

Two Organizations Representing Different Interests of the Watermelon Industry

The National Watermelon Association, Inc. (NWA) is a voluntary membership trade association dedicated to helping the watermelon industry produce and market their crops at a profit. The NWA currently has members in 30 states plus Mexico and Canada - with chapters representing Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Indiana-Illinois, Maryland-Delaware, North Carolina, South Carolina, Texas and the Western U.S. The purpose of the Association is to promote the best interests of the Watermelon Industry from production to consumption. The NWA is constantly seeking improvements in the growing, grading, handling, transportation, distribution and sale of watermelon.

The NWA is the voice of watermelon farmers, packers, shippers and suppliers on issues of trade, labor, invasive pest and disease, pesticide and nutrient use, federal legislation, scientific research, farm and packer-based food safety, and many others. The NWA's goal is to make sure federal legislative and regulatory decisions are made with industry's concerns in mind. The NWA is a member of the National Watermelon Promotion Board's (NWPB) crisis management contact list. NWA focuses on issues that may arise in farm and packer-based food safety, labor, legislative issues, worker protection or immigration.

The NWA is host to the annual NWA National Convention, now entering its 98th year in February 2012. The NWA provides services in key business need areas such as insurance programs (life, disability, critical care and long term care) and Employment Practices insurance, and a soon-to-be-announced national discount program for rental cars. Our goal is to provide services that fill member needs in a cost effective manner for their families and employees alike.

The NWA supports the industry's research needs through scientific grants to numerous universities and other organizations each year with a keen focus on the highest research priorities. Disease research (i.e. vine decline, phytophthora, gummy stem blight, etc.), farming improvement research (i.e. plant grafting), and value-added research (i.e. ethanol) are examples of the NWA's investments that will provide answers and support to the industry's needs.

The NWA is a supportive force on promotional activities through the National Watermelon Queen program. The National Watermelon Queen is trained as a spokesperson for the association and the industry, and is involved each year with in-store promotions, fairs, festivals, trade shows, numerous other promotional events and an annual visit with our federal legislators; promoting the best interests of the industry. And, the NWA created "National Watermelon Month" through resolutions from our U.S. Congress which is producing state, regional and national promotional programs that will help to increase the consumption and sales of watermelon. Throughout the year NWPB works with NWA on various promotions to support their queen promotional program. Working with their established retail contacts, NWPB helps to bring the queen promotional program into retail environments for promotional purposes.

The NWA is a respected clearinghouse of information for over 1,000 members, publishing industry trend stories, key legislative and regulatory activities, scientific research to combat invasive pests and diseases, development of a watermelon-specific food safety program, and providing an effective means of communication that is on-going and responsive to the industry's needs, which will help members run their businesses more efficiently and effectively. The association communicates with its members through its member-only magazine - The Vineline, a quarterly newsletter - Off The Vine Bulletin, and an effective association/industry web site - <http://www.vineline-digital.com/vineline>.

A Board of Directors referred to as the NWA Executive Committee is elected annually by our members at the national convention. This body governs the NWA. They meet twice per year (national convention and fall meeting).

The NWA is funded by donations that are generated through the annual watermelon auction at the national convention, sponsorships, exhibitors, advertisers, a nominal membership fee paid through our nine chapters, and incentive/goal oriented partnership programs with key suppliers. Anyone that has an interest in the NWA and the industry's affairs is welcome to join through any of our chapters, which automatically enrolls a member into the NWA. The NWA continues to be the rallying point around which the industry gathers.

The National Watermelon Promotion Board (NWPB) is a commodity promotion board organization that operates under United States Department of Agriculture oversight. At the urging of the industry, following years of declining watermelon consumption, Congress passed the Watermelon Research and Promotion Act in 1995 which is the legal framework of the board. This oversight ensures that the organization is operating in the most fiscally responsible manner, is in compliance within the framework of the Act in which it operates under, and is disseminating fact-based information.

The NWPB is funded through a self-mandated industry assessment paid by the watermelon producer, handler, and importer. The NWPB is comprised of 36 elected board members who are then appointed by the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture. They represent all watermelon production areas of the United States and watermelon importers. During annual meetings the NWPB's directors decide how to invest its budget in board programs under the oversight of USDA.

The Board and its committees oversee the strategic direction, allocation of budget and staff resources, and operations of the NWPB. Board meetings are held twice a year, the executive committee meets once a month via teleconference, and individual committees meet via teleconference as needed. This meeting structure allows NWPB to be governed closely and effectively by the industry at the lowest possible operating expense.

The NWPB is a multi-faceted organization with a strategic mission to make watermelon an every day, healthy choice for consumers throughout the United States, Canada and other export markets. NWPB works to increase consumer demand for watermelon through promotions, marketing, research, communication and educational programs. It is considered the marketing and communications arm of the watermelon industry.

A primary function of the NWPB is to serve as a crisis communication agency for the watermelon industry. The NWPB has a comprehensive crisis communications plan that is ready to use in case of crisis in the industry. The multi-faceted plan includes crisis training for each board member and key staff, an after-hours crisis line, crisis protocol and checklists. In addition, NWPB's plan lists key contacts, and includes access to crisis communications experts for consultation and guidance. The program has also developed and distributed industry education brochures and tip cards to assist individual watermelon businesses in how to handle media and consumers if problems arise.

The marketing department promotions play a major role in NWPB's efforts to help the industry move more watermelon. The majority of promotions are done with retailers – the NWPB has a director of marketing who, along with 6 independent field merchandisers, represent watermelon to all the major retail chains in the United States and Canada.

National and regional promotions are run through the NWPB. This system of director and field representatives allows NWPB access to all major and secondary retailers, utilizing the services of

highly experienced professionals who have long-standing relationships with retailers. They provide assistance in customizing promotions for the individual retailers that fit their needs, are very strategic, yet, unlike other large budget commodity groups, cost very little to the growers, shippers and handlers NWPB represents. These customized promotions result in greater watermelon sales than generic promotions because they work within the framework of retailers' existing operations.

The communications department generates publicity to raise watermelon's profile with consumers through television, radio, newspapers, magazines and the internet at a fraction of the cost of advertising. The department and the NWPB watermelon.org web site act as clearinghouses for the media by providing the place to go for a wealth of information and usage ideas about watermelon. The department has showcased watermelon as a healthy, refreshing, versatile fruit available all year long with the use of professional celebrity chefs, nutrition research and professionals in part by participating in special events, including nutrition and education conferences. On-going efforts are made to communication that watermelon is not only for picnics anymore, but also belongs on consumers' tables all year long and at every meal occasion with a wide variety of desserts, drinks and recipes.

Recently in 2015, the NWPB added a foodservice department to increase watermelon on foodservice menus. Foodservice not only helps move volume but also helps to reach consumers with more watermelon messages and delicious watermelon tastes. The foodservice department works with foodservice media to educate and inspire foodservice decision makers in the publications they read. Foodservice event sponsorship and attendance help to reach decision makers throughout the business including commercial and noncommercial operators with professionals in purchasing, culinary, marketing and nutrition. Once a foodservice operator is interested in using or expanding watermelon on the menu, the NWPB can support them through menu ideation and menu promotions. To reach future chefs the NWPB also works with culinary schools and chefs looking for ongoing certification through American Culinary Federation accredited culinary curriculum.

Another area the NWPB focuses on is research. While NWA works on production research, it does not duplicate the NWPB research allowing the NWPB to concentrate on research aimed at the consumer in order to drive more movement of watermelon. NWPB works closely with the USDA station in Lane, Oklahoma, and Dr. Penny Perkins-Veazy, as well as the USDA facility in Beltsville, Maryland, on nutrition research in order to make consumer-focused health statements about watermelon. These statements are then utilized to encourage consumers to buy more watermelon for health reasons as well as taste.

NWPB also conducts consumer and watermelon sales research and uses it to understand today's shopper and retailer to customize marketing programs that will be effective at helping move more watermelon. A key industry service, NWPB also provides this data back to the producers, handlers and importers to directly assist them with their sales efforts. NWPB also aggressively seeks grants and other cost-effective research opportunities in order to maximize the organization's research budget.