital spaces! All entries should showcase watermelon's benefits including health, value and versatility. Marketing efforts considered in judging will include category visibility, point-of-sale materials, good visual merchandising, messaging nutritional benefits, recipes and/or selection education and use of print, online and/or digital platforms.

Entries are open and will be **accepted until September 13th!** Visit

<https://www.watermelon.org/audiences/retailers/retail-contest/> for more information or email retail@watermelon.org.



Spring Programmatic Ad Results

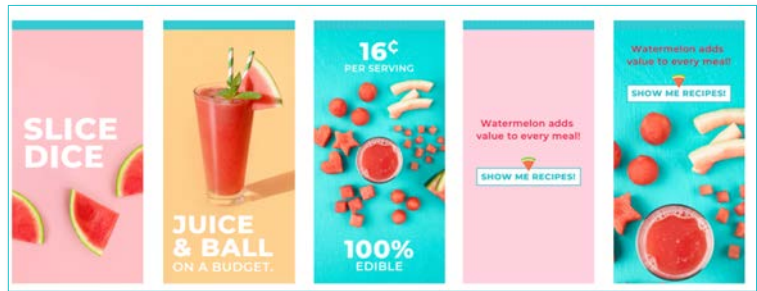
In April and May, the Board repurposed creative content from 2023 for our Spring banner ad campaign. The results were exceptional, demonstrating the effectiveness of our strategic approach.

Prospecting

- **Total Impressions:** 264,343
- Total Clicks: 1,582
- Click Through Rate (CTR): 0.60%

Remarketing

- **Total Impressions:** 166,914
- Total Clicks: 990
- Click Through Rate (CTR): 0.59%



Performance Analysis Both CTRs significantly outperformed industry benchmarks. While the general benchmark for display ads ranges from 0.07% to 0.10%, and the benchmark for the Food & Grocery industry ranges from 0.35% to 0.45%, our campaign achieved CTRs of 0.60% and 0.59% for prospecting and remarketing, respectively.

Geographical Insights Texas, California, and Florida garnered the highest number of impressions and clicks, indicating strong engagement in these key regions.

Device Insights A notable 78% of impressions came from mobile devices. This aligns with our target audience's behavior, as individuals interested in recipes and healthy living often interact with such content on their phones.

Overall, the Spring programmatic ad campaign has demonstrated the value of repurposing creative content and targeting the right audience, resulting in exceptional performance metrics and valuable insights for future campaigns.



National Watermelon Month: LinkedIn Success

July was National Watermelon Month and our community loves to celebrate! Our NWM graphic was posted on our LinkedIn channel - which is 100% handled in-house and primarily used for B2B audiences – where it **earned more than 120 likes and 20 reposts!** Be on the lookout for a special post on August 3 - National Watermelon Day – and make sure to share to your channels to help spread the message! The industry-facing LinkedIn channel provides industry updates, reports and tools. The consumer-facing channels of the same NWM graphic earned 6K likes on Instagram and 8.3 likes of Facebook, with 1,200 shares.





Director Nominations Sent to USDA

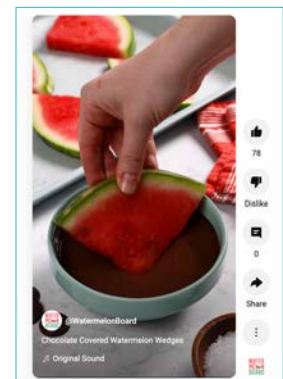


The Board of Directors is nominated by industry peers. Nominations teleconferences for Districts 2, 3 and Importers took place in February and the packet with all nominating information was submitted to USDA last month. The Secretary of Agriculture makes the final appointments to the NWPB. The Directors oversee all aspects of the Board, including setting policy and deciding how the Board’s budget is invested in research, promotion and education programs. Check out the [2024 District Map](#) to see the geographic area for each district. The newly appointed Board members term of office will begin on January 1, 2025, and end December 31, 2027. Next year Districts 4 and 5 will be up for appointment, with the process starting early in 2025. Reach out to Rebekah Dossett at rdossett@watermelon.org or Andrea Smith at asmith@watermelon.org with any questions.



YouTube Shorts

In an effort to leverage the video content created in 2023 and 2024, the Board is expanding its YouTube channels through the Shorts platform. Similar to IG Reels and TikTok, Shorts is a space to shoot, share, and binge short-form videos (60 seconds or less) on YouTube. This summer, three videos per week, including previously approved recipes, grower videos, and "watermelon stories," are being shared to capitalize on the seasonal momentum of watermelon. The last month has generated **nearly 270 hours of watch time and 32,000 views!**



Another Successful Foodservice Event in Canada

On May 28th the National Watermelon Promotion Board hosted a watermelon lunch in partnership with the Pacific Institute of Culinary Arts. The lunch included a **fully customized menu that featured watermelon in every course**, including cocktails and mocktails. Chefs and restaurant industry contacts across Vancouver were invited to the lunch with the goal of educating attendees on watermelon's versatility, inspired the use of watermelon on menus and fostered networking amongst the tables.



Executing the chef lunch was a valuable opportunity to reach and connect with a **foodservice audience in Canada**. It was also a valuable extension of the Toronto dinner hosted last year, allowing us to connect, inspire, and grow contacts in another province. The lunch was a successful step in strengthening and growing NPWB's presence in the Canadian foodservice industry in Western Canada.






With 18 chefs and foodservice industry contacts in attendance, who received takeaway bags that included NWPB branded materials and information, the lunch was of great value and contributed to our KPI of engaging with 63 industry contacts this year.



Watermelon in the Media

The summer peak season for watermelon is the time when influencers and content creators all over social media platforms are sharing about their love for watermelon, educating about how to pick a watermelon, recipes that utilize all the watermelon in different ways, and inspire and experiment with all kinds of watermelon tools, hacks, flavor combinations and more. Most of the content creators are not formally partnered with the Watermelon Board education effort, but the work, reach and influence they provide with the stretch of their messaging is outstanding! See for yourself:

- [50 Ways to Use a Watermelon](#)  - A YouTube posted June 22, 2024 by Nick DiGiovanni with 7.8M views and almost 8K comments (and it's 42 minutes long!)
- [Watermelon pickle sandwich](#)  - A TikTok posted July 19, 2024 by Benny Blanco (and a peek of Selena Gomez) with 3.9M views and over 4,200 comments
 - This flavor trend which started in earlier June actually **utilized a recipe from Watermelon.org from 2013** using watermelon as "bread" topped with mozzarella slices, bread and butter pickles, fresh basil and a drizzle of balsamic glaze has gained steady popularity, particularly with the Benny Blanco TikTok, that is now jumped to more traditional media with [The Today Show](#)  trying it live on TV



July Attaché Seminar

NWPB's Juliemar Rosado attended the 44th Annual Attaché Seminar hosted by the United States Agricultural Export Development Council (USAEDC) on July 11th in McLean, Virginia. The program included **high-level panels concerning demography and generational marketing, food as medicine and the intersection of culture and American agriculture by cultivating cuisine**. The seminar also included FAS Administrator Daniel Whitley discussing insights on the Agency. The seminar concluded with breakout sessions that discussed assisting specialty crop exports, building underdeveloped markets in RAPP regions and crafting engaging activities across regions.



Individuals with disabilities who require reasonable accommodations and or alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, LEP, etc.) should contact: Juliemar Rosado at jrosado@watermelon.org within three days of event. The National Watermelon Promotion Board is an equal opportunity provider and employer.



Watermelon on the Menu

Highball and Harvest - a Southern-inspired eatery based in the Ritz Carlton in Orlando - is currently offering a **Watermelon Salad** that includes beet mole, pistachio, goat feta, spruce tip vinaigrette, pickled beets, grilled sweet onion with Fairy Tale Farms shoots.



NWPB Connections

Flavor Experience – San Diego, CA – August 18 - 21

MISE Conference – Atlanta, GA – August 25 - 27