



# A New Year: Let's Get To It



Recently attending the last watermelon chapter convention before the domestic season begins, I am reminded of what is truly important. It is this time of the year when we are in full anticipation of what the new year will bring. Let us remember to appreciate the blessings in our lives, to take the time to enjoy the simple things, and to give thanks. We have many blessings to be thankful for, even in times of tragedy or trouble. I for one am grateful to be surrounded by my bride, children, grandchildren, friends and memories.

For over 102 years the Association has gathered as a Family does for an annual reunion, as we did recently in New Orleans. We do so to celebrate past accomplishments and face new challenges directly, and together. We will all take it in while seeking those wonderful moments when we greet old friends and make new ones, all the while creating new memories for years to come. And we leave charged with a new sense of well-being while we prepare to anticipate the challenges that will come about.

Your Association will continue to lead by advancing the issues that are most important to you, always remaining diligent of what is most important. We will endeavor to seek solutions that will make your livelihoods a bit easier. The business of this Association will always be to serve you, our members and stakeholders.

As we face the future without a crystal ball, we have much work to do. We will continue to anticipate changes and trends, and hopefully be ahead of them, to be flexible throughout the Association while being relevant. Our focus will be two-fold: what are we doing today, and what must we do to be successful tomorrow.

Our team is incredibly honored to be serving you at the Association, and we are extremely thankful to those who have stood with us and believe in our cause to bring the Association to greater heights. We could not do our job without wonderful members (and friends) like you helping us while lending your advice and support. Our future is very bright because of our collective efforts. Thank you for that - - very much.

May you have a very blessed year in 2016, and may God continue to bless our families, our country, and the National Watermelon Association. On behalf of your staff, be safe, be blessed, and the best of luck to you all.

Your friend and colleague (Executive Director),  
*Bob Morrissey*

# Precision AG – the Jetson Era is Here

by Lora Abcarian | Produce News

Yesterday’s science fiction is today’s science fact.

The Highland Corp., based in Mulberry, FL, began research and development on drones expected to revolutionize the agricultural production industry. “We’re taking Green Acres and mixing it with CSI,” said CEO Steve Maxwell.

The result of this mix is a highly sophisticated, cutting-edge technology aerial drone designed with the specific purpose of helping agricultural producers make quick, accurate business decisions based upon a host of real-time data.



The Precision Ag team has begun R&D testing of cutting-edge drones designed to provide agricultural producers with rapid response and cloud storable data to help them make quick business decisions about the condition of their crops. The drones are being developed in partnership with a Department of Defense contractor and software developers.

Maxwell became fascinated with drones after reading an article in the Wall Street Journal last January. “Eighty percent of drones are expected to be used in agriculture,” he said about details the article contained.

While the technology has been around for the past 30 years, Maxwell said it was used by satellites that weren’t very accurate. Three factors are facilitating the development of drone technology at Highland: development of a highly sophisticated drone flying at 100 meters altitude; six cutting-edge cameras that can bear down on their targets in the field to within 3.6 centimeters; and access to the computing power of the cloud.

With the capability to store literally millions of images in the cloud “this will be very economical for farmers,” Maxwell said.

The pinpoint accuracy of the cameras on the drones will provide producers with a myriad of obser-



national options. He provided an example of the power of the technology. “Light reflects a certain way when a plant is healthy. It reflects differently when the plant is sick. We can see disease before the human eye sees it.”

This ability means that a producer who is concerned about disease or pest pressures will be able to identify problems within quadrants and provide appropriate treatment to the specific site rather than having to deal with a field as a whole.

The drones can also identify soil types, commodity count and product size. As a result, producers can more easily achieve their goals of good land stewardship by reducing their carbon footprint and impact upon the land while working to reduce front-end financial inputs.

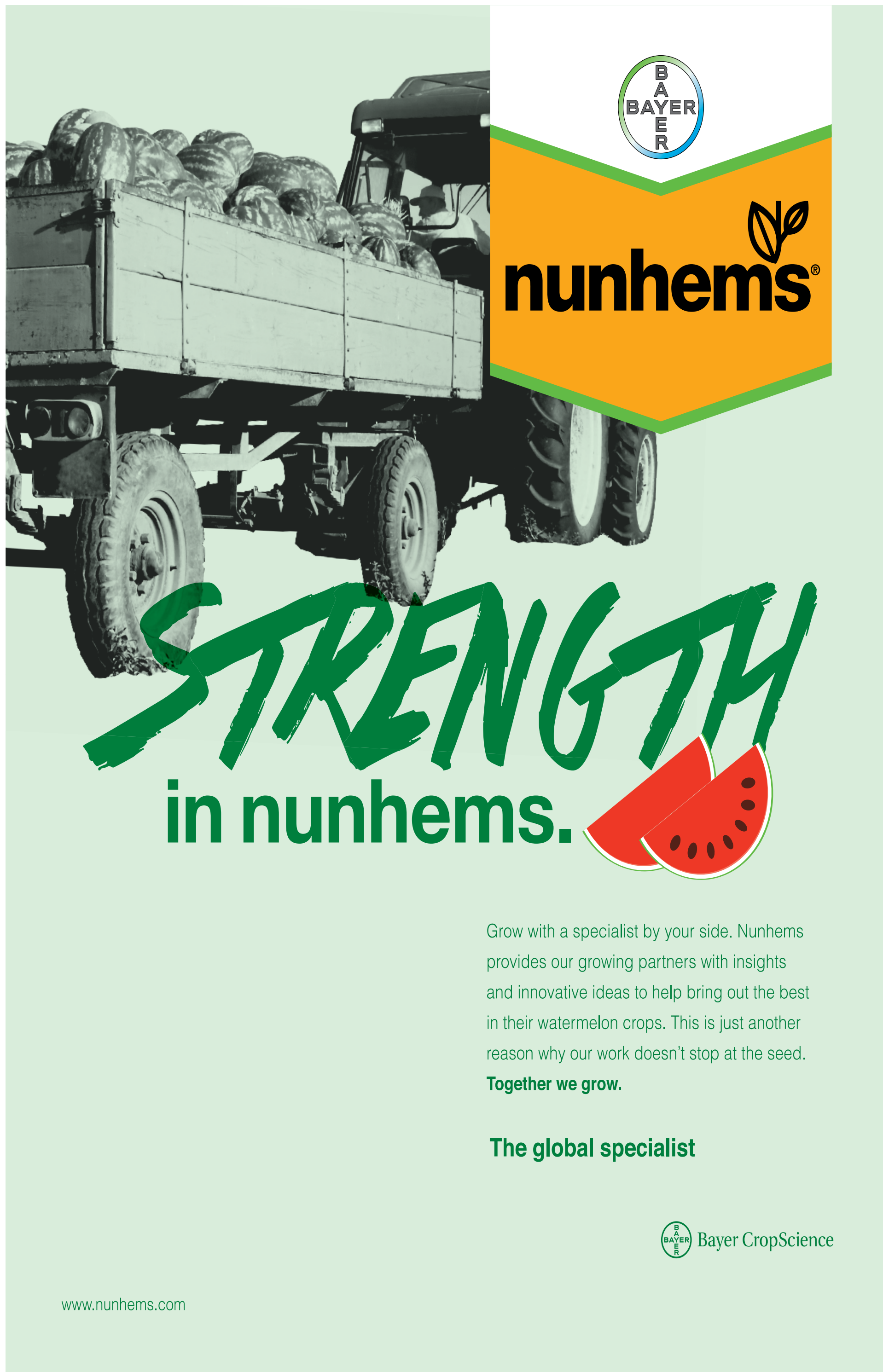
“This will assist in giving farmers regular updates about the progress made to correct problems,” he added. Multispectral, near-infrared and infrared cameras examine light of varying wavelengths. Hyperspectral imaging looks at 270 different bands of light.

“Coming down the road, we will refine the camera systems for specific commodities,” Maxwell added. Highland is working with the Florida Department of Agriculture to create a new certification category: Precision Ag. Maxwell said this certification, which he expects will be approved by the end of 2016, would add a new, bold category to reinforce producers’ commitments to feeding people. As envisioned, growers must meet all regulatory requirements; engage in prior planning to establish a baseline; schedule flyovers to determine pest and disease pressures; and commit to maintaining resultant data in the cloud for three growing seasons.

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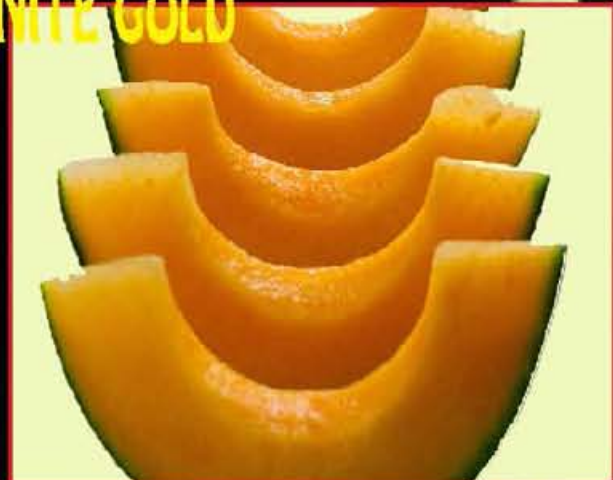
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## Hairnets and Pole Barns: Watermelon Group Voices Audit Concerns

By Chris Koger The Packer I

NEW ORLEANS — This was not your standard produce conference food safety session.

At the National Watermelon Association's Convention, executive director Bob Morrissey brought together three speakers representing the industry, the government and third-party auditors with the goal of giving growers the opportunity to ask point-blank questions about how Food Safety Modernization Act rules would specifically affect their operations.

Those attending the Feb. 27 session voiced concerns about whether they'd be covered by the produce safety rule or the preventive controls rule, what they see as nonsensical audit mandates and how to comply with water testing rules. Growers were most vocal during a presentation by Primus AuditingOps.

Two main points of contention concerning PrimusGFS and its application to watermelon growing/packing: a requirement that all employees handling watermelons must wear hairnets (and bibs), and all packing should be in fully enclosed facilities. NWA members said there's no food safety risk involved without hairnets, and that a majority of watermelon shippers pack in pole barns. Several in attendance also pointed out that no retailer demands their own employees wear hairnets when handling the watermelons.

Growers reported on their experiences of on-site inspections that they said were confrontational instead of collaborative. Some also listed issues that auditors brought up during the inspection: a single cigarette butt found in a parking lot on the property, gnats in a packinghouse in southern Georgia, a question of whether the grower had tested the strength of store-bought hand sanitizer.

"From the association level we are going to approach (Azule) and other scheme owners to discuss these things," he said. "We need to get to some point where these audits are making common sense and stop with these expectations that are unrealistic, that are not improving the safety of the fruit, and costing money unnecessarily."

Primus AuditingOps is now following up audits with customer surveys, and the company is hiring auditors to replace ones that have been let go for various reasons, and encouraged growers who are unhappy with the audit visit to file a complaint.

A number of NWA members were also concerned about whether they are covered by the produce safety rule — basically growers are covered — or the preventive control rule, which is directed at processors. A fuzzy area, however, concerns handling other growers' watermelons at a facility apart from a farm, which is a common practice for many watermelon shippers.

After hearing about a number of different growing/packing scenarios from the group, Kevin Gerrity, from the FDA's Office of Regulatory Affairs, said education, not enforcement, is key in ensuring the industry complies with FSMA. Typically, if an FDA inspection turns up a problem, the inspector will leave a notice with the company, and if the problem isn't resolved by the time a follow-up inspection is scheduled, a warning letter is issued.

"Then we'll start ratcheting things up, we start talking about seizures and injunctions," Gerrity said. "At the end of the day, we are a regulatory agency, so if it comes to a point where we can't come to an agreement and it appears that there's product that may harm the public that could end up in the market, we have to take action. But that's absolutely the last step."

David Gombas, vice president of scientific and technical affairs for the United Fresh Produce Association, recom-

## GMOs: To Be or Not to Be

GMOs: a debate that will continue for some time? We'll see what happens, but in reality GMO crops are a major part of our current day food.

From a farming standpoint, GMO crops offer great benefits: higher yields and disease resistance that lowers farm costs, reduces required acreage to produce yield, and carbon footprints.

However, consumer groups have created a great deal of drama related to GMOs, forcing some retailers to move away from GMO crops. Even when FDA has proven that they have no health risk to consumers, the moves have occurred.

As a result, up to 30 states are considering GMO food labeling laws, with Vermont being the first to pass a law that takes effect on July 1st.

As a result of the state actions, our U.S. Congress is in debate with a measure that would give consumers, businesses and farmers uniform standards based on federal determination of food label requirements for all foods including those made with genetically modified organisms (GMO).

A patchwork of state food labeling laws will increase costs to consumers by increasing processing and packaging costs. Enacting a national voluntary food labeling standard would eliminate those consequences in the marketplace.

The Association has contacted all watermelon seed companies to request a letter confirming that their seed is NON-GMO. Those letters are located on our website ([www.watermelon.ag](http://www.watermelon.ag)), and are there for your use in case one of your customers requires them.



Dr. David Gombas, Vice-President of Research and Food Safety for United Fresh Produce Association

mended growers take advantage of on-farm readiness reviews, a free service that will be provided by the state or federal agency overseeing the produce rule inspections. One grower said he heard the federal government has raised the stakes in responding to food safety problems and foodborne illness outbreaks, threatening criminal prosecution.

That, Gombas said, hasn't changed since the Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act of 1938 was established. In recent years, that led to prison sentences for officials at the Peanut Corporation of America, for knowingly shipping tainted peanut butter. In the listeria outbreak that was traced to Jensen Farms cantaloupe, the brothers at the company were charged with a misdemeanor and received probation.

The difference in the cases, Gombas said, was intentionally doing wrong and knowingly shipping tainted product. Regardless of what they're being asked to do, growers know they must have that certification. Retailers demand it, and they should have confidence in every item on their store shelves.

But retailers, who influence what third-party audits include, also have a responsibility to be fair to their suppliers. When retailers send representatives to accompany third-party inspectors to growing operations, they should take note of how audit mandates apply (or not) to those growers.

## Partnerships Pay Dividends to the Association

The National Watermelon Association in 2016 will continue with these distinct incentive programs with select suppliers of seed, logistics and pallets. Each program, albeit slightly different, provides a benefit directly to the Association when one of our members purchases their products and/or services.



The original partnership program was launched in 2008, and to date has resulted in over \$150,000 in incentives paid to the Association. Based on last year's business with our members, incentives are achieved when your business with CHEP (blue pallets) exceeds established goals. When CHEP builds their business to exceed the prior year's business, then the Association benefits. This is a true partnership program that has positive results for all involved.

In New Orleans, the CHEP incentive set a new high with over \$34,000 received. That is a testament to those members that utilize CHEP's excellent product and service .... While they benefit from the great product and service from CHEP, they also build this program to the benefit of their Association, which helps us to expand programs.

You have choices for your pallet needs and provider ..... we ask you to consider CHEP as your preferred pallet provider, knowing that while they are taking care of your needs, they are supporting your Association. CHEP is the only pallet provider that supports your Association financially. This program is a Win-Win-Win, for all of us!!!



Trucking watermelons to market is a process that requires time, patience and diligence each and every year. The Association begins its third year of partnership with Allen Lund Company (ALC) to fill that need (and void) for you. As a national truck broker operation with its original roots in produce, ALC has the resources that can meet your needs.

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## National Report

In wrapping up Queen Emily's year, I would like to again say thank you to 2015 National Queen, Emily Brown for the outstanding job she did representing NWA this past year. Thank you Emily! We love you!

Her tour picks up last November. We attended the NASCAR Infinity Race in Homestead sponsored by The National Watermelon Promotion Board. We were there to cheer on our driver of the Watermelon car, Ross Chastain. Ross does a fantastic job driving and promoting watermelon. Special thanks to NWPB for sponsoring us to the Homestead Race! Emily was sponsored back home to Vincennes for their annual Christmas parade by Hoosier Fresh Farms, thank you Kelly and Aaron! A little cold and fog didn't ruin their parade. Thank you Kelly and Aaron for your support of our program and Emily!

Our next stop was also back home in Indiana for Emily, for the annual Watermelon Drop, sponsored by the Illiana Watermelon Association. I was delighted to be able to attend this year. NWA President Dennis Mouzin and wife Cathy treated us to dinner, where we were joined by Anita Field. It was cold, but a fun and exciting way to bring in the New Year Watermelon style! We assisted Chef Joe in his tent as he carved and worked his magic. Watermelon salsa for everyone! When the clock struck 12:00 midnight, the Watermelons dropped, much more exciting than the ball in Times Square! Those Illiana melons brought quite a splatter! Special thanks to the Illiana Watermelon Association for your sponsorship and support of Emily this year.

Emily's next stop was historic Charleston, South Carolina for the South Carolina Watermelon Associations convention. Thank you to the South Carolina Association for sponsoring. Emily enjoyed the opening reception and meeting members and visiting with friends. Welcomed by President Scotty Sandifer. Congratulations to Laura the 2016 South Carolina Queen, I'm sure a wonderful year awaits you! We were sponsored to St Simons Island, Georgia, for their annual convention. We were welcomed warmly to the beautiful setting of the King and Prince on St. Simons Island. Thanks to the Georgia Watermelon Association for sponsoring us! We enjoyed the fun and fellowship of the watermelon family. We congratulate Andi Drue Dickerson on being selected the 2016 Georgia Watermelon Queen! Thank you President, Ricky Tucker, and GWA for an enjoyable convention.

We were soon off the Cambridge, Maryland for the 51st Annual Mar-Del Convention. Special thanks to our sponsors Scot and Caitlin Givens for your generous sponsorship. We were welcomed warmly by the members. Emily and I enjoyed the opportunity to visit precious little Kendell Givens and also President Will Hales and wife Candice Hales precious twins Miss Landry and handsome Ledger! Courtney Hastings did an awesome job representing the Mar-Del Watermelon Association this year! Courtney crowned Amy Wigglesworth the 2016 Mar-Del Queen! Congratulations Amy! Thank you again Caitlin and Scot Givens for sponsoring.

Emily and I were soon off to beautiful Biloxi, Mississippi for the annual Alabama Watermelon Convention. We were excited to be sponsored by the Alabama Watermelon Association. It was a fantastic convention, with AWA President Jeff Garrett, and Bobbie Jo at the helm. The food, fun, entertainment and auction were great! Queen Lenze did an excellent job for Alabama. Lenze crowned Miss Madison Laney the 2016 Alabama Watermelon Queen. Congratulations Madison, you are sure to have a great year! Thanks again to the Alabama Watermelon Association.

### National Watermelon Convention

The annual NWA convention gathered in New Orleans, Louisiana for their 102nd convention. We were welcomed by NWA President Dennis Mouzin and wife Cathy. Executive director Bob Morrissey had an interesting and entertaining program for attendees. The opening party at Mardi Gras World was a huge success. You can safely say a good time was had by all!

I would like to congratulate all the contestants in the National Queen competition, they did an amazing job! Not only at convention but during their year serving as a state queen as well. We congratulate Miss Carla Penney of Vienna, Georgia on being selected the 2016 National Watermelon Queen!

Carla is the 22 year old daughter of John and Carlene Penney. She is an American History major with a minor in Communication Studies, attending the University of Georgia. Carla wishes to thank all the donors of her scholarship monies, as well as the memorial scholarship donations, and the items purchased at the auction. Thanks to, Multicorr; Seminis; NWA; and the Brent and Debbie Jackson, Jackson Farming, for the Adam Jackson Memorial Scholarship; and the anonymous donor of the Oren Childers Memorial Scholarship fund. We certainly appreciate your generosity. Thank you to the Wiggins Family for purchasing the luggage for Carla. She's already put it to good use! Carla thanks the Bayer Group for the great Cannon Camera. Carla hit the road running as the 2016 National Queen, five days after crowning she was off to Indiana.

We congratulate Miss Lenze Morris on being selected second runner-up, and to Miss Carmen Honneycutt on being selected first runner-up. The Miss Jubilee title went to Miss Courtney Hastings! Congratulations to each of you! Each and every girl did an amazing job!

Carla has already been very busy as the National Queen. She is doing a fantastic job for you. If you are interested in sponsoring Carla to an event please contact me so we can get you on the calendar.

Special thank you to all our sponsors, we value your support!

Eleanor Bullock / NWA Promotion Coordinator / etb.nwa@gmail.com / or 229.322.9933



Homestead NASCAR Xfinity Race, Susan and Chad Chastain with Kelly and Emily



Serving up watermelon in the garage area



Show us your W



Our favorite driver, Ross Chastain!



Emily with Bob and Betsy Morrissey



The Vincennes Christmas Parade



Thank you Hoosier Fresh Farms, Kelly, Aaron, and Katelyn!



Thanks to IWA for sponsoring us to the Watermelon Drop



The "Star of the Evening"



Thank you!



Emily and Lindsey on this chilly New Year's Eve!



Brad and Angie Tony and family warming in the tent



Chef Joe and Anita at the Watermelon Drop



Allison and Ann with Emily in Charleston for the Presidents Reception



More of our great South Carolina friends



President Scotty Sandifer, Louise and Bradley O'Neal in Charleston



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## National Pictures



Emily enjoying Landry and Ledger Hales at the Mar-Del Convention



Thanks Kelly, Aaron and Katelyn for all your support this year



Hammy Dicks of Melon 1 at the Reception



Emily enjoying Mr. and Mrs. Ricky Tucker (President) by the fire pit



Emily says thank you to the South Carolina Association!



Emily and Carla



Courtney and Emily during the convention



Carmen and Emily Congratulate Queen Laura, and her runners-up



Kendra and Emily at the GWA convention



Mar-Del President Will



Congratulations Laura!



Our lovely Queens outside for the Seed Spit



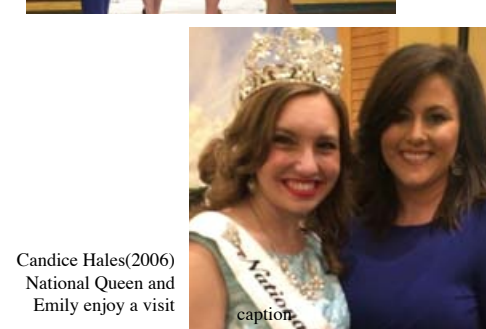
Ready for the Seed Spit



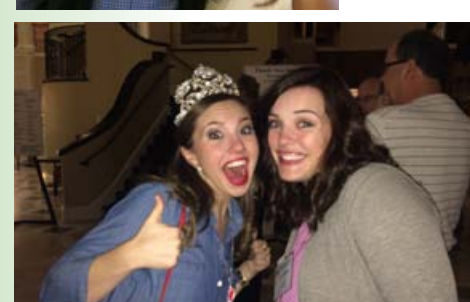
Emily poses with Mr. Charles Hall in St Simons



These girls worked together throughout the year



Candice Hales(2006) National Queen and Emily enjoy a visit



Emily and Samantha



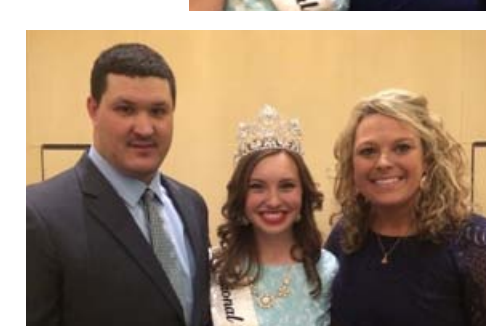
Katelyn shows us her W



Rich Novak and Emily



Congratulations Andi Drue Dickerson!



THANK YOU SCOT AND CAITLIN!



Congratulations Amy Wigglesworth

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## National Pictures



Katie and Lenze welcome Emily to AWA



AWA President  
Jeff Garrett  
welcomes  
Emily



What a fun night Under the Boardwalk



Cheryl Hicks and Emily enjoy a visit



Jason and the girls!



Emily assists with a Watermelon recipe demonstration at AWA



Emily and all the AWA Contestants



Congratulations  
Madison Lancy  
2016 Alabama  
Queen



Proud parents John and Carlene Penney



Emily and Contestants during Orientation in New Orleans



Thanks to the Wiggins for the luggage purchase



Queens and Coordinators during the Opening Reception in New Orleans



Thanks to the Bayer Group for the Camera



Bob Morrissey and the contestants during the Mardi Gras party



The Judges congratulate Carla!



All the lovely contestants



All the former National Queens welcome Carla to the family



Miss Jubilee Courtney Hastings



Greg Leger congratulates Carla



THE WINNER  
IS CARLA  
PENNY, 2016  
National  
Watermelon  
Queen



Congratulations from the Melon 1 team



First Runner-up Carmen Honeycutt, and Second Runner-up Lenze Morris



Samantha is all smiles with the 2016 National Queen, Carla

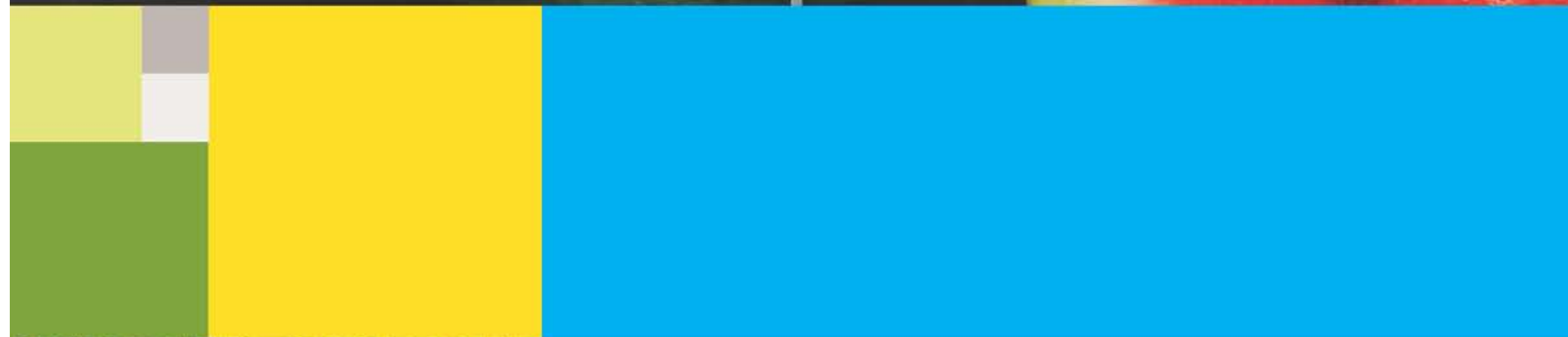
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## Awards and Honors Galore in New Orleans

The 102nd convention (Family Reunion) of the National Watermelon Association was one filled with memories, tradition, and advancements. We have selected a 'sampling' of awards and honors to 'wet your whistle'. Let's take a quick look at the major awards that were presented to our winners, and special honorees:



Representatives of the First Class of the Hall of Fame



Annual Marketing Award - MarDel Chapter



Auction Award winners from Melon 1



Auction Supplier of the Year - Syngenta



Don Hiller accepts the Auction award on behalf of Food Lion



First Class of Future Watermelon Farm Leaders - Wiggins, Singletary, Page and Moore



Golf - First Place Team awards - Score of 65



Golf - The winning team of Schmidt, Johnston, Mouzin and Kirschenman



Hall of Fame inductee, Buddy Leger



Highest # Increase of Members - MarDel Chapter



Highest % Increase of Members - Western Chapter



more Auction Awards for Melon 1



National Display Contest - Key West Commissary

The photographic memories posted above are a sampling of what occurred in New Orleans, from the introduction of our first class of Future Watermelon Farm Leaders, to the induction of the first class of the National Watermelon Association Hall of Fame. Hundreds of memories are now posted on our website at [www.watermelon.ag](http://www.watermelon.ag) under the Events tab. Take a look; download and print what you wish; Enjoy the new memories.



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Josh Rowe  
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## Alabama Report

Greetings from the Alabama Association! The Alabama Watermelon Association Convention was held in February at the Beau Rivage Resort in Biloxi, Mississippi. This year's convention was a huge success and could not have been possible without our convention sponsors: ALFA, Clifton Seed Company, Continental Produce, Genecco Produce, International Paper, LFT Greenhouses, McMelon, Multicorr, Nunhems USA, Premier Melon Company, Syngenta, Borders Melons, Browning & Sons, Freight Movers, LLC, National Watermelon Association, Rouses Supermarkets, WestRock, Billy Smith's Watermelon, CHEP USA, Harris Moran Seed Company, Intergro, Morgan Wood Products, National Watermelon Promotion Board, Siegers Seed Company, Valdosta Plant Company.

This year we had six wonderful young ladies compete for position of the 2016 Alabama Watermelon Queen. Congratulations to the 2016 Queen Madison Laney from Ariton, 1st runner-up Paige Severino from Enterprise and 2nd runner-up Bailey Sawyers from Dothan. Thank you to our Queen Contestant Sponsors: Billy Smith's Watermelons, Clifton Seed Company, Double A Farms, Gulf Seed, International Paper, and Intergro.

Queen Madison and I are both very excited to get started this year. We will be attending the Cooper River Bridge Run in South Carolina in March and then the National Watermelon Promotion Board training in Orlando, FL. Following the training we will start the 2016 Queen Tour handing out watermelon at races, visiting elementary schools all across Alabama, attending watermelon festivals and farmers markets, completing farm tours in Georgia, Alabama and Florida, and many other exiting promotions.

Last but not least, the Alabama Watermelon Association would like to congratulate our 2015 Queen Lenze Morris on being selected 2nd runner up at the National Watermelon Queen Competition. A special thank you, for all your hard work and dedication over the past year. You have represented the Alabama Association with great pride and elegance! In addition, thank you to all that have helped make her year so special!

See you all soon,  
Katie Eubanks  
Promotions Coordinantor  
334-237-0600  
[Katie.Eubanks2@gmail.com](mailto:Katie.Eubanks2@gmail.com)



Queen Lenze, Mardel Queen Courtney, GA Queen Carla, and FL Queen Kelli enjoying time together in Tampa, FL at the Florida Watermelon Convention.



Congratulations to the 2016 MarDel Watermelon Queen, Amy Wigglesworth.



Queen Lenze thanking Ms. Cheryl Hicks with West Rock for the beautiful gold watermelon ring.



AWA President Jeff Garrett and Bobbie Jo Garrett with 2016 Alabama Watermelon Queen, Madison Laney.



Congratulations to the 2016 Florida Watermelon Queen, Katy May Harrison.



2015 AL Queen Lenze Morris, 1st runner up Paige Severino, 2016 Queen Madison Laney, and 2nd runner up Bay Leigh Sawyers.



Jason Hanselman with the National Watermelon Promotion Board visiting with the Queens at the Alabama Watermelon Association Convention.



Syngenta's Bill Bussey visiting with Queen Lenze during the National Watermelon Convention.



These ladies love watermelon! A beautiful day in St Simons Island, GA.



TEAM WATERMELON!



Congratulations to the 2016 Georgia Watermelon Queen, Andi Dickerson.



Members of the Alabama Watermelon Association congratulating Queen Lenze on a job well done!



Harry Vaughn with Gulf Seed, Queen Lenze and Will Hales the MarDel Association President during auction.



What a great job these ladies have done this year. 1st runner up NC Queen Carmen, 2016 National Queen Carla, 2nd runner up AL Queen Lenze, and 2015 National Queen Emily.



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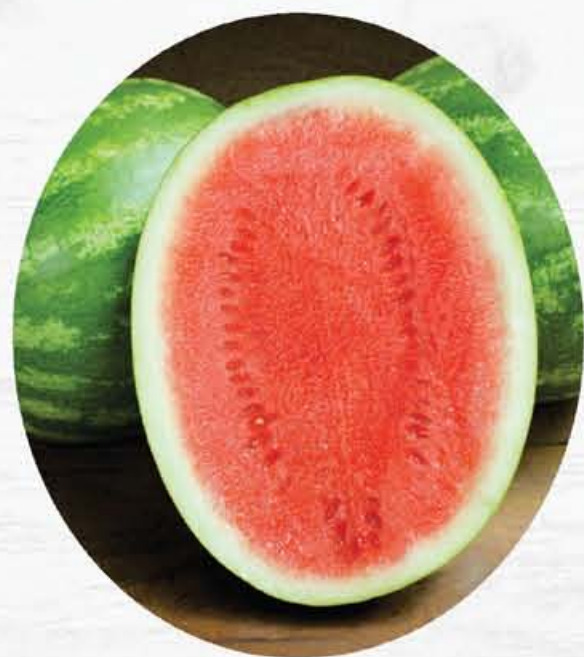
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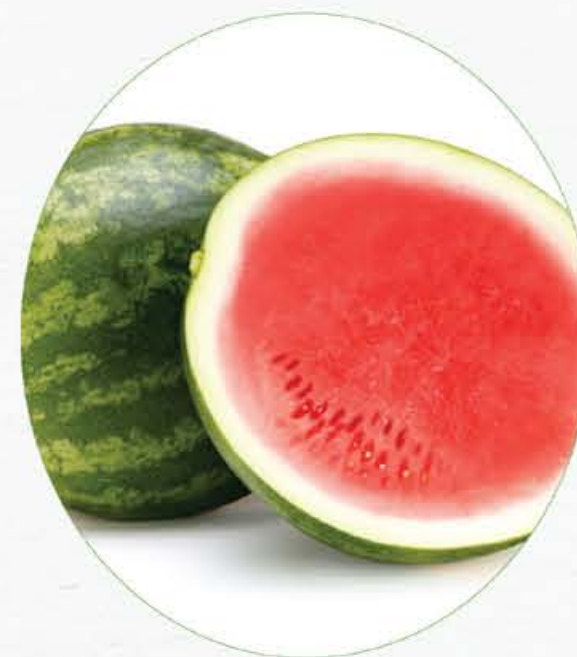
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## Florida Report

Greetings from the Sunshine State of Florida

2016 started off with a lot of exciting things happening with the Florida Watermelon Association. First of all, The Florida Watermelon Association held its 48th Annual Florida Watermelon Convention on Jan 15-17, at the Renaissance Tampa International Plaza Hotel, Tampa, Florida.

After a weekend of competition, Saturday evening's banquet ended with the crowning of our 2016 Florida Watermelon Queen Katy Mae Harrison, daughter of Billy Ray and Sherrie Harrison of Newberry, Florida. Katy Mae is an AWS Certified Welder, Brazer and Operator. She likes to spend her spare time painting, kayaking, welding, four-wheeling, and enjoying the great outdoors. Most of all she loves laughing and spending time with her family and friends. Katy Mae is attending Santa Fe College in Gainesville where she is majoring in Business Administration. Our first runner-up went to Hailey Bason of Chiefland, Florida and the second runner-up is Felicity Mejeris of Old Town, Florida. Katy Mae Harrison also received the "Miss Jubilee Award". Another special award that was given out for that evening was "The Ms. June Smith Award" that went to Mrs. Laura Land. Also during our convention Mr. Carr Hussey was elected as our First Vice-President and Mr. Mark Bryan was elected as our Second Vice-President. Congratulations to everyone!!

Following that weekend, Queen Kelli and I were off to the Georgia Watermelon Convention held at the King & Prince Beach & Golf Resort in St Simons, Georgia. Thanks to Melon 1 for sponsoring us for this event. Congratulations to Miss Andi Dickerson for being selected as the 2016 Georgia Watermelon Queen. Also congratulations to their new promotions coordinator Dawn Cheplick. Looking forward to seeing both of you this year.

Then in February, Queen Kelli and Brandi Harrison were headed off to the Alabama Watermelon Convention at the Beau Rivage Resort and Casino. Thanks to Clifton Seed Company, International Paper, Debra Harrison, Billy Smith Watermelons, and Mack Farms for sponsoring them. Congratulations to Miss Madison Laney for being crowned the 2016 Alabama Watermelon Queen. A special thank you to Brandi Harrison for filling in for me as chaperone for this event.

Then Queen Kelli and I were off to New Orleans, Louisiana for the National Watermelon Convention held at the Hyatt Regency. Congratulations to Miss Carla Penny for being crowned the 2016 National Watermelon Queen. Thank you to the National Watermelon Association for a weekend of fun that was filled with special friends and memories. The Florida Watermelon Association and I are proud of Kelli for the job that she has done this past year. You have been a wonderful and amazing spokesperson for our watermelon industry.

If you would like information regarding our queen appearances, please contact me at (863) 633-8306 or [debra@flfwa.com](mailto:debra@flfwa.com). Also thank you to my board of directors for my beautiful watermelon necklace. I will always cherish it with lots of memories from all of you. Thanks to all of you for supporting our queen program that I dearly love.

Wishing everyone a successful watermelon season.... until next time!

Debra Harrison  
Florida Watermelon Promotions Coordinator  
Email: [debra@flfwa.com](mailto:debra@flfwa.com)  
Home: (863) 494-1163  
Cellular: (863) 633-8306

Thank you to all of the 2016 "Convention Sponsors".



Queen Kelli visiting with Ms. Mary Jones and Ms. Cheryl Hicks in Georgia.



Our new 2016 "FWA Officers" - Chandler Mack - Chairman of Board, Mr. Mark Bryan - Second Vice-President, Mr. Carr Hussey First Vice-President, Mrs. Laura Land - President along with Patty Swilley - Secretary, 2016 FWQ Katy Mae Harrison and Debra Harrison - Promotions Coordinator.



Congratulations to Laura Land for receiving "The Ms. June Smith Award".



Our 2016 FWA judges along with our newly crowned 2016 Florida Watermelon Queen Katy Mae Harrison.



Our dearest and beautiful "HAS BEEN" with Queen Katy Mae.



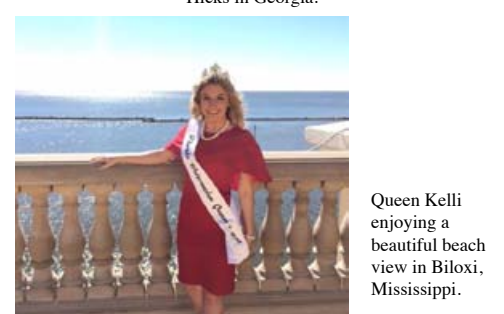
Congratulations to Hailey Bason - First Runner -Up, Florida Watermelon Queen Katy Mae Harrison, Second Runner-up Felicity Mejeris.



2016 Georgia Watermelon Queen Miss Andi Dickerson. Congratulations!



Thanks to "Melon 1" for sponsoring Queen Kelli and I for The Georgia Watermelon Convention.



Queen Kelli enjoying a beautiful beach view in Biloxi, Mississippi.



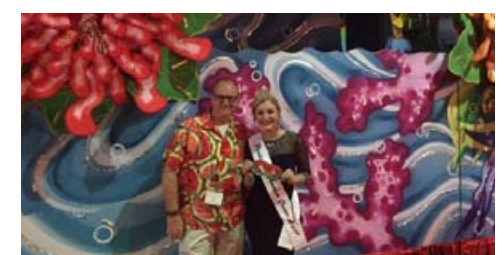
"Congratulations" to Madison Laney 2016 Alabama Watermelon Queen!



Thanks Paul and Jackie Sawyer for finding and sharing this "beautiful picture scenery" at the Mardi Gras World.



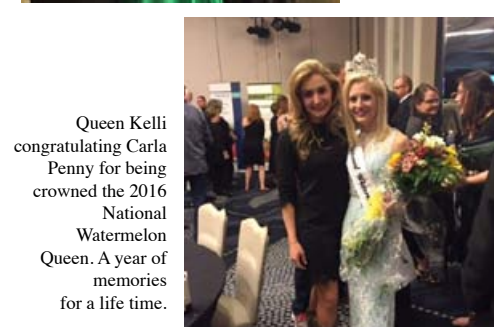
Thank you Bob Gibson of Gibson Produce for the beautiful watermelon necklace.



Queen Kelli showing Executive Director Bob Morrissey her hand-painted Mardi Gras mask that she made. An event that everyone enjoyed.



Queen Kelli with her mom along with her grandmother in New Orleans.



Queen Kelli congratulating Carla Penny for being crowned the 2016 National Watermelon Queen. A year of memories for a life time.

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## Georgia Report

Greetings from Georgia!

We're proud to report on a tremendous annual conference back in St. Simons this year. We held our meeting at the King & Prince Beach and Gold Resort where attendees enjoyed a day at the shooting range, golf course and a packed out convention!

The GWA Annual Convention had record high attendance this year! More than 265 growers and watermelon agribusinesses joined us this year and we raised \$250,000 through the live auction. A BIG THANKS to our lead donors, buyers and other auction supporters for this 2016 event. This association will thrive due to your support and passion for the industry and we're excited about the upcoming year. Also, thanks for the support given by our CORPORATE sponsors for the meeting; it would not be possible without your kind donations.

We were excited to have EIGHT top notch contestants for our annual queen contest this year that competed thanks to our contestant sponsors. THANK YOU Leger & Son Inc., Borders Melons East, Pal King Pallets, LTF Greenhouses, Atlantic Pallet Exchange, Darren and Tammy Deal, International Paper, and Gibson Produce for your support of our contestants! Congratulations to our 2nd runner up, Marlena Collins sponsored by Gibson Produce and 1st runner up, Savannah Hartley sponsored by Pal King Pallets, and our Miss Jubilee Winner, Isabella Connor sponsored by International Paper. Finally –congratulations to our 2016 Georgia Watermelon Queen, Miss Andi Dickerson! Andi is from Adel, Georgia and currently has her Associates degree in Marketing from Wiregrass Georgia Technical College. Andi was sponsored by Borders Melons East.

Queen Andi has started her year on the run! Queen Andi traveled to Tifton, Georgia to network with Harvey's store managers for a Georgia Grown event, passed out watermelon yogurt parfaits at the annual Georgia Ag Day at the Capitol and spoke to hundreds of kindergarteners at Dooley County Ag Day in Vienna. Later this spring, Andi will travel to Orlando, Florida for Watermelon Ambassador Training with the National Watermelon Promotion Board, swing over to Charleston, SC to hand out watermelon to the thousands of runners at the Cooper River Bridge Run. She also has 5 other school events scheduled before the end of the school year. Whew! We are glad to help schools promote agriculture and specifically watermelon!

If you are interested in booking our new Georgia Watermelon Queen, please call ahead to schedule a date for our 2016 tour by calling Dawn Cheplick at 706-845-8575 or [dcheplick@asinfo.net](mailto:dcheplick@asinfo.net).

In closing, GWA would like to congratulate Miss Carla Penney, the new 2016 National Watermelon Queen on an outstanding weekend in New Orleans for the National Watermelon Annual Meeting. We could not be more proud to see her succeed and continue to use her passion for the people in this industry to promote watermelon! Looking forward to seeing you all this summer!

Sincerely,  
Dawn  
Georgia Watermelon Association  
Membership Services Coordinator  
P O Box 1109  
LaGrange, GA 30241  
(706) 845-8575 Office • (706) 883-8215 Fax  
[www.georgiawatermelonassociation.org](http://www.georgiawatermelonassociation.org)



Congratulations 2016 GWA Queen, Andi Dickerson!



Teaching kids in Dooley Co. about Georgia Watermelons



They love stickers!



Show us your 'W'!



Ag Day at the Capitol in Atlanta, GA



With Georgia Commissioner of Agriculture Gary Black



GWA 2016 1st Runner Up Savannah Hartley, Queen Andi, 2nd Runner up Marlena Collins



At the Georgia Grown showcase with Harvey's Store Managers



Congratulations 2015 GWA Queen Carla Penney on your new title as the 2016 National Queen! We are so proud!



Queen Andi went to visit her sponsor Borders Melons East!



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# NWPB UPDATE



## 8th Annual Retail Display Contest

Celebrate the summer with the sweet taste of watermelon – and a fun display! That is what we encourage retailers and commissaries to do in the summer months. Creative displays are a great way to create excitement in the produce sales and move watermelons! The National Watermelon Promotion Board NWPB and the National Watermelon Association NWA are hosting their 8<sup>th</sup> annual watermelon retail display contest for all retailers and commissaries that supply U.S. watermelons in July and August.

The grand prize winner receives \$1,000 and the opportunity for two representatives to attend the National Watermelon Association convention in Lake Tahoe, NV on February 22-25, 2017. For more information, visit [Watermelon.org/Retailers](http://Watermelon.org/Retailers).



## Add WOW to Menus with Watermelon - Foodservice 2016

As a part of the 2015/2016 fiscal year the National Watermelon Promotion Board (NWPB) made the strategic decision to add Foodservice to the established Consumer and Retail programs. Foodservice has a 47% share of food dollar in the U.S. so it is a great audience that can help move volume through the supply chain. Moving into the second year of the program, the focus remains the same; to get more watermelon on foodservice menus year-around. Luckily watermelon has strong trends and research on its side, making it a great addition to any menu. For example:

- Produce is moving to the center of the plate, including watermelon
- Minimizing food waste is leading to innovative ways to use the whole product
- Consumers want to know where their food is coming from and are leaning more toward fresh ingredients
- Health continues to be a driving force in foodservice with obesity on the rise and menu labeling laws coming into effect
- Watermelon is the 27<sup>th</sup> most popular fruit on menus by penetration
- Watermelon fits many menu categories and day parts and menu penetration is stable across the country – perfect for a national chain
- Watermelon is the fastest growing fruit on salad menus
- Watermelon rind and seeds can be used to minimize waste
- Watermelon's health halo is multidimensional; hydration, lycopene, multiple vitamins, etc. and consumers say they will buy more watermelon if they are privy to these messages
- Watermelon can be used in unique ways including pickling the rind, compressing the flesh and is a star on beverage menus

Similar to last year, the NWPB has approved a strategic, multifaceted program to reach foodservice. Through foodservice media, menu decision-makers will receive education and inspiration about watermelon. In 2016/2017 the Board will invest in video assets, in addition to photography, to offer more tools to foodservice media. The Board will invest in multiple events reaching culinary, marketing, supply chain



and nutrition decision-makers at foodservice. Audiences to reach include K-12 schools, college and university, business and industry, independents, and regional and national chains. At these events the NWPB will share information on cutting and yield, among other educational messages, as well as sample watermelon dishes to inspire decision-makers. The NWPB will also invest in menu development and marketing promotion of watermelon menu items to help ensure those items are added to and stay on menus. New in 2016, the NWPB will reach out to culinary students through lesson plans certified by the American Culinary Federation. The lesson plans will include topics such as handling, nutrition, and flavor pairing. Current chefs will also be able to use the lesson plans and accompanying quizzes to fulfill ongoing credit needs.

There is a lot of work to be done within the Foodservice audience but the fun and success is just beginning! To experience the tools and resources available to Foodservice from the NWPB, please visit [www.watermelon.org/foodservice](http://www.watermelon.org/foodservice), or reach out to Megan McKenna, Director of Foodservice and Marketing, at [mmckenna@watermelon.org](mailto:mmckenna@watermelon.org).



## Communications Program Overview

The National Watermelon Promotion Board is driven by a shared mission to “increase demand for watermelon through promotion, research and education,” and, further more, the vision to “make watermelon an everyday, healthy choice.”

The Communications program includes publicity, social media, all digital communications, media outreach, paid influencers, earned placements, consumer promotions, spokesperson relationships and more. The Watermelon Board is telling the watermelon story. Why? To get people to #EatMoreWatermelon.

The primary objectives of the Communications program are:

- Increase awareness of, and interest in, the unique benefits of watermelon among key target audiences, with a primary focus on health
- Increase consumer proficiency with watermelon – its uses, its occasions, its handling – to grow demand

In 2016, we will focus on educating our traditional target, busy moms, as well as the fitness focused about the nutritional benefits of watermelon – whether as a recovery option after an intense workout or as a healthy, delicious way to fuel the family.

We will educate consumers primarily, the active and health-conscious, and secondarily Healthy-lifestyle Influencers including consumer media, health, nutrition, and fitness bloggers, and also nutritionists and registered dietitians. How? The conversations

will start with health messaging + taste/enjoyment to increase interest in trying watermelon in new ways. We will educate target audiences about watermelon's convenience and value to overcome a top barrier to purchase of “too big/inconvenient”. We will encourage new watermelon uses/occasions outside of the summer picnic table by developing year-round content that is seasonal, on-message and share-worthy across a strategic spectrum of channels to reach targets. Each season, health and nutrition will lead the conversation, supported by inspiring recipes and usage ideas.

### New Tactics and Activities 2016

- Television commercial production of a 30-second spot
- 21 how-to videos for watermelon recipes and carvings
- IDEA World Fitness Expo reaching fitness professionals
- Today's Dietitian Spring Symposium reaching registered dietitian influencers
- Healthy Lifestyle Guide landing page at [Watermelon.org](http://Watermelon.org)
- #100daysofwatermelon summertime social media campaign
- Workout with Watermelon and #WatermelonWorkout fall campaign

Stay tuned to the Vineline and the Watermelon Update industry newsletters for updates on these programs and more throughout the year. Please contact Stephanie Barlow, Senior Director of Communications, at [sbarlow@watermelon.org](mailto:sbarlow@watermelon.org) for more information.





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## Illiana Report

10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1.....Happy 2016! Illiana has had a great start to the New Year - literally starting at the stroke of midnight January 1st.

We rang in the New Year by celebrating the 'Watermelon Drop' held in Vincennes, Indiana.

What is the Watermelon Drop you ask?

Spectators come from all around to celebrate as an 18-foot, 500 pound watermelon rises in the sky and drops sixteen Knox County watermelons as the crowd counts from 10 backwards.

This year was even more spectacular as an Air Show by Team AeroDynamix displayed across the sky in celebration of Vincennes bicentennial year. Chef Poon entertained kids and adults throughout the evening with his outstanding watermelon carvings. Even though the temperature was rigid on the outside, Queen Lindsey and Queen Emily warmed our hearts from the inside out as they passed out party hats, beaded necklaces and horns to all in attendance.

Later that month Queen Lindsey attended the Knox County Chamber of Commerce Luncheon where she mingled with various business men and women. She gave a speech wrapping up her 2015 year. We appreciate Farm Credit Mid American for sponsoring this event.

IWA members came together to throw a send off party for Queen Lindsey as she prepared for the National Convention the following week. It was a very special day to spend reminiscing and showing appreciation from both sides.

Off to New Orleans we went. How great it was to be reunited with the other state queens. We started the convention with the unforgettable Mardi Gras party. The evening started with a remarkable venue and equally outstanding hors d'oeuvres. The evening just got better as all attendees were able to get up close and personal with actual Mardi Gras floats. The Queens shined as they threw party favors to the crowd as they passed by the floats. Ms. Eleanor and Ms. Lori were excellent hosts throughout the entire stay. Their hard work and organization did not go unnoticed:) All the state queens did a fabulous job and congratulations to Georgia Queen, Carla Penney, on carrying on the National queen title.

Just a few days later Illiana continued to unite as the 2016 IWA convention began. A great time was had by all from start to finish. We had 7 beautiful girls in the queen competition and they all did a wonderful job. Queen Lindsey passed her title on to 2016 Queen McKenzie McClain.

Queen McKenzie started her tour just four days later as she passed out watermelon at Ag day. A special thanks to John Toth for sponsoring and providing watermelons for this event. Ag day is a local event to celebrate and recognize the abundance provided by agriculture.

Seems only fitting as lent season is in full swing to celebrate the abundance that we all have. We are a blessed industry and country.

Until next time.... sweet regards

Lorrinda Ellerman  
IWA Promotions Coordinator  
812-887-8400

When in NOLA -  
Thanks to Rich Novak



Vvrroomm, vvrroomm lets GO!!!



Take two - Which one doesn't belong



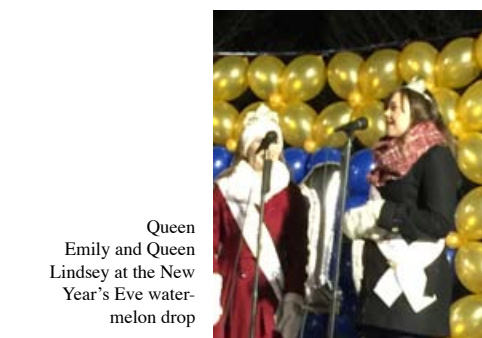
She's got this



Send off party



Queen Lindsey at NWA



Queen Emily and Queen Lindsey at the New Year's Eve watermelon drop



Passing on the crown!



IWA board members



Great job on the auction shirts Ms Eleanor



Did someone say watermelon?



Brad Johnson, Dennis Mouzin, Queen Emily, Queen Lindsey, Kelly Tyner, Anita Fields, Mike Horral, 2016 Watermelon Drop



Beauties



A night at Mardi Gras



2016 IWA Queen McKenzie McClain and NWA Queen Carla



2014, 2015, 2016 IWA queens

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# Hyatt Regency Knew That Watermelon Was ‘In The House’



Coloring Contest, complimentary publications, and more



Our hotel's next door neighbors - homes to the New Orleans Saints (NFL) and Pelicans (NBA)

Marketing a brand is a unique venture for any business, and the National Watermelon Association did so with pizzazz. Every person that walked into the Hyatt regency New Orleans, adjacent to the homes of the NFL's Saints and NBA's Pelicans knew right away that Watermelon was in the house!

Along with the obvious marketing tools and displays, the excitement of events filled the air, especially during the annual seed spit contest. Congratulations to our three winners, and thanks to Seedway for sponsoring and running the contests for us.

Thanks also to ALL of our sponsors, including Watermelon Water who provided their product at our Opening Event, and to Tsamma who provided two types of watermelon juice. Our crowd seemed to enjoy both the water and the juices very much.



Registration was a very busy place with over 525 attendees



Seed Spit adult winner - Kelly Tyner



Seed Spit Child winner - young Mr. Jones



Seed Spit Contest - Queen winner, Carmen from NC



Seed Spit Contest mat - over 70 feet long



Thanks to Sarah and the Tsamma Team for the great tasting juice

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# Mar-Del Report

Greetings from the Mar-Del Watermelon Association!

We had quite a mild winter, even experiencing days of spring-like weather and Christmas Day was actually HOT! Now we are ready for Spring and even more so, Summer! Since our last edition, we have had quite an eventful winter.

Queen Courtney and I had the pleasure of spending a weekend in January with the Florida Watermelon Association at their annual convention in Tampa, where we got to experience some southern sunshine! We had a fabulous time and Courtney was excited to welcome a new watermelon sister to the family, as well as spend time with the other state queens, as there time together was ticking away... Thank you to Kelli and Miss Debra for hosting such a wonderful convention!

The following week Courtney went to the Maryland Agriculture Dinner, where she tasted appetizers from all across Maryland and mingled with guests, including Secretary of Agriculture, Joseph Bartenfelder, who would join us at our convention just a few days later.

The next day, we kicked off our annual convention and this year we celebrated with a “Watermelon Beach Party” theme. Queen Courtney and I welcomed three wonderful queen contestants to the Hyatt Regency in Cambridge, MD as well as state queens. Farmers attended seminars on Friday afternoon and we enjoyed dinner at our President’s Reception in the evening. We held our seed spit competition on Saturday morning and had a fantastic auction after lunch - the largest ever! We appreciate everyone who purchased items and or loads to help our association and everything that we do. At our banquet in the evening we crowned our new queen. The 2016 Mar-Del Watermelon Queen is Miss Amy Wigglesworth. Amy is the 21 year old daughter of Mike and Traci Wigglesworth of Salisbury, MD. She is currently attending Salisbury University, studying Public Relations and Journalism Communications. We are excited to welcome Amy into our watermelon family and we look forward to a fantastic year ahead!

Former Mar-Del Queen, Terra Tatman and Courtney hit the sky for Alabama’s Watermelon Convention in Biloxi the next weekend and boy did they enjoy more southern weather and hospitality! Courtney had the opportunity to spend this weekend with more state queens and together they all welcomed a new Alabama queen. Thank you to Katie and Lenze for having them join in your fabulous weekend of festivities!

Just enough time to pack and we were leaving again for Nationals in New Orleans, LA! A quick flight down, although we dodged tornadoes that spread over the area when we arrived! While there, we took a tour and learned of the history of New Orleans, as well as visited some of the areas hardest hit by Hurricane Katrina. We enjoyed two fantastic nights out to dinner, one with the Melon1 family and the other with International Paper. We cannot express how sincerely grateful we are for your hospitality!

Finally, it was time to get down to business and Courtney represented our association phenomenally and we are all very proud of her! Courtney’s own peers voted her “Miss Jubilee”, which was well-deserved and we thank you all who were able to join us and to those of you who have supported Courtney throughout her reign. Thank you Courtney for all your hard work and dedication to the industry - you have a sparkling future ahead of you! Thank you from the bottom of our hearts to this year’s sponsors and donors. We could not do any of this without your continued support.

We have a full spring ahead and we wish you all a successful season!

Sincerely,  
Caitlin Givens  
Promotions Coordinator  
Mar-Del Watermelon Association



Courtney joins Kelli Wilder, FL Queen, Carla Penney, GA Queen, and Lenze Morris, AL Queen at Florida's Watermelon Convention



Enjoying Alabama's Watermelon Convention with Kelli Wilder.



Courtney and our three contestants at our Mar-Del Watermelon Convention.



A future Watermelon Queen, Kenna Evans has her turn in the Youth Seed Spit during the weekend.



We had a celebrity in the house - our friend, Ross Chastain! Thank you so much Ross!



The girls enjoyed some down time outside for a photoshoot.



2016 Mar-Del Watermelon Queen, Miss Amy Wigglesworth.



Mar-Del Watermelon members who attended the National Convention in New Orleans to show their support to Courtney! Thank you all!



Courtney in her festival attire for the competition.



Courtney spitting during the Seed Spit at Nationals.



Thank you to James Buchler and International Paper for your generosity this year! We are so appreciative.



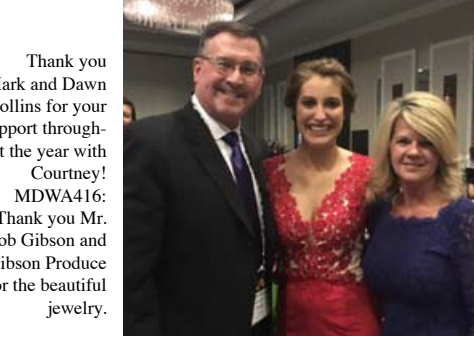
Courtney on Bourbon Street!



Courtney has done an amazing job for us this year, serving as the Mar-Del Watermelon Queen!



Will Hales accepts the Marketing Grant Award and highest number of new members award that the Mar-Del Watermelon Association received! We are so happy!



Thank you Mark and Dawn Collins for your support throughout the year with Courtney! MDWA416: Thank you Mr. Bob Gibson and Gibson Produce for the beautiful jewelry.



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## Education Takes Center Stage

Our members asked for more education, and the Association delivered a straight flush at convention. From Labor to Food Safety to Audits to Bee health to New Products, education was at the center of events and well received.

“It has been a bit disconcerting to me that at times we have a topic that is potentially contentious or challenging, but in the end we are bringing the highest priority issues and topics to our members in an effort to inform, educate and try to find solutions to their everyday issues that they deal with in their business”, said Bob Morrissey – Executive Director of the NWA. “But, we are dealing with issues that need to be solved, so the format and topic selections are well attended and accepted by involved members.”

### LABOR FORUM:

The 90-minute labor forum was filled with key information, hot topics and new developments in the world of labor that can/will effect most AG labor employers. Two attorneys from Fisher & Phillips LLC – Ann Margaret Pointer and Steve Cupp – led the discussion through the myriad of labor issues.

All of their information, and many additional entries – are posted on our website under Public Affairs. Please take the time to visit this section regularly to stay abreast of new laws, rulings, etc.



Labor Forum speaker - Ann Margaret Pointer



Labor Forum speaker - Steve Cupp



Labor Forum was a sold out affair



Marty Wiglesworth of Syngenta discusses their new phytophthora treatment, Orondis

### IMPACT HOUR:

The impact hour is designed to include 6 speakers – 6 topics – 6 presentations - in a quick release of key data and insights that cover multiple topics in an abbreviated timeframe.

The session included segments that covered Syngenta’s new phytophthora product – Orondis, Bees & Bee Health – Bayer, ADAMA’s new nematode product – Nimitz, and a glimpse into the future of farming called Precision AG by the Highland Corporation.

The second impact hour was a preview of the afternoon food safety seminar with Dr. David Gombas – United Fresh Produce Association, Kevin Gerrity – FDA’s Office3 of Regulatory Affairs, and Courtney Cox – Primus Auditing Ops.

### FOOD SAFETY FORUM:

Dr. Gombas kicked off the forum with an immediate Q&A session that was both enlightening and interactive, with numerous shippers asking great questions to understand which FSMA rule(s) they are responsible for.

Kevin Gerrity got into the details of FDA’s intentions to ‘educate first’ and ‘enforce later’. He also mentioned that FDA will hire the State Departments of Agriculture to handle the audits, as needed, once enforcement begins.

The discussion surrounding audits was interactive and thought provoking. Centered around the audit requirements of hairnets, bibs and losing points for open packing sheds/pole barns, Primus Auditing Ops discussed their company layout, procedures and the opportunity for auditees to file a complaint to have an audit challenged. Contentious at times, the forum has resulted in a path forward for the Association to take the lead to discuss unreasonable audit expectations with scheme owners and possibly a couple of retailers.

The presentations from Dr. Gombas and Kevin Gerrity are posted within the Food Safety page of our website. Please feel free to refer to them for your team’s use and knowledge.



Pablo Navia of ADMA discusses their new nematode product, Nimitz

## FDA Deputy to Leave Agency

The Food & Drug Administration announced that Mike Taylor, a leader in implementing the Food Safety Modernization Act, will be leaving the agency on June 1.



Taylor, who is FDA’s first deputy commissioner for foods and veterinary medicine, will be succeeded by Stephen Ostroff, the agency’s chief scientist who recently led FDA as acting commissioner until Robert Califf was confirmed as the new FDA commissioner.

“As part of a succession plan that ensures both continuity in the program and strong new leadership for the future, Dr. Stephen Ostroff will become the second Deputy Commissioner for Foods and Veterinary Medicine upon Mr. Taylor’s departure,” FDA announced in a March 8 statement.

“Between now and June 1, Mr. Taylor and Dr. Ostroff will work closely together, with FDA Commissioner Califf’s strong support, to manage a transition that sustains the program’s momentum on the many challenges and opportunities that lie ahead for FDA.”

As for Taylor’s future plans, FDA said only that he plans “to continue working on in the food safety arena, focusing on those settings where people lack regular access to sufficient, nutritious and safe food.” Taylor’s departure will come before food companies must comply with much of FSMA’s rules.

“Mike Taylor came into FDA with a vision of how to improve food safety, and he realized that it would only succeed if all stakeholders worked together,” said David Gombas, senior vice president of food safety and technology at United Fresh Produce Association. “The produce industry respects and will miss the integrity, openness to ideas and transparency Mike embodied during FDA’s rulemaking process. It is unfortunate that he is leaving before his vision is realized.”

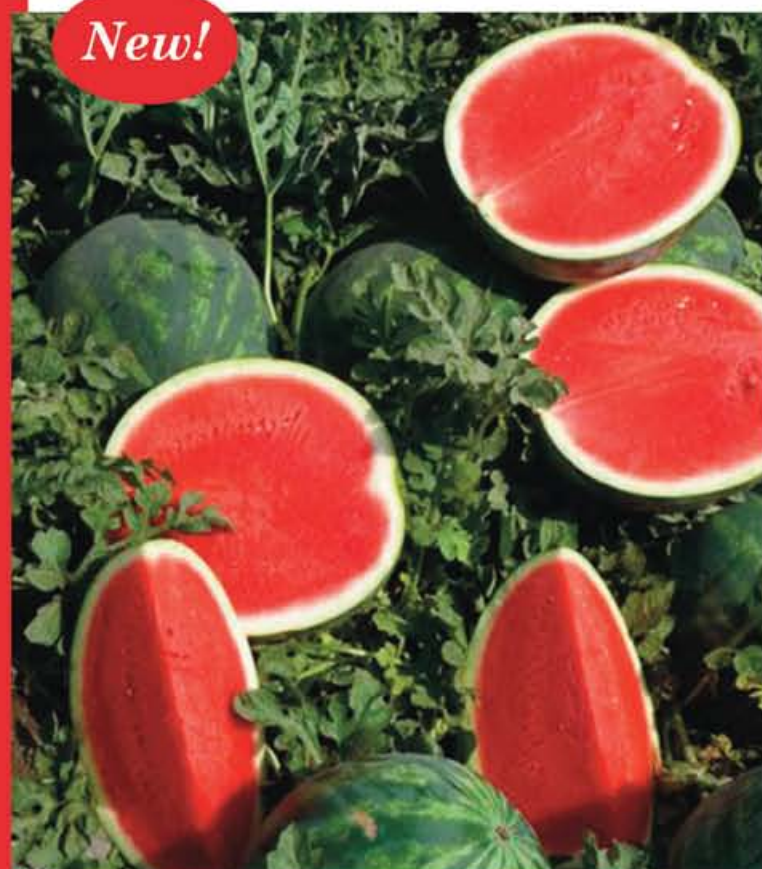
Taylor has assembled a good team at FDA with deeper knowledge to handle the “heavy lifting” of FSMA, though it’s not expected to be without problems. He also created better linkages between the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention and FDA during outbreak investigations.

Taylor joined FDA in July 2009 and has overseen FSMA implementation, along with changes in nutrition and other food policies. Ostroff joined FDA in 2013 as senior public health adviser to Taylor before he served as deputy director of the National Center for Infectious Diseases.



Roy Morris of Bayer discussed Bees and Bee Health



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**North Carolina Report**

Greetings from North Carolina,

What a great year it has been for the NC Watermelon Queen Miss Carmen Honeycutt. Carmen was an outstanding watermelon ambassador and we would like to thank her for her tireless dedication this season. She always had a smile on her face and loved educating the young and the young at heart about agriculture and watermelons. We also want to congratulate Queen Carmen for being selected First Runner Up in the NWA Queen Pageant and representing North Carolina so well. Carmen wanted an opportunity to say a farewell to all of her supporters this year.

Dear Watermelon Family and Friends,

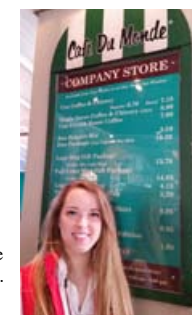
This year as your 2015 North Carolina Watermelon Queen has been a true blessing. When I started this adventure, I had no idea just what an amazing experience it would be. Nor could I ever imagine how many new friendships and connections I would make while learning more about this dynamic industry. While I'm sad the year is coming to a close, I cannot wait to pass this opportunity of a lifetime and the crown over to another queen! I hope that I have represented you all well and made North Carolina proud. I will end this year a much richer person because of all of you. The lessons I have learned and experiences I have enjoyed have made me a better person and I look forward to carrying this new family and everything I've learned forward to enrich the lives of the students I will be teaching in the coming years. Thank you all again for making this year one I will never forget!

Love Always,  
Carmen Honeycutt

\* Also in this issue are a few photos from the NC Watermelon Association's 35th Annual Convention held in Wrightsville Beach, NC. Congratulation to Miss Sarah Lemons of Catawba, NC who was selected to represent the NC watermelon industry for 2016. It was a wonderful weekend and we are looking forward to a very exciting year to come!

Sharon Rogers  
 Promotions Coordinator 336-583-9630  
 ncwatermelonqueen@gmail.com

Café Du Monde was our favorite place in New Orleans.



Thank you for all the support from our NCWA family



2016 National Watermelon Queen Pageant NC Queen Carmen - 1st Runner Up, Carla - National Queen, Linzie - 2nd Runner Up and Emily - 2015 National Queen



Carmen really enjoyed the NWA Convention and New Orleans



Welcome to New Orleans...fun at Mardi Gras World



Mrs. Eleanor and Carmen celebrating after the pageant



State Queens enjoying Mardi Gras World events



Brent and Debbie Jackson enjoyed meeting all the NC Watermelon Queen contestants during the auction.



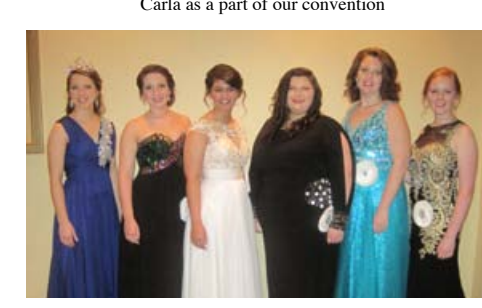
Queen Carmen, Pieter Westerbeek with Seminis, GA Queen Carla and Samantha getting ready to meet the crowd and throw out Mardi Gras beads.



We were excited to have SC Queen Laura and National Queen Carla as a part of our convention



Bob and all the State Queens



Queen Carmen and our contestants looking beautiful for the evening gown competition



Mardi Gras World was lots of FUN for everyone



NC Watermelon Queen Pageant: First Runner up Miss Shelby Bireley, 2016 NC Watermelon Queen Miss Sarah Lemons and Second Runner up Miss Allison Phillips



Queen Carmen showing off her Seed Spit Award



Former NC Watermelon Queens welcome new queen Sarah to the watermelon family.

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## South Carolina Report

What a wonderful start to 2016. The South Carolina Watermelon Association crowned Miss Laura Schurlknight at their state convention held in the Holy City of Charleston, SC on January 15-17, 2016. Laura is the daughter of Malinda Schurlknight of Darlington, SC and is a current senior at The University of South Carolina where she is a Communication Studies major. Laura is excited about her upcoming year as the South Carolina Queen and has already completed several trips in this capacity.

Immediately after being crowned, Laura attended the MarDel Watermelon Association annual convention in Cambridge, Maryland and the Alabama Watermelon Association convention in Biloxi, Mississippi. She was also fortunate enough to attend the convention of our neighbors in North Carolina and was sponsored to this event by Rusty Kinard and Benny Hughes.

The 2016 calendar is filling quickly with many promotions already lined up. On March 31st through April 3rd, the SCWA will be sponsoring the annual Cooper River Bridge Run in Charleston where other state queens and coordinators will be joining us to pass out cut and packaged servings of watermelon to over 40,000 runners and additional spectators. The girls will also make a trip to the local TV Station, Low Country Live, where Laura will discuss the program in South Carolina called "Watermelon Fuels Athletes". They will also attend the Bi-Lo Expo prior to the race.

Laura and first runner-up, Blakely Johnson, will be attending Queen Training in Orlando, Florida on April 8th-10th. May 6th-7th, will find Laura and Blakely in Beaufort, SC where they will be passing out watermelon slices at the Beaufort 5k run. The Taste of SC will be held at the Capitol in Columbia on May 11th, and on May 20th, Laura will be attending Field Day at Batesburg Leesville Elementary School where she will participate in events and pass out watermelon slices to 300 students and faculty. An appearance on "Your Carolina" on Memorial Day in Greenville, SC will finish out the month of May.

As our busy year shifts into full gear, we wish all of the state associations a very fulfilling and profitable year. We look forward to visiting and working with all of you in the coming months.

Ann Bryant  
SCWA Promotions Coordinator  
[abryant@charter.com](mailto:abryant@charter.com)  
[ann.bryant@furman.edu](mailto:ann.bryant@furman.edu)



Contestants at the SC Convention



Laura is having a ball in Cambridge, Maryland



SC Queen and her Court



Crowning of 2016 MarDel Watermelon Queen, Amy Wigglesworth



Eleanor Bullock and Emily Brown welcoming Laura into the watermelon family



Ready for the Alabama auction



Mark Collins enjoying the lovely ladies and SC auction



Congratulations to 2016 Alabama Watermelon Queen, Bay-Leigh Sawyers



Gilbert Miller and first runner-up, Blakely Johnson



Having fun at the NC Convention with the Melon 1 guys



SC Board Members



Laura starting the day's activities in North Carolina



Laura getting ready for her first promotion



Laura and new National Queen, Carla Penney enjoying the sun in Wrightsville Beach



Queens enjoying the MarDel Convention



New 2016 North Carolina Watermelon Queen, Sarah Lemons

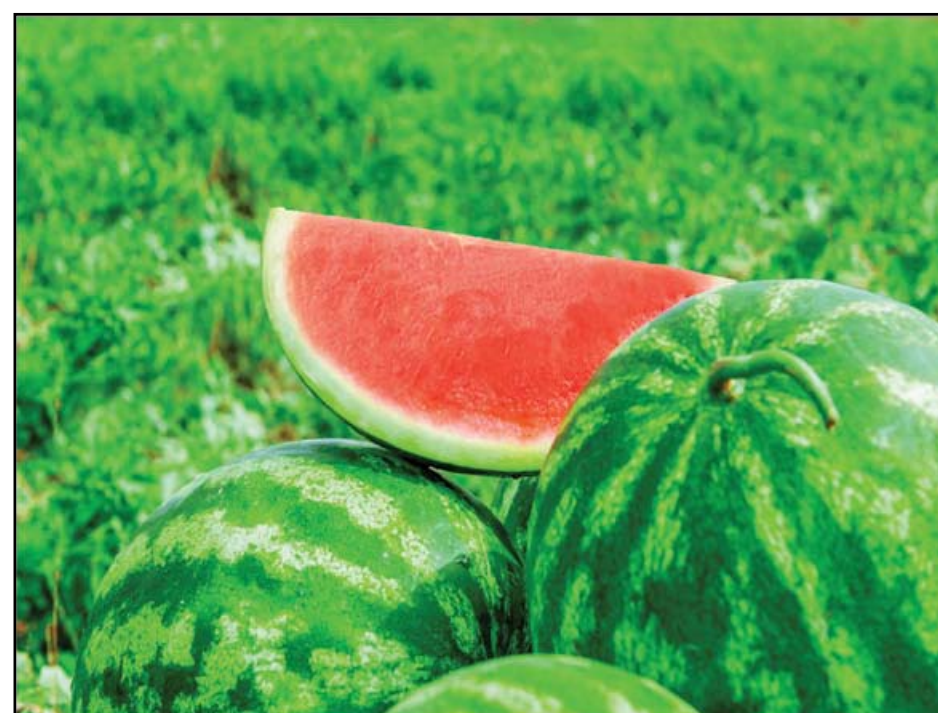
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## Texas Report

Happy spring from Texas! I hope everyone this letter reaches is well, healthy and happy. The months after the holidays have been relatively quiet for Queen Kristin as far as promotions go, but she was busy getting ready for the national convention in New Orleans, Louisiana. We found New Orleans to be a bustling city that was great in culture.

The first evening of the convention we enjoyed the reception and festivities at Mardi Gras World. Kristin and I loved seeing our old friends from the NWA and, of course, meeting new ones. The next day the state queens gave their speeches, competed in the seed spit, and then helped with the very successful auction. Saturday morning we listened to some informative speakers and then the girls had the promotion wear competition, their interviews with the judges, their on camera interviews, and the written portion of the competition. Saturday afternoon the girls had a little down time, and Kristin got to enjoy seeing some of New Orleans with her parents. Saturday night was the evening gown competition and all of the girls looked beautiful. Congratulations to all of them for a job well done!

I wanted everyone to know that Kristin was wonderful to work with and was always an extremely adaptable, kind, and caring young lady that worked very hard for the association. She had a few words for everyone about her year...

"Wow, it's difficult to summarize what a wonderful time I had this past year. From expos, to festivals, to store promotions, it was an exciting year spreading knowledge about Texas watermelons! I truly am blessed to have been provided with this wonderful opportunity. It was a privilege to work for the Texas Watermelon Association as their promotional ambassador. Throughout the year I was able to meet amazing people and get a glimpse of all of the hard work that goes into producing Texas watermelons. I am so very thankful to all the sponsors who made this possible. Nowell Borders Companies, Wiggins Watermelons, Warren Produce, McWhirter Farms, Texas Melon Exchange, NWA and NWPB, thank you for all your support! This is an amazing program, product, and community. I am sad my year is over, but also filled with excitement for the new 2016 Texas Watermelon Queen. She has an amazing year of growth and learning ahead!"

We wish Kristin much success as she continues her education in grad school. She is a smart, beautiful young lady and has a great future ahead of her.

In the months ahead I look forward to getting to know our 2016 Texas Watermelon Queen, Makensie Anderson. In April we have an expo in San Antonio, then queen training in Florida, and in May we will be heading to the Race for the Cure in Minneapolis. After that, the summer promotions begin!

I pray everyone has a wonderful watermelon growing season and a great harvest. May this year find you and yours blessed in every way.

With fondest regards,  
Barbara Duda  
TWA Queen Coordinator  
bcduda62@yahoo.com



The girls enjoyed the evening at Mardi Gras World



Busy auction helpers



Queen Kristin and Jesse Wiggins, who got in the Mardi Gras spirit



Miss Eleanor, her daughter, Lori, and some former national queens- always beautiful



TWA members, Gerry Lozano and Brandon Henderson, wish Kristin good luck.



Promotion wear competition



Smile!



Beautiful girls in their beautiful gowns



Bob Morrissey and the state beauties in front of a Mardi Gras float



Congratulations to Carla Penney, 2016 NWA Queen!



Ready for their speeches!



Kristin and her proud parents, David and Patricia Valadez



A reporter does a spot for the local news



Kristin congratulates Queen Carla and 1st runner up, Carmen Honeycutt.



Kristin's final seed spit as the 2015 TWA Queen

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## SOME OF THE SIGHTS FROM OPENING NIGHT AT MARDI GRAS WORLD



And they danced the night away



Jamey Adams with the queens, and a photo bomb from Richard



And they dressed for the party



Let the Second Line parade begin



Everyone had fun making their own masks



Mardi Gras mask making was big fun for all



Filing into the Grand Oaks Mansion for the reception



Mardi Gras World hosted our Opening Event



Floats filled with color and surprises, and watch for the beads



Not sure if Will can hold up that Mardi Gras head



Great atmosphere, light jazz music, a few hors d'oeuvres and fun for all



Our 2015 President, Dennis Mouzin, kicks off the opening event



Our very own Mardi Gras parade complete with NWA beads



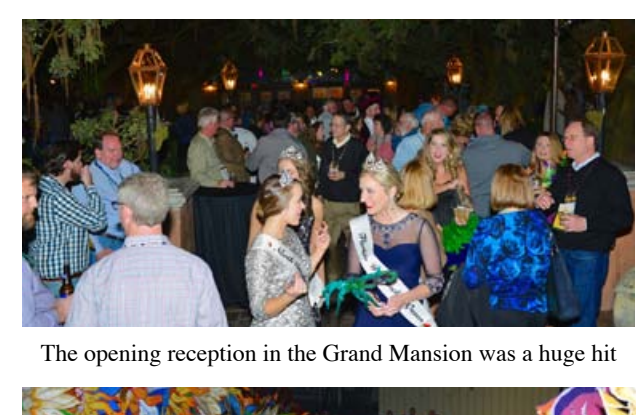
Pope Harry - a blessed moment with the queens



Revelers livening up the party



The court jester at 10 feet tall



The opening reception in the Grand Mansion was a huge hit



The paraders file into the Float Den



The Watermelon Water Girls with Scott



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## Western Report




Spring is in the air out here in the West and we are very excited for the upcoming watermelon season! We kicked off our year with our annual Western Watermelon Convention in Las Vegas, Nevada in January. The convention was well attended and was an overall positive experience for growers, shippers and members of the industry. A big thank you Tashi Zouras for putting on a great event and to everyone that participated this year!

We are anticipating the 2016 domestic season to be a positive one. Although the rainfall has helped this year, some regions are still struggling with water issues, but supplies should still be good. Domestic fruit will be available starting in May, with a steady supply out of the desert regions, and our growers down in Mexico still going strong. We are anticipating a steady market throughout the season with strong demand.

With summer right around the corner, we are excited to get our delicious fruit into the hands of watermelon lovers everywhere! Cheers to everyone having a successful and prosperous watermelon season!

Sincerely,  
Danielle Cultrera  
Western Watermelon Association  
[Daniellec@vgandsons.com](mailto:Daniellec@vgandsons.com)

For more information on the Western Watermelon Association, be sure to check out our website at: [www.westernwatermelon.org](http://www.westernwatermelon.org) and  "like" us on facebook



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Steve Van Meter of Freshhouse models his new costume, courtesy of his friends at Food Lion

# Many Sincere Thanks!!!

The many sponsors and load donors that are listed on this page are the true heroes of the Association. They provide the means that we can create & hold wonderful convention (like New Orleans) and perform the initiatives & projects that we do for you, our stakeholders. To them, we give a HUGE THANKS!

This year we were successful in adding over twenty (20) new sponsors from across our membership. They recognize the efforts that their Association is doing on their behalf. They will in return see that we recognize their contribution throughout the year; not just at convention.

Sponsors help us to create the type of convention that you have become accustomed to - - cutting-edge educational seminars; entertainment; interactive events; great speakers; high quality menus that are unrivaled. Sponsor contributions help us to maintain those high standards, while keeping our registration fees at a produce industry low.

Please thank a sponsor and donor the next time you see or talk with them. They are the true heroes in this story. Thanks to them, our memory banks continue to overflow.

### We Ask for Your Help

You will also notice that there are some 'obvious' suppliers from our industry that you may be doing business with that are not listed. Yet in many instances, those same companies that are not sponsors take advantage of our programs, membership and successes.

To those companies, we ask you as their direct customer to question them. Why aren't they supporting the Association that does so much for our stakeholders? As their customers, you should expect them to support your Association. You have the 'buying' power to guide them to support your Association.

We ask you to do so, at every occasion and instance that you can. They should be here, with us. Free riders are not welcome. Together, we can eliminate the free rides and get them involved, as they should be.

# Our 2016 Watermelon Load Donors

We raise funds to support the Association in many ways, with the watermelon truckload donations topping that list every year. The list of donors for this upcoming domestic season are giving of their very own crops to support our Association. To them, we Salute you all, and give a hearty bear hug.

- Agraian Farms
- B&K Farms
- Big Chuy
- Browning & Sons
- C&S Farms
- Cactus Melon
- Capital City Fruit
- Celli Brothers
- Coosaw Farms
- DMC Farms
- Diamond 99
- Eagle Eye Produce
- Frey Farms
- George Perry & Sons
- Gibson Produce
- Giumarra Companies
- Global Produce
- Glory Farms
- H.C. Schmieding
- Hoosier Fresh Farms
- Jackson Farming Company
- Jackson Farms
- Kids Choice
- Kirschenman Enterprises
- Land Watermelon Sales
- Leger & Son
- Melon 1
- McMelon, Inc.
- Melon Acres
- Mesilla Valley Produce
- MGM Farms
- Mouzin Brothers
- Phil Turner Farms
- Premier Melon
- Prime Time International
- Reid Groves Farms
- Saikhon Company
- Southern Corporate Packers
- SunState Produce
- SunTerra Produce
- Sweet Mama Produce
- Texas Melon Exchange
- Tucker Family Farms
- Van Gronigen & Sons
- Vincent Farms
- Wabash Valley Growers
- Warren Produce
- Wiggins Farms

## 2016

National Watermelon Association

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In addition, a number of companies and watermelon chapters have donated cash equivalents in lieu of a load in support of our Association. They are:

- Bagley Produce
- Borders Melons
- Keith Connell Produce
- Wiggins Watermelons LLC
- And all nine of our Watermelon Chapters: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Illiana, MarDel, North Carolina, South Carolina, Texas and Western

All of these donations are heart-felt, sincere contributions to support our Association. We are grateful for each and every one. Thank You All!

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To learn more about our watermelon program, contact your local Syngenta representative or seed dealer today.

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