



Watermelon Update

NATIONAL WATERMELON PROMOTION BOARD

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Watermelon for All NWPB Supports Marine Corps Marathon for 11th Year

The NWPB celebrated its 11th consecutive year partnering with the Marine Corps Marathon (MCM) on October 27, 2024. Known as “The People’s Marathon,” the event draws runners from across the U.S. and around the world, and NWPB was there once again to distribute 16 pallets of fresh watermelon at the Finisher’s Festival.

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Marine Corps Marathon Continued


Watermelon has become a beloved post-race snack at the marathon, offering both refreshment and hydration to runners and supporters after their 26.2-mile effort. This year, the NWPB team, including national and state watermelon queens, distributed fresh watermelon slices and hundreds of Tajín® seasoning packets to the crowd.

As NWPB continues to champion watermelon's health benefits and its role in fueling active, healthy lifestyles, events like the Marine Corps Marathon offer the perfect platform to demonstrate its versatility. Whether as a post-race snack or an everyday healthy option, watermelon remains a favorite for people from all walks of life.

NWPB's participation was **supported by BASF | Nunhems**, a global leader in vegetable seed production. This partnership reflects NWPB's commitment to promoting watermelon as a healthy, versatile fruit, and events like the Marine Corps Marathon help highlight watermelon's role in supporting active, healthy lifestyles.



Proposed Rulemaking for the Assessment Increase

The industry is awaiting the Secretary's ruling on the proposed rulemaking for the assessment increase. The industry dialog started this time last year with presentations at the association conventions across the country. Since then the 30-day comment period for the proposed assessment increase was open from July 9th-August 8th. There were 33 comments. They can be reviewed here: <https://www.regulations.gov/document/AMS-SC-24-0020-0001/comment> . The comments and associated documents are being reviewed by the appropriate USDA officials before the Secretary of Agriculture makes the final determination. There is no specific timeline for the Secretary's ruling.

Fall Board Meeting

The Board met on October 15th and 16th in Atlanta, GA. The Board heard from Harrison Hodges from USDA, President Lee Wroten with an Executive Committee Update, and George Szczepanski with an update from the National Watermelon Association (NWA).

As a part of the Board's five-year review process, the Board evaluates district structures based on watermelon production trends, shifts in quantity, and other relevant factors. The Redistricting Subcommittee presented options and a recommendation. The **Board agreed to a proposed realignment** which will be submitted to the Secretary of Agriculture for final approval via rulemaking.

Look for articles on the Segmentation Study and Consumer at Foodservice research presented at the Board Meeting in future Watermelon Updates. As always, the presentations from the communications and marketing departments include topics covered in the Watermelon Update on an ongoing basis. Instead of a Board dinner, the Board enjoyed a reception immediately following the meeting. As in the past, watermelon recipes were served throughout the day on Tuesday and at the reception as a way to experience the activities from the year (viral watermelon pickle sandwich pictured!).



The next meeting will be held in Austin, TX on February 22nd in conjunction with the NWA Convention.



CRCEO Meeting – Portland, Maine

NWPB Executive Director Mark Arney attended the Commodity Roundtable CEO meeting in Portland, Maine and hosted by the Maine Lobster Marketing Board.

The group's two day meeting covered a number of **topics and issues common to all groups**. USDA-AMS Administrator Bruce Summer joined the group via Zoom and briefed the group on activities of the USDA-AMS. These included the appointment process for various board positions, rulemaking updates and oversight. Administrator Summer was asked a number of questions by Roundtable members.



William Watson, The Fresh Approach (L), Mark Arney, Executive Director of the National Watermelon Promotion Board Middle, Lisa Droke, Senior Vice President and CFO, Cotton Board & Chairperson of the CRCEO Right

NWPB Hosts Media Training for Board Members

The day following October's board meeting, NWPB board members gathered for an insightful media training session led by public relations experts Daren Williams and Mary Moenning from Curious Plot (pictured right with NWPB Executive Committee). **This training provided board members with valuable tools to effectively communicate key messages and engage with the media.**



The session included a presentation covering essential media tips and insights, helping board members better understand the nuances of media interaction. Attendees gained firsthand experience in a live coaching session with a Q&A, where each Executive Committee member participated in a mock interview. This hands-on experience was instrumental in building confidence and media savvy, as each participant practiced navigating real-time interview scenarios under the pressure of being on camera and microphone.


Through constructive feedback, participants learned how stepping outside of their comfort zones fosters growth and improvement. By sharing this learning experience with their peers, each member came away better prepared to represent the NWPB and the industry as a whole.

NWA Executive Director George Szczepanski was also in attendance, creating messaging synergy throughout the industry.

Talking point sheets tailored to specific scenarios—Food Safety, Consumer Media, and Trade Interviews were also provided. These resources are designed to be adaptable and can be customized to fit each board member and their company, ensuring that all members speak from a unified message playbook when representing the board. If industry members are contacted for media opportunities outside of NWPB requests, they are encouraged to reach out for additional support. NWPB staff are available to provide further preparation if needed, making sure each member is ready for in-depth discussions on any topic.



Save the Date! Mexico Emerging Markets Program Results Webinar

Join us for a **webinar on Wednesday, November 13th @1pm Eastern** where we unveil the results of a comprehensive market assessment aimed at expanding U.S. watermelon exports, with a focus on Mexico. This insightful report will serve as a valuable guide for producers, shippers, and traders, addressing key challenges, regulatory needs, and market preferences. Learn how this roadmap will strengthen the U.S. watermelon industry's export strategy and track essential performance metrics for long-term success. Scan the QR code or click [here](#)  to register!



Industry Member Spotlight: Get to Know Cody Buckley

Company: M&P Produce Company

Time in the Industry: I started working part time for the family business after graduating high school in 2011. After I graduated college in 2015 I started working full time and it's where I've been since. I am the 4th generation in my family to work in the produce industry as my great grandfather was one of the original members on the San Antonio Produce Terminal Market.

Time on the board: January 2019 - December 2024

Favorite thing about watermelon: That watermelon can really bring people together and everyone can remember a good story or a fun time with watermelon. Watermelon never fails to make a kid smile when I give out samples or when I bring watermelons to family BBQs. I think everyone has a positive experience with watermelon and the nostalgia of having it when a kid never goes away. Because we bring so much joy to people I think the watermelon industry is something we can all be proud to be a part of.

Favorite item on bucket list: To dive the Great Barrier Reef.



NWA Nook: Building Tomorrow's NWA, Executive Committee Meeting Highlights

This October in Atlanta, alongside the IFPA Global Produce & Floral Show, the **National Watermelon Association's leadership gathered for a series of strategic meetings** that set an exciting course for our future:



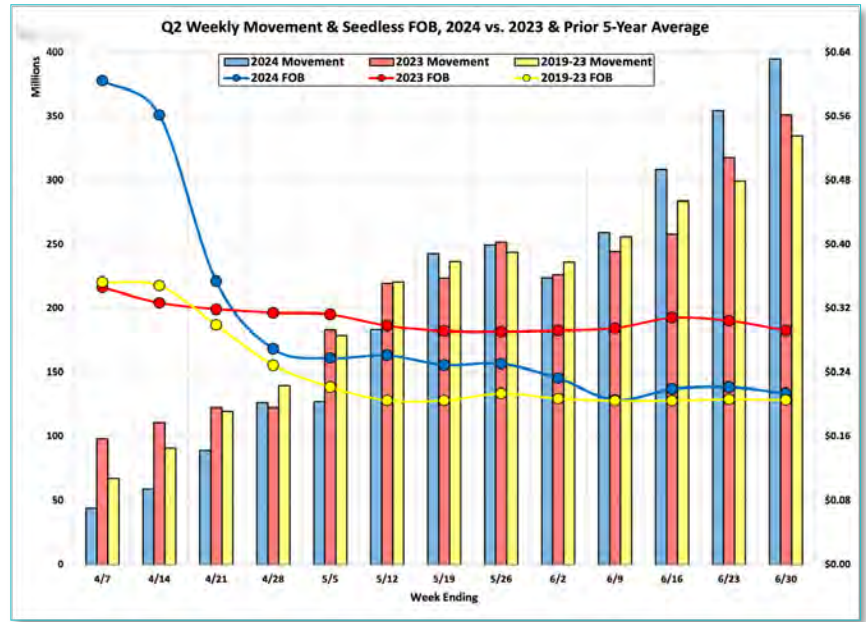
- Tuesday: Joined forces with the National Watermelon Promotion Board for collaborative industry discussions
- Wednesday: Built on NWPB's media training while launching into NWA committee work, with successful meetings of our Economics, Food Safety, Research, and Budget Committees
- Thursday: Advanced our strategic planning through the Promotions Committee and full Executive Committee meetings
- Friday: Immersed ourselves in the IFPA Global Show, where watermelon's prominence was on full display through industry signage, product demonstrations, and member connections

After a year of strengthening our communications through website redesign and improved outreach, we're energized to tackle industry challenges head-on and deliver even more value to our membership in the coming year. Stay tuned for developments as we act on the course charted in Atlanta, and deliver on plans to serve the watermelon industry for another year.

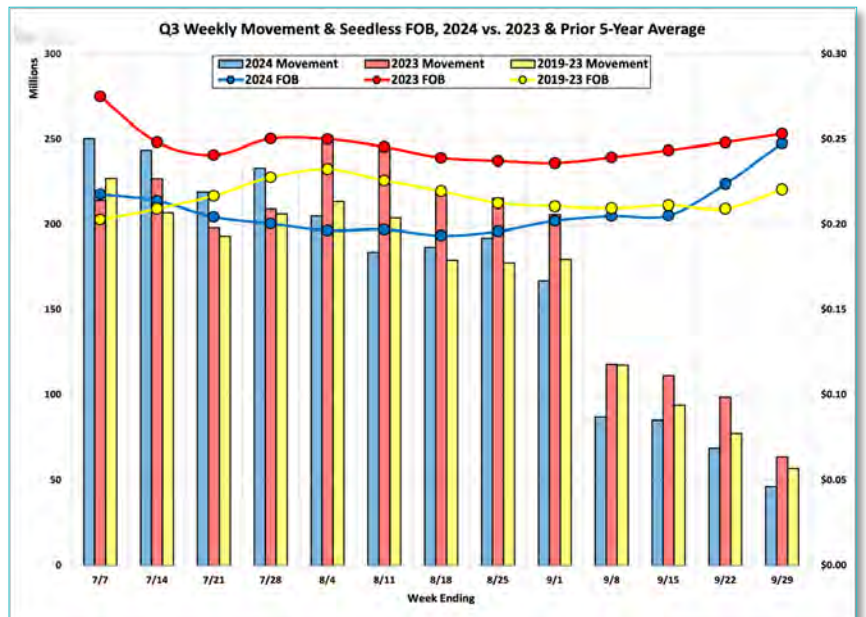


Quarter 2 & 3 Watermelon Supply & Pricing Analysis

Data freely provided by Agricultural Marketing Services (AMS) Specialty Crop Market News portal makes it easy to analyze how supply and pricing this year compares to past years. **The pictured charts compare the second and third quarters of 2024 to 2023 and the prior five-year average from 2019 - 23.** The blue columns show weekly movement for 2024 and can be compared to the red or yellow columns showing 2023 and the five-year average, respectively. Color consistency carries over to seedless FOB pricing with the right hand axis showing dollar per pound pricing.



Movement was very light most weeks early before falling in line for Memorial Day then closing the quarter with much stronger volume than either comparison period. Seedless FOBs started out very strong early then subsided to a midpoint between 2023 and the average. The tail end of Q2 featured near-average prices, while 2023 was well above average most weeks.



Strong volume continued to start the third quarter, but soon started to oscillate around average with both well below 2023. The last several weeks fell a good deal short of both periods. Prices around average to start the quarter spent a good deal of time below average before rallying to close out the quarter.

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.

Director Megan McKenna Part of IFPA Leadership Class 29

The International Fresh Produce Association announced the **incoming Class 29 of the prestigious Produce Industry Leadership Program on October 16th during the Global Show in Atlanta, including NWPB senior director of marketing and foodservice, Megan McKenna.** Sponsored by Corteva Agriscience, the only ongoing leadership program for the produce and floral industries was launched in 1995 and has graduated more than 330 program participants, including NWPB director Stephanie Barlow. The program is competitive, with only 12 spots available to high potential professionals. Beginning November 2024, the members of Leadership Class 29 will participate in several educational events centered on the four core focus areas of the program: leadership development, business relationships, government and public affairs, and media and public communications.



Influencing Foodservice Through Foodservice Media

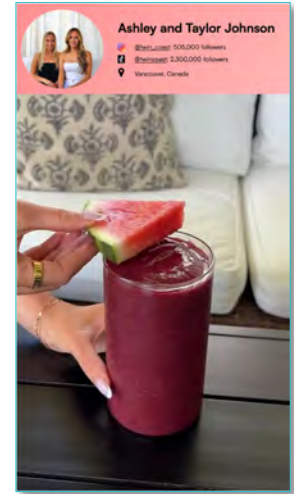
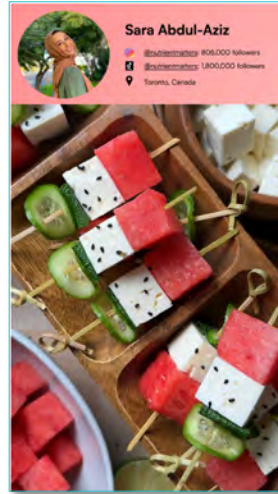
The Watermelon Board **uses foodservice media to reach many segments of the audience with watermelon education and inspiration.** Coverage comes naturally throughout the spring and summer, with fall and winter paid placements rounding out the year. The Board attended and sponsored the International Foodservice Editorial Council (IFEC) in Chicago at the end of October. The sponsorship included watermelon as a part of the opening night “Trend Around.” The Board was paired with restaurant Lena Brava who served a Watermelon Aguachile with seared watermelon, charred avocado, cucumber, chamoy, and guava and Watermelon Steak with al pastor marinade, pesto and feta crema, pistachio streusel, and dehydrated pineapples (pictured right). The menu items hit on trends such as plant-forward, spice, and global flavors.



Day two watermelon was featured as a part of the trend-forward breakfast; Watermelon Spears with Labneh, Honey and Lime. These great tastes led to 13 inspiring media appointments, pitching watermelon throughout 2025 based on trends and editorial calendars. **Follow up throughout 2025 will lead to strong watermelon coverage.**



Canada Influencer Campaign Mid-Year Report



NWPB’s Market Access Program in Canada continues to build its consumer communication efforts through content creators. This year, NWPB amplified the presence and appeal of watermelon by collaborating with influencers on TikTok and Instagram to highlight NWPB’s key messages. By enlisting a diverse group of influencers, each with a unique and engaged audience, the versatility, nutritional benefits and sheer joy associated with consuming watermelon were strongly showcased.

These influencers, ranging from foodies to health and lifestyle experts, have crafted engaging content that highlights recipes, wellness tips and entertaining ideas featuring watermelon. Results so far include 1.6 million impressions, 33K likes, 518 comments, over 5K shares and almost 10K saves!

Individuals with disabilities who require reasonable accommodations and or alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotope, 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 employe



Florida Watermelon Association Annual Convention

In October, NWPB Executive Director Mark Arney attended the Florida Watermelon Association Convention in Fort Myers. Despite a temporary power outage at the hotel, NWPB Board President Lee Wroten delivered a presentation on behalf of the Board updating attendees on the latest Board activities and initiatives aimed at promoting watermelon. The convention offered a chance to reconnect with long-standing industry partners and make new connections, all while celebrating the crowning of the new FWA Queen, Reagan Hudson. Congratulations to Reagan on her new role, and everyone involved in this memorable event for Florida watermelon!



Communications Mid-Year Report Highlights

Communications partner agency, Curious Plot, has provided a mid-year report with activity highlights and KPI measurements for the activities under the consumer communications outreach including social, digital and traditional media as well as influencer partnerships. Some key highlights include:

Simply Watermelon campaign video series shoot

- **Approach:** The video series was a cornerstone of the Simply Watermelon campaign, including high-quality videos shared during peak and shoulder season, leveraging watermelon in simple, easy-to-follow, and easy-to-replicate recipes that maintain watermelon as a simple, easy-to-enjoy snack.
- 16 videos (available for industry use) focused on simple, 5-ingredient-or-less new recipes added to the website
- **Results:** Total Views (through Sept. 30): **1.541M**
 - Instagram: 534K, Facebook: 1.0M, TikTok Views: 7K



Simply Watermelon social media ads

- **Approach:** Ran peak season ads that featured the simply shoot recipes and directed consumers to the corresponding recipe pages. Promoted for site traffic, these ads also generated over 66K organic engagements, a unexpected but welcome result. A dark ad landing as one of our organically engaging posts of 2024 without an in-timeline placement is a rarity, but reinforces the power of carousels in content format and high quality, simple recipes.
- **Results:** Facebook and Instagram Impressions: 3,724,711; Link Clicks: 57,935; Engagements: 66,310

Summer Giveaways illustrate Simply Watermelon campaign resonance

- **Approach:** NWPB social channels ran three giveaways during peak season. Users were asked to engage and comment to enter with the comment requiring users to share how they simply enjoy watermelon.
- **Results:** Facebook: 3.8K Reactions, 1,608 Comments, 143 Shares; Instagram: 6.2K, Reactions, 1,156 Comments
 - Many fans and followers let us know in the comments that they love watermelon simple: cold, plain and/or without any recipes or additional ingredients. When ingredients are used, they are often simple additions, like fruit pairings, salt, or Tajin.



Social Media posts with strategic lower cadence

- **Approach:** Drive an always-on presence of watermelon among U.S. consumers through a higher quality cadence of Instagram, Facebook, Pinterest and TikTok content, ads and community engagement with focuses on the Simply Watermelon campaign messaging during peak season.
- **Results:** Though social media post cadence decreased in FY24, a focus on posting the right content at the right time with the right promotion budgets has resulted in increased results.
 - **Impressions:** 22M, **+12% YOY** (surpassed full FY24 goal of 20M in 6 months)
 - **Paid Site Traffic:** 141,181 paid site visits, **+98% YOY** traffic growth

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Social Media Metrics: KPIs

This year, our social strategy is focused on increasing engagements (see chart, right, for status by platform).

For more information and reporting on other tactics within the Mid-Year Report, such as Grower Stories, Pinterest Ad Videos, Engagement-Driving Community Posts, Owned UGC TikTok Videos, Display/Banner Ads on Google, E-newsletter Reach, Website Reporting, and Influencer Partners for the Simply Watermelon Campaign, please contact Stephanie Barlow at sbarlow@watermelon.org.

	Total
Social Media Impressions	30,150,718
Facebook	8,485,805
Instagram	8,299,544
Pinterest	5,509,122
YouTube	301,678
TikTok	7,506,550
LinkedIn	48,019
Social Media Engagements	2,660,423
Facebook	313,538
Instagram	146,718
Pinterest	193,400
YouTube (Interactions)	1,966
TikTok	1,996,385
LinkedIn	8,416



Weis Markets Health Bites Magazine

NWPB participated in the September/October issue of Weis Healthy Bites magazine. The magazine had a **theme of snacking, fitting in nicely with the watermelon prosciutto skewers and including an article featuring a watermelon pizza recipe titled “Why Watermelon is Your Snack Soulmate.”** The feature included the recipes, website and a QR code that linked to NWPB’s website. 80,000 magazines were distributed in stores for free to Weis shoppers. It is also available on the store’s website, receiving an average of 1,500 visits for each issue of their Healthy Bites magazine release. It is then archived and remains available online.



International Fresh Produce Association Global Show

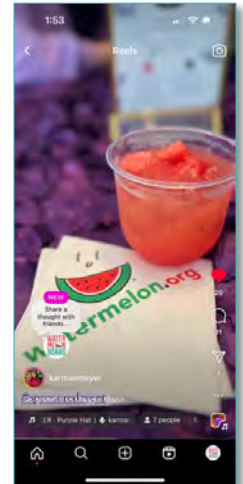
The 2024 International Fresh Produce Association's (IFPA) annual convention, the Global Show, did not disappoint! **NWPB staff Stephanie Barlow, Megan McKenna, and Juliemar Rosado**, heard about new consumer research on fresh fruits vegetables funded by IFPA, attended multiple panels with topics including K-12 foodservice, merchandising at retail and the state of the industry. They also visited with watermelon and greater produce industry colleagues throughout the 3-day event.



Reaching Influential Registered Dietitians Through Food & Nutrition Conference and Expo Events

Watermelon was incorporated and **presented at not one but two satellite events at this year's FNCE**, the world's largest annual gathering of food and nutrition experts, which took place in Minneapolis in early October.

- **Pause on Purpose for Total Brain Health A FNCE Saturday Mini Wellness Retreat** hosted by Maggie Moon, MS, RD
 - This event guided attendees through a joyfully crafted journey to experience the six pillars of brain health firsthand, including:
 - Immersive experiences to promote mindfulness and relaxation
 - Structured time to set intentions
 - Hands-on activities to foster creativity
 - Joyful movement to boost energy and vitality
 - Learning new skills from a national memory champion
 - Nourishing connections to create community
 - A watermelon wellness drink was served to the 58 Media Attendees and a Melon Sushi tasting bite was provided as a sweet surprise
 - Reach of this event on social media was over 3M from attendees posting and tagging during the event
- **Fruit & Veggie Trivia Night** hosted by the Healthy Family Project
 - An evening of lively networking, trivia, and impactful charitable giving while celebrating the power of fruits and vegetables
 - A casual multi-sponsored game night of trivia questions that included watermelon education and information as well as a watermelon grand prize featuring health and wellness-minded items like a One in a Melon yoga mat and more!



Watermelon on the Menu

Mission Ceviche, a Peruvian restaurant with two locations in New York, is serving a **Watermelon Ceviche** with Edamame, Yuzu and ginger tiger's milk and Crispy quinoa furikake.



NWPB Connections

Texas Watermelon Association Convention – McAllen, TX – November 7 – 9

Mexico Emerging Markets Projects Webinar – Virtual – November 13

USAEDC Annual Workshop – Baltimore, MD – November 20 & 21

Suwannee Valley Watermelon Institute – Fanning Springs, FL – December 5

