



Trucking: Made Complicated & Raising Costs

On March 13, 2018, the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) announced additional steps to address the unique needs of the country’s agriculture industries and provided further guidance to assist in the effective implementation of the Congressionally-mandated electronic logging device (ELD) rule without impeding commerce or safety.



The Agency announced a 90-day temporary waiver from the ELD rule for agriculture related transportation. Additionally, during this time period, FMCSA will publish final guidance on the agricultural 150 air-mile hours-of-service exemption. FMCSA will also continue its outreach to provide assistance to the agricultural industry and community regarding the ELD rule.

The waiver will last until June 10th. We are expecting the FMCSA to release additional guidance on or about April 1st, which will tie-in nicely with the National Watermelon Association’s trucking webinar with our partner, John Seidl, on Tuesday, April 4th.

In addition to submitting public comment directly to the FMCSA, the National Watermelon Association, and a number of other produce groups, have requested hearings that will allow Congress to carry out a fundamental responsibility to maintain oversight of federal agencies as they implement new regulations that will often times have significant

TRUCKING continued on page 16

Convention Hit the Right Notes

They don’t call Nashville ‘Music City’ for nothing. It truly was a convention that hit the right lyrics and notes to build memories for a very long time.

In the end, Nashville had the second largest attendance that the National Watermelon Association ever had – 562 attendees. Only rivaled by New Orleans in 2016, the flu and some folks saving for our first venture to Paradise in 2019 (Hawaii) kept us from approaching that record. Close, but still a record setter.

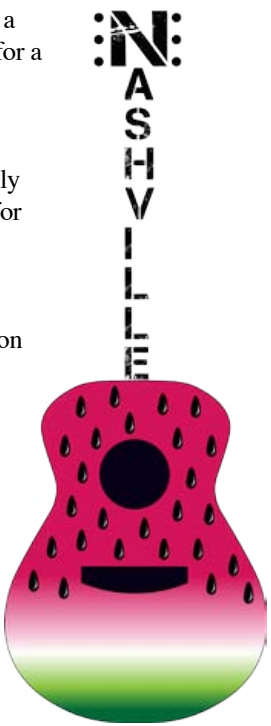
An all-time record in gross and net auction proceeds - - an auction that Arnold would have been proud of.

The largest group of speakers in our history participated in key talks and discussions related to Trucking, Labor, Trade, our IMPACT Hour and even a former Miss America.

Being in Music City, song started the convention off, and ended it as well. Opening night at The Wildhorse Saloon with a full country music concert was in many attendees’ opinions “the best opening night ever!” The following night, 400 attendees ventured to a dinner reception and show at the Grand Ole Opry. And finally, following the awards banquet, four of Nashville’s best songwriters entertained us during the closing hospitality time.

So many honors and achievements: Class III – The Innovators Class – of Hall of Fame inductees, that included Matt Dietz, Arnold Mack and Bruce Price. Fifteen Executive Committee members were honored for their many years of service with the Leadership Achievement awards. Class III of the Future Watermelon farm leaders inducted four new members – Haley Keenan, Brady Mouzin, Kitt Moore and Jared Wiggins. A special commemoration and music video honored the memory of Arnold Mack. And, so much more.

CONVENTION continued on page 16



The Law of the Land in 2018: Immigration-Related Workplace Enforcement

Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is the agency within the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) that is responsible for immigration-related workplace compliance. Across the years and many changes, an employer’s rights and responsibilities have remained constant.

In the past decade, the I-9 Form has undergone multiple revisions, and ICE has shifted its enforcement strategies from raids to audits and now possibly back to raids. Agricultural employers were once targeted by ICE before priorities were directed to other industries.

It is important to understand the scope of ICE’s reach, even before President Trump requested to triple ICE’s workforce. As frequently as AG employers, and that includes H-2A employers, are audited by DOL’s Wage & Hour Division (WHD), there are more than 10 times as many investigators at ICE (almost 20,000) as there are at WHD (around 1750). ICE is increasing its enforcement efforts in 2018.

The President’s Budget calls for thousands more ICE agents to be hired. The Director of ICE, Thomas “The Hammer” Homan, stated that ICE intends to increase “worksite



enforcement efforts” (i.e., I-9 audits) by 400% this year, even with current staffing levels within the agency. There is no indication that agriculture will be spared this major

LAW continued on page 16

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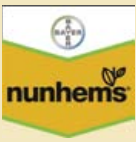
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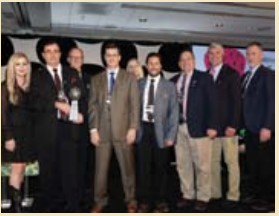
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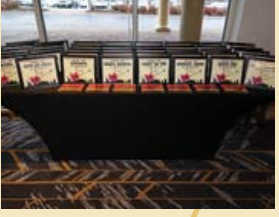
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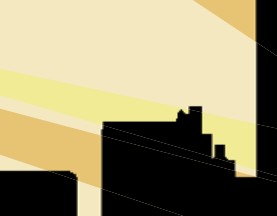
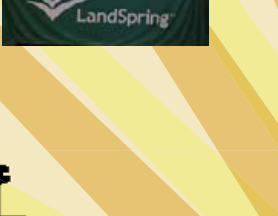
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National Report

Congratulations Savannah Christensen, 2018 National Watermelon Queen

Our National Watermelon Convention in Nashville was a huge success! I hope everyone enjoyed their time in Music City! It was heartwarming to see so many in attendance this year. What a tough Queen competition, we certainly had a fantastic group of girls. I congratulate each of you for the excellent job you did representing your Association.

A special thank you to our 2017 National Queen Madison for a job well done! We love and appreciate you, and wish you God’s greatest blessings.

Congratulations to our 2018 National Watermelon Queen, Miss Savannah Lee Christensen. Savannah is the 21 year old daughter of Elizabeth Christensen of Arcadia, Florida. She is a nursing student attending the University of South Florida. This year’s Miss Jubilee award, chosen by her peers, went to Miss Anna Beth Potter, the Georgia Queen. Second runner-up went to Miss Blakely Johnson, the South Carolina Queen, and First Runner-up went to Miss Paige Severino, the Alabama Queen. Congratulations to each of you, and all the girls it was a tough competition.

Special thanks to NWA, MultiCorr, the anonymous donor of the Oren Childers Memorial Scholarship Fund, to Brent and Debbie Jackson for the Adam Jackson Memorial Scholarship fund in memory of their son Adam. Thanks to each of you for your contribution to Savannah’s Cash Awards. We also would like to thank Garrett Raulerson, son of Heather and Derek Raulerson for assisting the contestants on stage and to Heather and International Paper for providing the flowers. Thank you! A very special thank you this year to Sakata Seed for providing the crown and banner for the incoming queen. Thank you Sakata! MultiCorr provided the incoming queen with a cash award, as well as the outgoing queen, thank you again MultiCorr!

Special thanks to Terry Parrish for the spa basket for Savannah and to Gibson Produce for the diamond earrings. Thanks to everyone for your generosity.



Madison visits Sponsors at Ag Solutions in Nogales



Thanks to Big Chuy for your Sponsorship



Thanks Brent Harrison for setting up our Safeway Watermelon Promotion



Sponsor Peter Zaferis, (Val and Jim on vacation) at North County Fruit Sales



Madison and Susan with one of several Kindergarten classes at Coronado Elementary in Nogales



John Gee, NWA's First VP at the United Fresh Produce of the America's party



Madison visits with Barbara, Jesse Wiggins and Chandler Mack before the Opening event in McAllen; Thank you Texas Watermelon Association



HEB Watermelon promotion in McAllen, visits from our Borders Melons Family



Chloe and Madison enjoy the Queens luncheon, thanks TWA for making Madison's birthday memorable



Chloe and Madison Congratulate Hannah Crisp, 2018 Texas Watermelon Queen



Lovely Queens Chloe and Madison during the Auction in McAllen



Our South Carolina Queen, Blakely Johnson welcomes Madison to SC Convention



Thanks to Rusty Kinard and Vincent Farms for sponsoring Madison to the SC Convention



Madison, Emma and Blakely working the auction



Blakely and Madison having fun with Sully Conrad at the dance



Congratulations to Miss Emily Dicks 2018 South Carolina Watermelon Queen



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National Pictures



What a beautiful group of Watermelon Queens! Congratulations to Sarah Jane Levine Alabama Watermelon Queen



Madison thanks Alabama Watermelon Association President Heather Raulerson for sponsoring her back to Sweet Home Alabama



Madison Congratulates Sarah Jane Levine, Alabama Watermelon Queen



What a great turn out of state queens at the FWA Convention in Miami for their Red Carpet Event



Savannah welcomes Madison to their convention



Anna Beth, Madison and all the girls congratulate Savannah Hartley, 2018 Georgia Watermelon Queen



Madison Congratulates Savannah Hartley, Thanks GWA for having us!



Special thanks to International Paper, Heather Raulerson, and special assistance from her son Garret and for the flowers at the NWA Convention



Derby Party Ready, Emma, Madison, Paige and Mar-Del Queen Conner Vincent, what fun!



Congratulations Camri Campbell, 2018 Florida Watermelon Queen



The girls welcome 2018 Mar-Del Watermelon Queen, Gabrielle Hastings to the sisterhood



Thanks to these guys, Rich and John, and Melon 1 for your support



Congratulations Gabrielle Hastings



Thanks to Laura Land FWA President, Mrs. Annette Land and Laura's son Ray, thanks to having us to your convention



Thanks to Mar-Del President Kevin Evans and wife Katie for having us and a wonderful convention



Anna Beth welcomes Madison to the Georgia Watermelon Convention



Madison thanks the Vincent Farms Guys for all your support; Clay and Ray and two of Rays sons



Queens, Katie, Anna Beth, Emily and Madison in beautiful St Simons



Paige and Madison, Presidents Reception at the AWA Convention, Peace, Love and Watermelons



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Alabama Report

Greetings from the Alabama Association!

This year has already started with a busy January and February. Queen Paige and I had wonderful time at the Florida and MarDel Watermelon Conventions. Each convention was amazing and it was great getting to see our watermelon family from all over. There is nothing like celebrating our favorite industry at the National Convention in Music City.

The Alabama Watermelon Association played that funky music and got 70s style for our convention 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: Clifton Seed Company, Coast to Coast Produce, Continental Produce, Genecco Produce, International Paper, LFT Greenhouses, Multicorr, Nunhems USA, Inc., Seminis, Syngenta, Borders Melons, Browning & Sons, Big Charlie’s/Lil Brian’s, Freight Movers, LLC, Geneva Farms LLC, Matrana’s Produce, McMelon, Inc., National Watermelon Association, National Watermelon Promotion Board, Rouses Supermarkets, Billy Smith’s Watermelon, CHEP USA, H.M. Clause, Intergro, Jeff Martin Auctioneers, Morgan Wood Products, Siegers Seed Company, and Valdosta Plant Company. Your support is greatly appreciated!

This year we had three wonderful young ladies competed for the position of the 2017 Alabama Watermelon Queen. Congratulations to the 2018 Queen Sarah Jane Levine from Enterprise, the 1st runner-up Taylor Skipper and 2nd runner-up Abbey Closson.

Queen Sarah Jane and I are both very excited to get started this year. We will be attending the Cooper River Bridge Run in South Carolina and the National Watermelon Promotion Board training in Atlanta, GA in April. Following the training we will start the 2018 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 2017 Queen Paige Severino on placing 1st runner up in the National Queen Competition. A special thank you, for all your hard work and dedication over the past year. You have represented the Alabama Association with a kindness, vivaciousness, and elegance! In addition, thank you to all that have helped make her year so special!

See you all soon,
Jordan Sawyers
Promotions Coordinator
334-791-6230
j.skipper94@gmail.com



Queen Paige and National Queen Madison rocking the red carpet at the Florida Watermelon Convention.



Congratulations to 2018 Alabama Watermelon Queen Sarah Jane Levine, 1st runner-up Taylor Skipper, and 2nd runner-up Abbey Closson.



Queen Paige Severino at the Florida Watermelon Convention.



Mr. Scott Davis and Queen Paige Severino at the National Watermelon Convention.



Congratulations to the 2018 Florida Watermelon Queen Camri Campbell.



Mr. Terry Parrish congratulating Paige.



Queen Paige and Queen Madison at the 2018 Mar-Del Convention.



The AWA is so proud of the hard work and dedication Queen Paige has put in this year. Queen Paige and our AWA President Heather Raulerson.



Congratulations the 2018 Mar-Del Watermelon Queen Gabrielle Hastings.



These queens were getting ready to “Boot, Scoot, and Boogie” at Nationals!



These ladies were ready to play that funky music at the Alabama Watermelon Convention. Queen Paige, Mrs. Eleanor Bullock, and Queen Madison.



Congratulations to the New National Queen Savannah Christensen from Florida, and 1st runner up Paige Severino from Alabama, and 2nd runner up from South Carolina Blakely Johnson. You all did fabulous!



Congratulations Sarah Jane Levine our new Alabama Watermelon Queen.



Queen Paige and Mr. Steven Vandermeid at the National Watermelon Convention.



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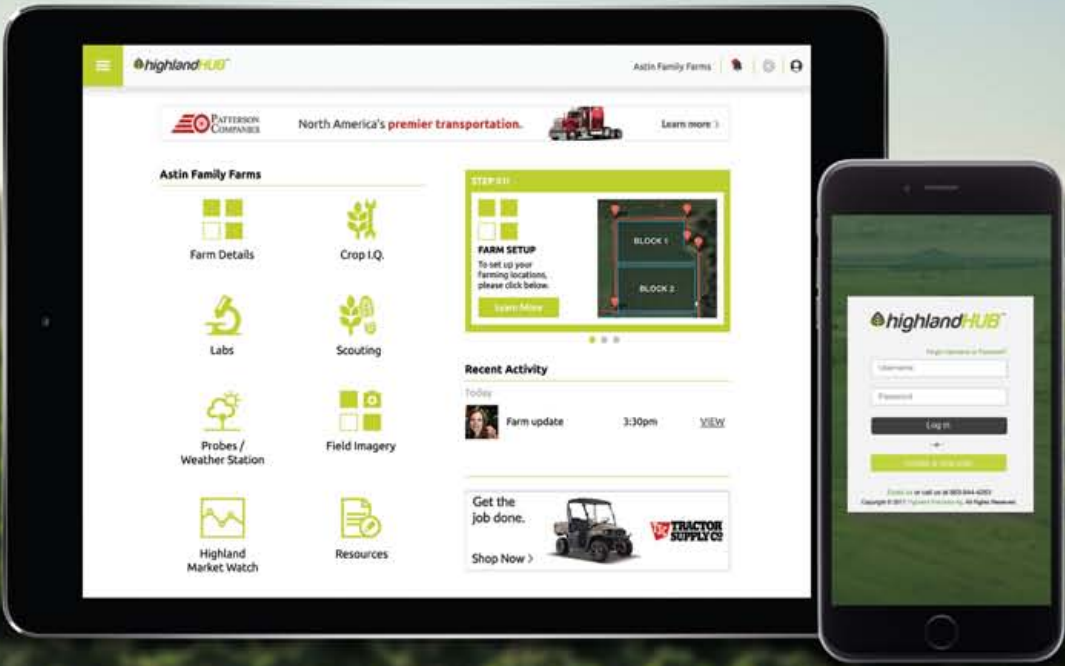
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Florida Report

Greeting’s from Florida the Sunshine State!!

As our 2018 year begins Queen Savannah and I attended several conventions through the months of January and February 2018.

Our first convention was the “Red Carpet Attire” at the beautiful beach of Sunny Isles, Florida for our 50th Annual Florida Watermelon Convention at the Trump International Beach Resort. Our Past President Laura Land did a tribute “So God Made a Watermelon Farmer” throughout the week-end dedicated our convention to our roots of our Florida Watermelon Farmers. Congratulations goes out Miss Camri Campbell for being crowned as our 2018 Florida Watermelon Queen. Camri is currently attending Florida Gulf Coast University where she is majoring in BS in Community Health. First runner-up was Ashley O’Steen from Lake Butler, Fla. and Second runner-up was Sydney Esquibel from Avon Park, Fla. Our Jubilee Award went to Catherine Bowman. Also Congratulations goes out to Ms. Carrie Thomas for receiving the “June Smith Award” and Mr. Trey Miller for being selected as our Second Vice-President. A fun-filled memorable weekend by everyone that attended and thanks to everyone that helped out that weekend.

The last weekend in January, Queen Savannah and I traveled up to the beautiful island of St. Simons, Georgia to attend the Georgia Watermelon Convention. Special Thank you to “Melon 1” for sponsoring us to attend this year convention. Congratulations to Savannah Hartley for being crowned the 2018 Georgia Watermelon Queen.

On February 9-10, Queen Savannah and I were in Biloxi, Mississippi at the Beau Rivage Resort for the 38th annual Alabama Watermelon Convention “Peace, Love and Watermelons”. President Heather Raulerson announce this year at their convention that they are joining the states of Louisiana and Mississippi know as part of their association. There new name will be announced next year at their convention. Congratulations to Sarah Jane Levine for being crowned 2018 Alabama Watermelon Queen. Thank you to our sponsors Billy Smith Watermelons, Clifton Seed Company, International Paper and Multicorr.

Our last weekend together, Queen Savannah and I headed out to Nashville, Tenn. for the 104th National Watermelon Convention. I’m so proud to announce that our Florida Watermelon Queen Savannah brought home the title of the National Watermelon Queen. CONGRATULATIONS to SAVANNAH!!! Way to go!! On behalf of the Florida Watermelon Association, our board members and FWA members we are all very proud of you, Queen Savannah. You have done an amazing job this year being our Public Ambassador. Thanks to everyone that attended Nationals in Tennessee and supported Queen Savannah. Also Congratulations goes out to Anna Beth Potter for winning the “Miss Jubilee Award”, Second Runner-up Blakely Johnson, and First Runner-up Paige Severino. All the States Queen’s this year did an awesome job representing their home state.

Wishing everyone a successful Watermelon season this year..... Until next time!

Debra Harrison -
Florida Watermelon Promotions Coordinator
Email: debra@flfwa.com
Cell: (863) 633-8306



Congratulations to Carrie Thomas for receiving this year “Ms. June Smith Award”. Carrie and her beautiful family at the Florida Watermelon Convention.



2017 FWQ Savannah and our 2018 Florida Watermelon Queen Contestants.



Our 2018 Florida Watermelon Queen Judges!!



Our Past President Ms. Laura Land and there beautiful family “The Land family”.



2018 Florida Watermelon Queen Camri Campbell and her court. First Runner-up Ashley O’Steen and Second Runner-up Sydney Esquibel.



Thank you to Cory Dombrowski with Sakata Seed-America for sponsoring this year crowning with the “Triple Crown”.



Our Beautiful “Has Been” along with 2018 FWQ Camri Campbell.



Welcome to our watermelon family “The Campbell’s”, brother Colton, Christa and Matt.



Congratulations to Savannah Hartley for being chosen as the 2018 Georgia Watermelon Queen.



“Love, Peace and Watermelons” was this year theme for the Alabama Watermelon Convention!



Congratulations to Sarah Jane Levine for being crowned 2018 Alabama Watermelon Queen.



Queen Savannah spending the day at our “Florida State Fair” booth.



Ladies having fun in Nashville at the Wild Horse Salon with Country Band “Trick Pony”.



““Congratulations” Savannah for bringing home the National crown.



Congratulations to first runner-up Paige Severino – Alabama, NWQ Savannah Christensen and second runner-up Blakely Johnson- South Carolina at the National Watermelon Queen



2018 Florida Watermelon Queen Camri Campbell at her first promotion in Tampa, Florida at “Southern Exposure”. Thanks to Melon 1 for sponsoring her.

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TRUCKING continued from page 1

impacts on the American economy. While we understand the intent of the ELD mandate is to improve the safety of American roadways, neither the agency, law enforcement, or regulated community were prepared for the implementation.

In response to the overwhelming issues experienced by the produce industry across the country, we have requested a two-year extension to the waiver for agriculture carriers from ELD usage in hopes it will provide ample time for Congress to review the implementation process and take any necessary legislative action.



We have received feedback from producers and trucking operations, many of whom are small family-owned businesses, that ELDs currently on the market are not able to accommodate the agricultural exemption that is provided under the Hours-of-Service regulations. These devices cost \$500 or more and need to be able to implement the regulations that FMCSA requires. Without a verifiable technological standard that FMCSA stands behind, the regulated community is subjected to growing costs for purchasing and repurchasing unnecessary devices in a futile attempt to meet the federal mandate. This issue is further demonstrated by the fact that some ELD manufacturers themselves, who have discovered their devices are not fully compliant, have filed exemption requests. Without the available technology being able to implement the flexibility that Congress envisioned for perishable cargoes under the Hours-of-Service regulations, those exemptions effectively do not exist.

Additionally, we are concerned that the guidance that has been provided to state enforcement officials by FMCSA is not clear. For example, a comment period was recently closed on defining a key parameter in determining the scope of the agricultural exemption within the Hours-of-Service regulations. If a fundamental question of this nature is not currently settled, it is unreasonable to assume that the industry can comply with an ambiguous standard.

There is a great deal of confusion in the mandate related to Hours-of-Service, and when a driver can turn on and turn off the clock that tracks their limited drive time in each 14-hour period, mandatory 30-minute break, mandatory 10 hours off between each 14-hour period, 34 hours off between each 70-hour period, the drive time clock not starting until after the 150 air-mile radius comes into play, and more. The rule is very complicated and has caused much confusion in the process. Plus, the mandate includes a Coercion Rule which you need to be aware of.



When dealing with a perishable product like fruits & vegetables, changing how we harvest, pack, load and ship crops is not the topic of the day, nor something that should be even part of this discussion. What this must be about is to learn of the understandable explanations of how Hours-of-

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increase in enforcement actions. Growers need to be prepared and know their rights and responsibilities long before an ICE agent knocks on their door.

In November 2016, the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) published a revised I-9 Form. All employers must use this new version for newly-hired employees. Electronic or paper copies of the new I-9 Form are available from the USCIS website, as well as copies of instructions and the USCIS Employer Handbook revised in July 2017 (the M-274) at <https://www.uscis.gov/i-9>.

The revised I-9 Form was intended to be more user-friendly for those completing the form on a computer, with prompts for missing information, the ability to enter multiple preparers or translators, a dedicated area for adding additional information rather than having to add it to the margins, drop-down menus and calendars for adding dates, on-screen instructions for each field, and instructions separate from the form itself. The form also reiterates that it is not to be completed before the employee accepts a job offer and re-states the Anti-Discrimination Notice. There is a Spanish-language edition of the form, but that can only be used by employers in Puerto Rico – it can, however, be used to assist Spanish-speaking new hires in completing the English-language official form.



Focusing on I-9 forms and compliance is a huge step in the right direction.

Under President Obama, ICE changed its enforcement approach, moving away from the large worksite raids that had become common between 2006-2008 and favoring the use of audits and I-9 inspections followed by civil fines. Between 2008 and 2012, I-9 audits increased by more than 375% while arrests decreased sharply. At the same time, civil monetary penalties collected from employers ballooned from \$675,000 (2008) to \$6.9 million (2010) and to \$16 million (2013). In the final years of the Obama administration, ICE began to deprioritize audits of agricultural employers, devoting limited enforcement resources to employers in other industries. That practice now appears to be ending.

Facing the prospect of increasing audits and immigration raids, AG employers are asking for advice as to how employers can prepare for possible visits by ICE and what they should do if they are visited. To gain any legal advice, a grower is recommended to seek legal counsel. Additionally, Texas A&M University (TAM) shared a piece titled, “The Difference between an ICE Audit and an ICE Raid: Are You Prepared?” It has been posted to the National Watermelon Association website and is available to our members.

Service work; when a driver can turn the clock off and on; what is drive time and what is not; how federal law trumps state laws; and how we can ship a perishable product to market without negatively affecting commerce.

We have expressed these concerns to FMCSA and look forward to hearing their response. In the meantime, congressional oversight hearings would allow our industry concerns to be heard and help Congress to better understand the difficulties faced by not just the produce industry, but also more than 30 other industries who have expressed their apprehensions with the mandate. In addition, an oversight hearing will provide an opportunity to find out what legislative or administrative solutions may be needed.

Stay tuned to the National Watermelon Association news and website for updates about the ELD mandate, especially as we close in on early June when the mandate will be enforced fully by DOT inspectors.

CONVENTION continued from page 1

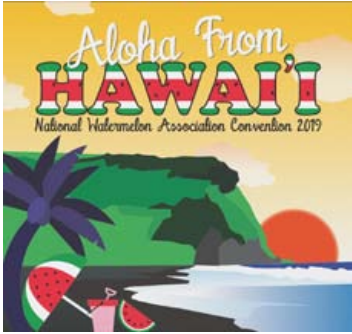


There are so many thanks to give to so many people, so many companies, and partners too. Without you all, we could not do what we do to kick off another watermelon season. The sponsors who help us to keep our attendees' costs down and allow us to create a convention experience that is unrivaled; the exhibitors who support the convention to sell their products & services; our third party partners that help us to make it all happen from audio-visual to coach buses to the entertainment to registration and auction memorabilia, and more. We thank you all very, very much. It absolutely takes a small village to pull this off; We Did It, and WELL!

On multiple pages throughout this issue of The Vineline magazine, we have captured our sponsors, exhibitors, sights, award winners, speakers, and more in some pictorial selections of some of the memories from the 104th National Watermelon Association Convention & Annual meeting in Nashville, Tennessee.

I would be remiss if I did not take a moment to thank the Officers for their support. Whenever we needed them, they were there to help out. Thank you, Boys! I most definitely want to give a huge Shout-Out to my team - Monica and Kelli. This particular convention had more arms and legs than we are used to, and we pulled it off. In fact, we did it so well that the City of Nashville has nominated us to compete against other conventions (held in Nashville in 2018) for their annual Gold Record award. It is because of my team's hard work that we are honored by Nashville with just a nomination. We are thrilled and honored. Thank you so very much, Ladies.

Next year, we will venture to Paradise for the very first time in our history – Hawai'i! And to eliminate any confusion, we are going to the Big Island of Hawai'i, the largest island in the chain of islands that make up our 50th State. The airport is Kona International Airport, located on the western coast of Hawai'i.



Until we meet again, know that your Association is here, working for you everyday on the important issues. We'll see you down this road that we travel. MAHALO!

An ICE inspection is not unlike an inspection by your doctor or auto mechanic. If you haven't practiced preventative maintenance by the time you have your visit, it is probably too late to avoid the bad news. Unlike the case of a vehicle that runs poorly or a body that does not feel well, where one can control the timing of his/her visit to the mechanic or doctor, one seldom can anticipate when an ICE agent will show up at your office or on your property.

The Difference between an ICE Audit and an ICE Raid: Are You Prepared?

When R. Jordan and Tiffany Dorell advised...

Investigation compliance issues frequently arise from the spring and summer of 2017. The U.S. Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) conducted audits at several locations in Texas. In one case, it is noted that at one location, there were 100 employees. In another case, there were 100 employees. In a third case, there were 100 employees. In a fourth case, there were 100 employees. In a fifth case, there were 100 employees. In a sixth case, there were 100 employees. In a seventh case, there were 100 employees. In an eighth case, there were 100 employees. In a ninth case, there were 100 employees. In a tenth case, there were 100 employees. In an eleventh case, there were 100 employees. In a twelfth case, there were 100 employees. In a thirteenth case, there were 100 employees. In a fourteenth case, there were 100 employees. In a fifteenth case, there were 100 employees. In a sixteenth case, there were 100 employees. In a seventeenth case, there were 100 employees. 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In a five hundred and forty-seventh case, there were 100 employees. In a five hundred and forty-e

Georgia Report

Greetings from Georgia!

We’re proud to report on a GREAT annual conference back in St. Simons this year. We held our meeting at the King & Prince Beach and Golf Resort where attendees spent their time relaxing, golfing, shopping and enjoying all the conference activities throughout the weekend!

The GWA Annual Convention had a great attendance this year with over 270 growers and watermelon agribusinesses who joined us for the weekend. The live auction was a huge success raising over \$300,000. A BIG THANKS to our load donors, buyers and other auction supporters for this 2018 event. The GWA is thankful to have your support and passion for the industry and we are looking forward to a successful growing season this year! Also, thanks for the support given by our CORPORATE sponsors for the meeting; it would not be possible without your generous donations.

For our annual queen contest this year we were excited to have some very lovely, poised and intelligent ladies all competing for the position of the 2018 GWA Ambassador. THANK YOU Bayer Vegetable Seed, Pal-King Pallets, Seminis Seed and International Paper for your support of the contestants! Congratulations to our 2nd runner up, Emily Steward Peters sponsored by Seminis Seed and 1st runner up, Ashley Rodgers sponsored by International Paper, and our Miss Jubilee Winner, Jordan Lunsford. Finally –congratulations to our 2018 Georgia Watermelon Queen, Miss Savannah Hartley! Savannah is from Glenwood, Georgia and will be graduating from Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College in May with a Bachelor’s degree in Agriculture Communications. Savannah was sponsored by Bayer Vegetable Seed. Queen Savannah is already in full swing with ‘Feed My School’ visits across Georgia, retail promotions, Queen Training with the NWPB, Cooper River Bridge Run in Charleston, SC and many other events throughout the spring.

If you are interested in booking our new Georgia Watermelon Queen, please call ahead to schedule a date for our 2018 tour by contacting Dawn Cheplick at 706-845-8575 or dcheplick@asginfo.net.

Looking forward to seeing you all this summer!

Sincerely,
Dawn Cheplick, Promotions Coordinator
706-845-8575
dcheplick@asginfo.net



GWA crowns their 2018 Queen, Ms. Savannah Hartley.



Savannah on her first promotion as the 2018 GWA Queen.



Queen Savannah judging a fast and fierce watermelon eating contest.



Queen Savannah with the Navy Chef at Kings Bay Commissary



Celebrating ‘Feed my School’ week with Radium County Elementary students.



Serving up some watermelon breakfast parfaits – YUM!



Kids love Queen Savannah and her delicious treat she shares with them!

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Road Trip

a 45-count watermelon hybrid



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Here in Illiana we enjoy the four seasons but we love the Spring. A time of new growth and new beginnings. Queen Katie's year finished up with a lot of travel time to different conventions.

St. Simon Island was Queen Katie's next stop for the Georgia Convention. Even though it was rainy the island is was beautiful. The hospitality was top notch as well. Thank you Georgia for always making us feel so welcomed.

The National Convention was bittersweet for Queen Katie. Saying goodbye to so many wonderful new friends is never easy. Katie will cherish the memories and friends forever in her heart.

Illiana Watermelon Convention ended Queen Katie's reign by crowning the new IWA Queen, Brilee Albrecht. We wish Queen Brilee the best of luck in this upcoming year and we are so excited to see her bubbly personality shine throughout 2018!



Goofy Brad
Johnson &
Queen Katie



Queen Katie
meets with U.S.
Congressman
Larry Bucshon
& other IWA
members



Aaron & Kelly Tyner and Queen Katie



Queen Katie giving a speech at the Knox County Chamber of Commerce luncheon



Miss
Anita,
Katie
and Miss
Gwen
Snider



Katie's seed
spitting
improves
throughout
her reign



Horral
Family with
Queen Katie



These two look like they are up to something



IWA President,
Rick Linenburg
and Queen
Katie



Ross Chastain, Kelly Tyner and Queen Katie



Brandy & Cody Smith, Brad Johnson and Queen Katie



Queen Katie and Jamie Adams



Mouzin Brothers and Queen Katie



Craig Mathis and Queen Katie



Crowning of 2018 Queen Brilee Albrecht

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- 2) The number of plants needed
- 3) Desired delivery dates

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Crunchy Red

XL size, late maturing crimson sweet with very firm flesh.

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Mar-Del Report

As an association, we sit and reflect on another great year of promotions and supporting our watermelon industry. We always look forward to the winter season where we are able to visit with our Agriculture leaders at various banquets and meetings. Queen Connor stayed busy and was able to represent us at the Delaware Agriculture dinner. She met with Delaware Secretary of Agriculture Michael Scuse and Delaware Governor John Carney. It was a great evening full of fellowship and looking forward to a successful and safe 2018 watermelon season.

Queen Connor attended the Florida convention and was red carpet ready with the other state watermelon queens. It was a great weekend seeing our watermelon family and welcoming in a new Florida Watermelon Queen.

With a couple weekends off it gave us just enough time to get ready to roll right into our 2018 Mar-Del Watermelon convention weekend. Queen Connor did an excellent job of hosting throughout the weekend. Our theme was watermelon derby days. It was a fun weekend of laughs, memories and many derby hats. It seems like just yesterday Connor was crowned the 2017 watermelon queen. Connor has represented our association at 60 promotions throughout Delaware and Maryland. She participated in three live T.V. interviews, a T.V. commercial, radio commercial, and a live radio interview. At the end of the weekend, Queen Connor crowned the 2018 Watermelon Queen, Ms. Gabrielle Hastings.

The 2018 Mar-Del convention is in the books but we had one last stop left before Nashville bound! We had a “Groovy Watermelon” weekend at the Alabama Convention and welcomed in the 2018 Alabama Watermelon Queen.

The 2018 National Watermelon Convention was a huge success and Queen Connor had a blast exploring downtown Nashville, the Country Music Hall of Fame, Wild Horse Saloon and the Grand Ole Opry. It is hard to pick a favorite memory of the weekend. It was great to see our watermelon family and watch eight successful women compete throughout the weekend for the National Watermelon Queen title. Queen Connor did an excellent job and we cannot wait to see what her future holds.

Our 2018 promotion schedule is booking up fast and we are ready for a Mar-Delicious season!



Queen Connor with Secretary of Agriculture, Michael Scuse and Delaware Governor John Carney at the Delaware Agriculture dinner.



Red Carpet ready with all the Watermelon Queens!



Queen Connor at the Florida Convention.



Newly crowned 2018 Queen Gabrielle Hastings with Mar-Del President Keven Evans and his wife Katie Evans.



Friendly competition in the watermelon derby horse race!



Watermelon Queens looking Derby ready in their hats!



Our 5 lovely contestants at the Presidents reception.



Peace, Love, Watermelon at the Alabama Watermelon Convention



Queen Connor ready to dance the night away at the Wild Horse Saloon.



The Watermelon Queens taking a photo opportunity before interviews.



We could not be more proud of Queen Connor and all she has accomplished this year! You looked stunning up on stage!

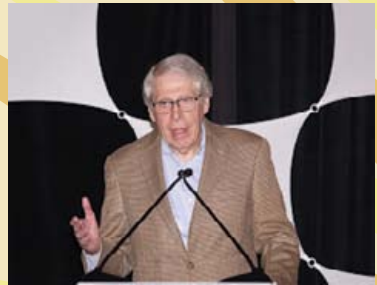


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North Carolina Report

What a great year it has been for the NC Watermelon Queen Miss Emma Cannon. Emma was the perfect watermelon ambassador and we would like to thank her for her dedication this season. Always happy to be promoting watermelons no matter the time or place.

Watermelon Farewell Letter from Queen Emma:

A little over a year ago I returned to NC from living in Africa for six months and little did I know that watermelon would soon become a huge part of my life! Not only did I come to know and love more dearly the fruit, I found a family that will always hold a special place in my heart. To the association members, I thank you so much for allowing me to become a part of your special family. I have thoroughly enjoyed getting to know all of you throughout this year and it has been an honor to represent you at all of the watermelon events.

To the NCWA Board thank you for believing in me from day one on the job. Cathy & Bonnie thank you for being the glue that holds us together. James & Courtney Sharp thank you for your support this year. I've loved getting to know your family and your girls. They will be the cutest watermelon queens one day! Senator Brent Jackson thank you for taking the time to help me understand more about policy that affects the watermelon industry. Mom, Dad, Ashton, and Chandler thank you for always believing in me and encouraging me to chase my many adventurous dreams!

To my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ thank you for writing it in your plan for my life to leave Africa earlier than planned and allowing me the opportunity to become a part of such a wonderful watermelon community. The relationships I've made and lessons I've learned this year are all because You know what's best for my life, not me!

*With all my sincerest appreciation,
Emma Catherine Cannon
2017 NCWA Queen*

The NC Watermelon Association just completed our 37th Annual Convention and it was a huge success. Congratulations to our newly crowned 2018 NCWA Queen Miss Katie Honeycutt of Angier, NC. Katie is a student at NC State University majoring in Ag Business and Education. We are looking forward to a great year with Katie.

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



Queen Emma and NCWA VP Frank Howell at the Southeast Fruit & Vegetable Expo.



Queen's Madison, Emma and Blakely at the SC Watermelon Association Convention.



Queen's Connor, Madison, Paige and Emma at the Derby Night President's Reception during the Mar Del Watermelon Association Convention.



NCWA President James Sharp, Queen Emma NCWA Vice President Frank Howell and Rob Glover having fun at the Wild horse Saloon during the NWA Convention in Nashville, TN.



All the state queens getting ready for the seed spit at the NWA Convention.



Queen Emma and Susan Eden enjoying the auction at the NWA Convention.



Queen Emma had a great time at the NWA Convention in Nashville, TN.



2018 NC Watermelon Queen Scholarship Pageant Contestants



Future NC Watermelon Queens enjoying the band at the NCWA Convention in Wrightsville Beach, NC.



Katie Honeycutt participating in the convention seed spit contest.



Mike Bunch and queen contestant Shelby Bireley at the NCWA Auction.



2018 NC Watermelon Queen Miss Katie Honeycutt and SC Queen Miss Emily Dicks.



Winners of the NCWA Queen Scholarship Pageant. Shelby Bireley-second runner up, Katie Honeycutt-2018 NC Watermelon Queen and Amy Arnold-first runner up.



Jim Ray and Johnny Bradley from Ingles Markets with our 2018 NC Watermelon Queen Miss Katie Honeycutt.



Past NCWA Queens welcome Katie to the watermelon family.



Rick and Gavin Keziah from Food Lion with Queen Katie.



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South Carolina Report

The South Carolina Watermelon Association would like to welcome Miss Emily Dicks as our new 2018 South Carolina Watermelon Queen. Emily is the 20 year old daughter of Hamilton and Michele Dicks of Barnwell, SC. Emily attends the University of South Carolina in Columbia where she is majoring in Merchandising with a minor in Business.

Emily has had the opportunity of attending the Georgia, Alabama, and NC state conventions. Being able to attend these conventions and meeting her sister queens has been a wonderful experience for her. Congratulations to all of the new state queens and we look forward to working with you all in the coming year.

We are now getting ready to begin our year with the SC Commissioners BBQ Cup in Columbia on March 24th, the Taste of SC at the State Capitol in Columbia on April 3rd, the Cooper River Bridge Run in Charleston on April 5-8, and Queen Training in Atlanta, GA, on April 20-22.

May and June already have numerous school field days on the calendar as well as another 5k race in Beaufort, SC. We are anticipating many more promotions coming in over the next few weeks and months.

We would also like to take this time to thank our 2017 SCWQ, Blakely Johnson, for a job well done at the National Convention in Nashville, TN. Blakely did an outstanding job for South Carolina this year and came in 2nd runner-up for the National title. Many thanks to Blakely and the Johnson family for their support of the South Carolina Watermelon Association. Also, congratulations to 2017 Alabama Queen, Paige Severino on being named 1st Runner-up at Nationals and welcome to the new 2018 National Queen, Savannah Christensen who was the Florida Queen.

Wishing everyone a prosperous 2018 season.

Ann Bryant
SCWA Promotions Coordinator
abryant028@charter.net
ann.bryant@furman.edu
864-303-3995



Commissioner Hugh Weathers and new SCWQ, Emily Dicks.



Queen Emily at the Alabama Convention greeting some of her adorable supporters.



Emily Dicks, 2018 SCWQ; Courtney Kubu, First Runner-up; and Lauren Guillenbeau, Second Runner-Up.



Emily posing before the crowning.



Emily with her family after being crowned.



Meeting the new Alabama Queen.



The South Carolina Board Members congratulating their new watermelon queen.



North Carolina Convention, Wrightsville Beach, NC



Queens enjoying the beautiful scenery in St. Simons Island, Ga.



Enjoying time in North Carolina.



Emily and Anna Dicks with Kit at the Georgia Convention.



Saying hello to 2018 North Carolina Queen.



Melon 1 having fun with Emily at the Georgia Convention.



SC Association Members gifting their 2017 queen with a beautiful necklace at Nationals.



Welcoming Savannah Hartley into the watermelon family.



2018 National Queen, Savannah Christensen, First Runner-Up Paige Severino, and Second Runner-Up, Blakely Johnson.

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A man and a woman are standing together, smiling, and holding a small trophy. The man is wearing a dark suit jacket over a light blue shirt, and the woman is wearing a dark, long-sleeved top. They are standing in front of a backdrop with large, dark, circular patterns. The trophy is a small, gold-colored figurine of a person on a horse.

A photograph of two women standing side-by-side in front of a black and white patterned backdrop. The woman on the left has long blonde hair and is wearing a black lace dress. The woman on the right has short blonde hair and is also wearing a black lace dress. She is holding a large, ornate trophy with both hands. The trophy has a circular base with a face and a tall, decorative stem.



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Watermelon
HALL OF FAME



Texas Report

Sweet spring greetings from Texas! I hope this letter finds all of our watermelon friends doing very well. Miss Chloe Brown just finished up her reign as our 2017 Texas Watermelon Queen and we are so proud of her. In January Chloe attended the 50th annual Florida Watermelon Convention in Sunny Isles, Florida at the Trump International Hotel. Though it was a relatively quick trip, we packed in a lot of fun. The first evening we attended the red carpet welcome reception where everyone was dressed to impress and many danced the evening away. The next day Chloe and I watched the contestants give their speeches then Chloe helped at the auction, and later we enjoyed the banquet. Chloe loved getting to spend time with her good friend, NWA Queen, Madison Laney and many of the other state queens. Florida had some outstanding contestants and their new 2018 Florida Watermelon Queen, Camri Campell will certainly serve them very well as their promotions ambassador. We give our sincere thanks to Debra Harrison and the outgoing FWA President, Laura Land, for inviting us and for showing us a wonderful time.

The climax for the year for Queen Chloe was the National Watermelon Association convention in Nashville, Tennessee. The first night was a fabulous private event at the Wildhorse Saloon where a good time was had by all. The next day the girls took part in the promotion wear competition, then gave their speeches, and later helped at the auction. In the evening the group attended a night out at the Grand Ole Opry where everyone witnessed a little piece of history. On Saturday, the ladies listened to some very informative speakers then had their interviews. Finally, Chloe and the other contestants could relax until it was time to get ready for the evening gown competition. Chloe and all of the young ladies looked lovely in their gowns and made their associations very proud. In the end the judges' choices were revealed. Congratulations to the second runner up, Miss Blakely Johnson of South Carolina, first runner-up, Miss Paige Severino of Alabama, and the 2018 National Watermelon Queen was Miss Savannah Christensen. We wish you all the best.

Chloe wanted all of the watermelon family to know how much this year has meant to her, so I am including this quote from her. "This position and the experiences it has brought me have abundantly exceeded all the things I could have ever imagined. From promoting watermelons in various grocery stores, watermelon festivals and the Marine Corps Marathon, I enjoyed every second as the Texas Watermelon Queen. I would like to thank the Texas Watermelon Association for allowing me this once in a lifetime opportunity as it is something I will forever hold near and dear to my heart."

I would like to add that the TWA is proud of the job Chloe has done and the attitude that she has displayed throughout the year. She always been very pleasant, hard-working, prompt, professional, and has shown her love for the industry and the people that are a part of it. Thank you, Chloe. The association and I wish you the very best.

Best Regards,
Barbara Duda TWA Coordinator
bcduda62@gmail.com





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For information contact:
Scott Bowers
801.376.2187



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 another great event and to everyone that participated this year!

We hope that everyone had a great time that traveled to Nashville for the National Convention, we always love to see representation from the West Coast! A big thank you to the NWA for hosting such an amazing event year after year.

We are anticipating the 2018 domestic season to be a positive one. We are receiving much needed rainfall out here in the west, helping with ongoing water supply issues. 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. Markets have been high with prices reaching upward to .30/lb. out of the Nogales region. 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 Ratto
Western Watermelon Association
Danieller@vgandsons.com

For more information on the Western Watermelon Association, be sure to check out our website at: www.westernwatermelon.org and Facebook.



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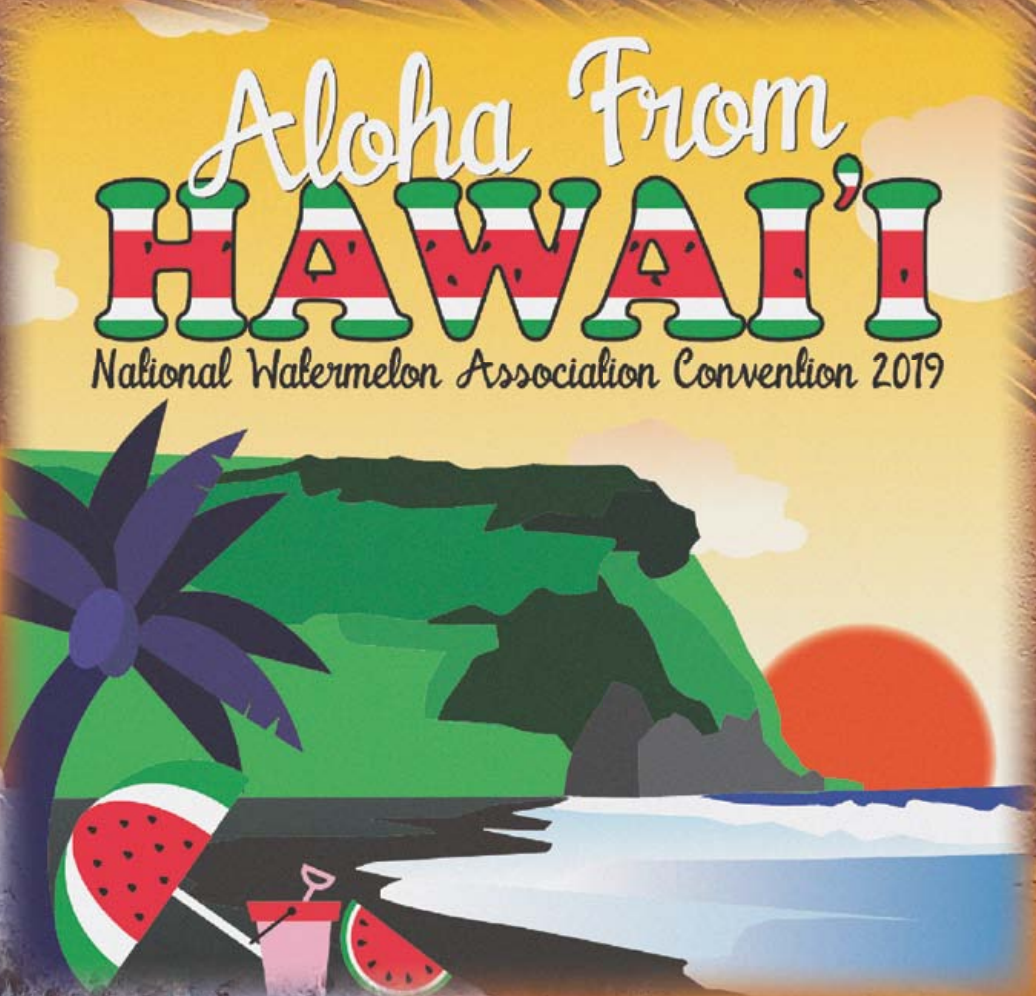
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105th National Watermelon Association Convention & Annual Meeting

Monday - Sunday
February 18-24, 2019

Waikoloa
Hawaii'i



Marriott Waikoloa Beach Resort & Spa
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Airport - Kona International Airport
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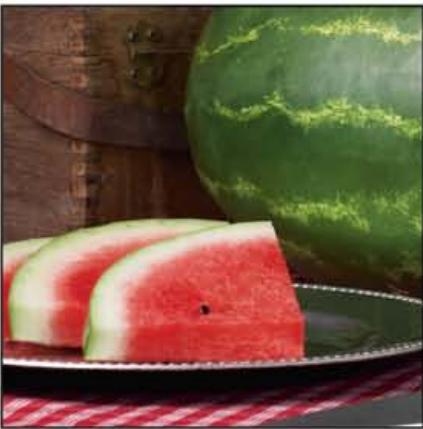
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- All trays come preset with a 3:1 seedless to pollenizer ratio, which helps prevent mix-ups.
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- Increases productivity as transplant crews can cover more acreage faster, because fewer plugs are pulled.
- Full Count Duals and Full Count Deuces are the result of patented technology only available through Syngenta.



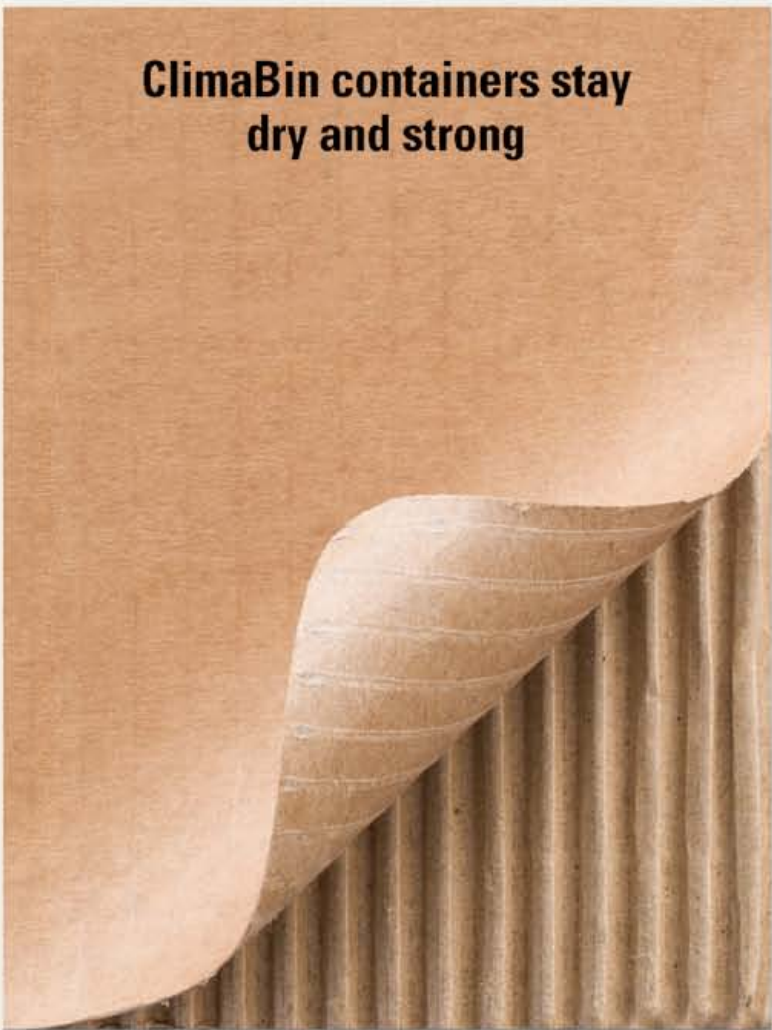
TO LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR FULL COUNT PROGRAM, CONTACT YOUR LOCAL SYNGENTA DEALER OR SEED RETAILER TODAY.



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