



FDA Will Issue a Second Draft of Produce Safety Rule

FDA Deputy Commissioner for Foods and Veterinary Medicine Michael Taylor recently issued a statement saying FDA will issue a second round of draft rules concerning key provisions and seek additional public comments. The rule provisions undergoing major revisions focus on water quality standards and testing, standards for using raw manure and compost, provisions affecting mixed-use facilities, and procedures for withdrawing the qualified exemption for certain farms.

The FDA released this statement from Taylor: “FDA appreciates and takes very seriously the extensive input we have received from produce farmers and others in the agricultural sector on the proposed FDA Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) rules on produce safety and preventive controls for human food, which we published in January 2013. We have made every effort to solicit input on the proposed rules, not only through the standard rulemaking process, but also by participating in more than 150 meetings and by traveling to numerous farms of varying types and sizes from Maine to California. To ensure broad input and facilitate constructive dialogue with the produce community, FDA has extended the comment periods on the proposed rules three times. Based on our discussions with farmers, the research community and other input we have received, we have learned a great deal, and our thinking has evolved. Everyone shares the goal of ensuring produce safety, but, as we said at the beginning of the process, the new safety standards must be flexible enough to accommodate reasonably the great diversity of the produce sector, and they must be practical to implement.

To achieve this goal, we believe that significant changes will be needed in key provisions of the two proposed rules affecting small and large farmers. These provisions include water quality standards and testing, standards for using raw manure and compost, certain provisions affecting mixed-use facilities, and procedures for withdrawing the qualified exemption for certain farms. We have heard the concern that these provisions, as proposed, would not fully achieve our goal of implementing the law in a way that improves public health protections while minimizing undue burden on farmers and other food producers.

Because the changes to the key provisions would be significant, FDA plans to propose revised rule language and seek comment on it, allowing the public the opportunity to provide input on our new thinking. There may be other revisions to the proposed rules; the scope of the revised proposals, on which we will seek further comment, will be determined after we complete our initial review of written comments. We believe that this additional step to seek further input on revised sections of the proposed rules that need significant adjustment is critical to fulfilling our continuing commitment to getting these rules right.

Our plan is to publish revised proposed rule language by early summer 2014. We will accept additional comments

Congress asks FDA to re-propose FSMA rules

Capitol Hill weighed in on the need to re-propose food safety rules as 75 members of Congress sent a letter to the Food & Drug Administration warning that farms and processors will suffer and some businesses may close if there’s no opportunity to comment on revamped food-safety rules before they become final.

Businesses in the produce industry have been grappling all year with the impact of the proposed produce safety and preventive control rules required by the Food Safety Modernization Act. FDA is being swamped with comments asking for major changes in the proposals, but the agency is under a court-ordered deadline to accept comments on the rules only until March 2014.

While the agency appeals the court order, food industry groups have been running to Capitol Hill for relief in hopes of convincing the FDA that another round of proposed rules should be released for public comment.

“After hearing many reservations from our farmers and businesses, we are concerned that the rules as currently proposed, and the heavy cost of complying with them, will force some producers and processors to shutter their operations,” 75 members of Congress said in a Nov. 22 letter to FDA Commissioner Margaret Hamburg. “By seeking additional input through second proposed rules for public comment before final rules, we believe that producers’ concerns can be addressed and unintended consequences can be greatly mitigated.”

The letter listed the top concerns for their constituents: agricultural water testing frequency; manure restrictions; mixed-use facility compliance; conservation and environmental practice conflicts; small farm definitions; and farm ownership issues.

FSMA is the most significant regulatory overhaul of food-safety rules in 70 years, so Congress asking FDA to seek additional input through a second set of proposed rules before final rulemaking makes very good sense.

only on those sections of the proposed rules that have been revised. FDA remains under a court order regarding the timelines for finalizing these rules. FDA recognizes that completing these rules is essential to protecting the public health and is committed to completing them as quickly as possible.

It is gratifying to FDA that in our meetings around the country, we have received broad support for moving forward in implementing FSMA in a timely manner in light of its important food safety and public confidence goals. Thanks to all of you who have worked with us. We will continue this collaborative approach as we move down the pathway to final rules and to full implementation of the FDA Food Safety Modernization Act in the years to come.”

U.S. House must act on immigration now

Speaker of the House John Boehner can’t even eat breakfast in peace. Recently a pair of teenage girls, activists for immigration reform, approached him at Pete’s Diner, his early-morning stop, to ask how he’d like to be deported.

“How would you feel if you had to tell your kids at the age of 10 that you were never coming home?” 13-year-old Carmen Lima, of California, asked Mr. Boehner. “That wouldn’t be good,” replied the speaker.

The rest of his remarks on immigration that day were not so clear. Mr. Boehner, who pledged to press ahead with immigration reform a year ago following Mitt Romney’s dismal performance with Latino voters, now says the House will not negotiate with Democrats on the basis of the sweeping reform bill passed by the Senate in June with bipartisan support. Some experts have this translation: Don’t hold your breath for immigration reform this year.

The Speaker of the House says he still wants to deal with immigration, but in a common sense, step-by-step way. The trouble is, no one knows what those steps would be.

The Senate’s immigration bill is 1,300 pages long, a fact that Mr. Boehner cited to dismiss its viability as the basis for negotiations. In the wake of Obamacare’s rollout troubles, large-scale reforms are in poor standing. As the old saying goes, “the devil is in the detail”.

But the fact is there are an estimated 11 million undocumented immigrants in the United States. The country needs to deal with them in some way. When it does so, it needs to set up a sensible system for future immigration so we don’t wind up in the same fix 10 or 20 years from now. That requires legislation of some complexity, but members of Congress are elected to solve complex problems.

The House should vote on the parts of immigration reform they consider priorities and take that sensible step-by-step approach into negotiations with the Senate. To delay it again and again with politics at the center is not productive, and definitely not good for our economy, security or job growth.

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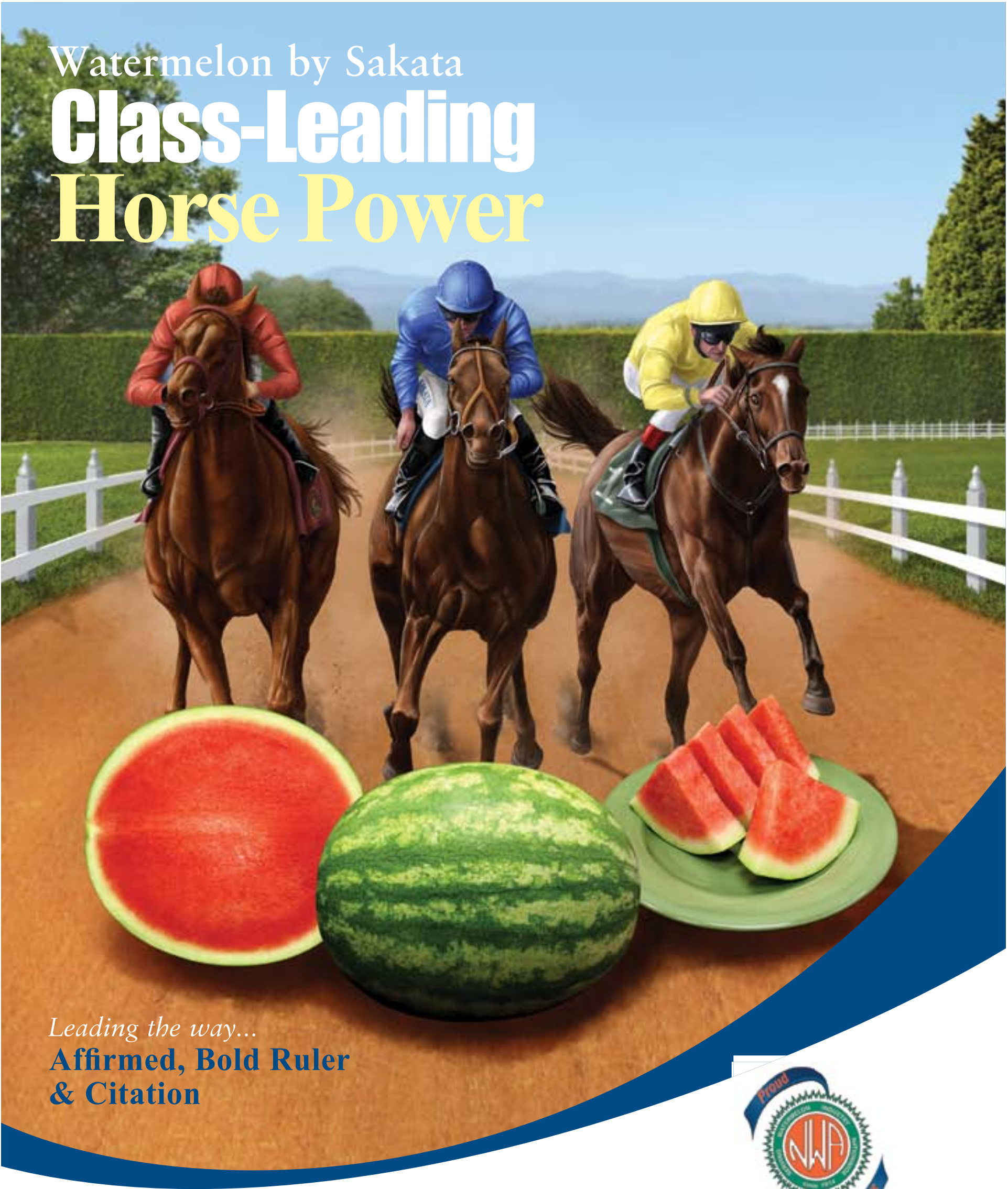
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Fuel price spike effect on produce prices studied

Fuel prices surges have the potential to hurt fresh produce demand, according to a new U.S. Department of Agriculture study. The study, titled “How Transport Costs Affect Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Prices” was published by the USDA’s Economic Research Service. It examines the influence of fuel and transportation costs on wholesale produce price volatility.

The report predicts the effect of changing fuel prices on wholesale prices of fruits and vegetables, said Richard Volpe, an author of the report and research economist in the Food Markets Branch of the Food Economics Division.

Among other things, the study looked at the effects to the industry if gas prices would double. While that’s a dramatic increase, he said it helps to put into perspective what effects high fuel prices would have on fresh produce. Some fresh produce items would see prices rise by 40% to 50% with a doubling of fuel costs, he said.

The study showed that a 100% increase in diesel prices would lead to a short-term average wholesale produce price increase of 20% to 28%. That type of spike is meaningful, he said, because the effect of fuel price increases on fresh produce is higher than it is for packaged or shelf stable foods.

“It underscores the idea that more perishable foods — the foods more in line with dietary guidelines — that are more likely to face volatility as a result of input prices such as fuel,” he said. The study demonstrates that fuel prices are a significant factor in determining the difference between domestic wholesale and farm-level produce prices. For produce shipped by truck, the price margins are increasingly sensitive to fuel prices with greater distance from the growing region.

Volpe said he was somewhat surprised by transportation technology’s effect on fuel price increases. “Almost across the board, the commodities that were most sensitive to fuel price swings were those that were produced in the U.S. and shipped within the U.S. and shipped from state to state,” he said. Those U.S.-produced commodities rely on truck transportation, which is more energy intensive by far than ocean carrier transportation which bring in produce from other countries.

“A lot of people have this perception that the closer to home you are for the source of your food the better in terms of being sustainable and fuel efficient and all that, but that is not obviously always the case,” he said. The study found that commodities with larger import shares generally exhibit less fuel price sensitivity, with the authors concluding that is because ship transport is considerably less energy-intensive per mile than trucks. Studies have shown that trucking uses more than 13 times more energy per-mile per-pound shipped than does ocean shipping.

Rail fuel efficiency is almost as good as ocean shipping, and Volpe said the study makes it clear that the incentives of produce price stability and price predictability favor more rail transport of fresh produce.

“To the extent that the fuel price share of produce prices can be reduced, that’s one major step to reducing price volatility, which should improve welfare,” he said. “There are incentives to move in that direction, but that’s not to say it is going to be easy.”

Volpe said more research is needed, particularly on the link between increases in fuel prices and changing retail prices.

Finding precise data from the retail sector will be more challenging, but Volpe said he believes more research is possible.

Small-business requirement delayed in ObamaCare rollout

The White House delayed the launch of its online small-business exchange by one year. The delay is another setback for the troubled enrollment process of President Obama’s signature healthcare law. Companies with fewer than 50 employees were slated to begin buying coverage through the Small Business Health Options Program (SHOP), an online ObamaCare exchange. The exchange’s delay means small businesses will instead have to seek out coverage through an agent or broker.

U.S. Department of Health Services spokeswoman Julie Bataille said the delay was the result of the administration concentrating its focus and energy on getting the online exchange for individuals up and running by Nov. 30. Bataille argued that since many small businesses already go through agents and brokers, the disruption would be small because employers are already familiar with the process. She also said employers would be able to determine their eligibility for tax credits, a key feature

Jensen case sending shockwaves through the produce industry

On Nov. 20, Eric and Ryan Jensen, owners and operators of Jensen Farms officially assigned their lawsuit against PrimusLabs to Attorney William Marler, a nationally recognized food-safety advocate and managing partner of the Seattle-based law firm Marler Clark. The firm specializes in foodborne illness cases, and Marler represents 46 of the 64 victims of the 2011 Listeria outbreak traced back to tainted cantaloupes grown at Jensen Farms.



During the outbreak, 33 people died and another 147 people were sickened in the United States. The assignment, made during an off-the-record meeting held at the federal courthouse in Denver, followed several months of discussion. “Jensen has given my clients that lawsuit,” Marler stated, adding that the assignment was taken in behalf of all 64 victims. A lawsuit filed by Attorney Forrest W. Lewis sought five claims of relief for Jensen Farms. The claims against Primus include negligence; breach of contract; negligent hire; negligent misrepresentation; and unfair and deceptive trade practices.

Marler said a number of lawsuits have been filed in behalf of victims in 16 states. A total of 20 lawsuits have been filed in Colorado. “We’re in the long phase of litigation,” he noted. The relationship between manufacturers and consumers, and the degree to which victims have recourse to file claims varies from state to state. According to Marler, Primus has filed motions to dismiss in jurisdictions based upon not having a duty to consumers. “Even if Primus wins some motions to dismiss, they won’t get away. If nothing else, they will have to deal with the Jensen suit.”

Marler said the third-party auditing industry has evolved largely unregulated. Historically, the meat industry had inspectors in every plant. “On the FDA side, that’s not the culture they grew up in,” he said of the fresh produce industry. “Sure, there are great third-party auditors,” he said. But he added that inspection reports generated at the time of a severe outbreak can show a mismatch between inspection scoring and actual conditions at a facility, often leaving people to wonder “if the facility is the same.” Marler, whose professional experience spans more than 20 years, said the Jensen case is the only one where a specific auditor has been named in a lawsuit. “There has to be a causation between the alleged failure of the inspection and the outbreak,” he stated. “[Primus] was there when the outbreak was happening.”

of the federal exchange, through the workaround. Republicans seized on the announcement as yet another example that the healthcare law is doomed to fail. “Once again, President Obama has unilaterally delayed another major portion of ObamaCare, and once again, he has tried to bury bad news around a holiday hoping nobody will notice,” House Majority Leader Eric Cantor (VA) said in a statement. “The president’s latest one-year delay is another sign that ObamaCare’s issues run much deeper than a failing website,” he added. “The delay is also a reminder of the terrible harm ObamaCare will inflict on small businesses, costing jobs and economic growth. The president has fought bipartisan efforts to give middle class families and individuals a similar one-year delay from the debacle of ObamaCare.”

It’s not the first delay for the SHOP exchange, which hasn’t received the attention of some other aspects of the law because of the problem-plagued individual exchanges. The healthcare law establishes new insurance marketplaces, referred to as SHOP exchanges, where small businesses can compare and purchase insurance plans. The healthcare law allows small businesses to either offer a single plan to all of their workers or pick a certain benefit level and let workers choose among plans at that level.

The HHS delayed the latter option earlier this year, saying it’s too complicated for insurers to implement right away. Workers will still not be able to choose from an employer-approved benefit level of plans during the one-year delay. The White House has instituted a handful of unilateral delays. The Spanish-language version of the website will not be ready on time either, despite assurances to the contrary. And the White House has on a number of occasions moved back deadlines associated with individual enrollment.

FDA ups criminal prosecution for food safety violations

Criminal charges against a Colorado cantaloupe grower implicated in a 2011 listeria outbreak should cause all fresh produce shippers to take note.

The Food and Drug Administration told Congress in 2010 that it might increase misdemeanor prosecutions of food industry executives for violations of the federal Food Drug & Cosmetic Act. In September, Eric and Ryan Jensen, owners of the Holly, Colo., farm, were charged with violating the FDCA by introducing adulterated cantaloupe into interstate commerce, implicated in the outbreak leading to 33 deaths.

The misdemeanor charges do not allege any criminal “intent,” but FDCA violations alone are sufficient for misdemeanor charges. The Jensen Farms case has caused many growers to raise their eyebrows to try to understand what the potential criminal exposure could be for a food handler who unintentionally sells adulterated food.

The FDA’s basis of charges lies upon the history and evolution of the Park Doctrine — which allows misdemeanor charges even though criminal intent is not evident — and its use in the Jensen Farms case.

The main development, and something that all growers, packers and food manufacturers should be aware of, is that Jensen Farms was charged criminally without having any intent to do anything wrong or any knowledge of any problems. That means potential lawsuits, especially if injuries or death of consumers, occur. FDA is being more aggressive about pursuing criminal charges and that trend could increase.

FSMA rules are changing to change the game. And new rules require investment by industry to meet the demands. The fact that you can be found strictly criminally liable is yet another reason to take the new regulations seriously, to start preparing now for what it looks like FDA is going to require down the road and for investing in getting it right from the start.

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National Report

Make your plans to attend the 100th annual National Watermelon Association Convention in beautiful, historic Savannah, Georgia, February 19-23! Look for you there!

Amber has still been a busy lady promoting watermelons. We have so many promotions left to share with you from her tour!

Again we will let the pictures tell the story. We thank the following sponsors for this portion of the promotional tour and featured in this edition. Thanks to all that have made this year possible!

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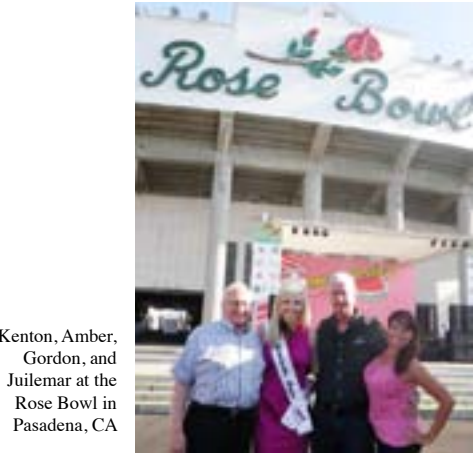
Josh presents the girls with Carytown Watermelon Festival shirts in Richmond



Kroger manager Ed Southern and our host for the event gives Amber a Carytown tour



Chelsey, Sheila, Brad, Stephanie and Amber enjoy dinner in Richmond



Kenton, Amber, Gordon, and Juilemar at the Rose Bowl in Pasadena, CA



Ready for the KTLA TV segment at the Rose Bowl



The morning host interviews Amber



More interviews



Mr. & Mrs. Dan Van Groningen visit at the Rose Bowl Festival



Gordon and Amber at the Santa Monica pier



Amber after a live radio interview with Ryan Seacrest, EXCITED maybe!



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Samples in the beautiful display kitchen at Market Basket



Amber prepares Fire & Ice Salsa in the Boston area Market Basket



NWA Executive Director, Bob Morrissey and NWA First VP Don Hiller at the Welcome Reception at United in DC

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Greg Leger of Leger & Son visit with Bob and Amber in DC



Capital Hill visits



Bob and all the girls at the Fresh Festival on Capital Hill



All these ladies thank Mark Collins for a great dinner in New Orleans



All the girls with the NWPB team at PMA



Mark Arney, NWPB Executive Director and Amber at the booth at PMA



NWA's 2nd VP with Amber at PMA



Andrea and Rebekah at the NWPB booth during the Health and Fitness Expo



J. Slice and Amber ready to fire the confetti guns at the Kids Fun Run at the Pentagon



Thanks to these Stephanie and Don for the success of the Marine Corps Marathon



Don Hiller poses with these hard working girls during the marathon...THANK YOU DON HILLER AND THE CLASS PRODUCE GROUP!



A sample of the crowd, unbelievable!



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Amber reads to a fantastic group of Kindergarteners at Coronado School



A luncheon with our sponsors, thank you again! Sorry Rick Burkett was out of town



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Val and Jim welcome us to their home before the opening party



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Amber visits with Bob and the Zaferis's during the closing party in Nogales



Susan treats us to lunch at LaRoca in Mexico



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Alabama Report

Greetings from Alabama!

We would like to invite you to join us for a Tailgate Party, at the 2014 Alabama Watermelon Association Convention on February 14th & 15th. This year's convention will be held at the beautiful Beau Rivage Resort and Casino in Biloxi, Mississippi. For more information please contact Marti Smith at 352-463-6925 or marti_s_63@hotmail.com. I can assure you this is a Watermelon Tailgate Party you do not want to miss!

The 2013 Queen Tour has been very successful and full of excitement! We ended our promotions this year with a bang. Starting with the United Fresh Washington Public Policy Conference in Washington, D.C., where Queen Jordan witnessed firsthand the issues the watermelon industry is facing.

Second, we were off to New Orleans, LA for the annual PMA trade show. Approximately 18,000 industry professionals from 60 countries attended the Fresh Summit. What an amazing experience and opportunity for Queen Jordan to visit with produce industry members from all over the Country.

Lastly, we headed back to Washington, DC for the Marine Corp Marathon. This was one of the best and busiest promotions I have ever participated in. There were approximately 30,000 runners and we handed out over 32,000 cups of watermelon. I would like to thank the National Watermelon Promotion Board for organizing such a terrific promotion. In addition, I would like to thank our sponsors for this promotion: National Watermelon Association, NWPB, Mr. Don Hiller-The Class Produce Group, Mr. Harry Vaughn-Gulf Seed, Mrs. Cheryl Hicks-RockTenn, and Mrs. Mary Jones.

Queen Jordan and I look forward to seeing you all at conventions and of course the National Watermelon Association Convention.

See you all soon,
Katie Eubanks
Alabama Watermelon Association
Promotions Coordinator
Katie.eubanks2@gmail.com
334-237-0600



Visiting with Representative Martha Roby.



Queen Amber and Queen Jordan assisting Chef Joe at the PECO Pallet booth demonstration.



All the queens with Mr. John Toner of United Fresh



What a great NWPB Party!



National Queen Amber and Queen Jordan handing out watermelon samples at the United Fresh reception in DC.



J Slice and Queen Jordan trying to stay warm at the Kids Fun Run.



FL Queen Brandi and Queen Jordan visiting the RockTenn booth at PMA.



Queen Jordan visiting with families and runners of the MCM during the Health and Fitness Expo.



Queen Jordan visiting Mr. Myron Harrison at the International Paper booth at PMA.



Queen Jordan coloring with a child at the Kids Fun Run.



Chef Joe and the Queens at the NWPB booth at PMA.



Taking a moment to the Marines for all they do for our Country.



Mrs. Mary Jones and Queen Jordan enjoying the excitement of PMA.

My year has been filled with so many memories. This experience as the 2013 Alabama Watermelon Queen has been more than I could have ever imagined. It has truly sculpted me into the young lady I am today and I am so thankful for that. Thank you to the AWA and all the sponsors who have made this year possible."~Jordan Skipper





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Florida Report

Greetings from the Sunshine State!

Happy 2014 everyone! Hope everyone had safe and happy holidays.

In August, Queen Brandi joined Mar-Del Queen Chelsey and Coordinator Dawn Collins for a week full of events for the Mar-Del National Queen tour. A special thank you to Katelyn Kelley Miller for filling in for me for a few days. Queen Brandi along with Queen Chelsey, NWQ Amber, and GWA Carol Anne visited watermelon farmers, packing houses, crab festival and local grocery stores. Thanks Dawn and Queen Chelsey for inviting us to attend the National Queen Tour.

October was another busy month promoting watermelons. Thanks to our sponsors, Queen Brandi had a chance to visit New Orleans and be at the Produce Marketing Association (PMA) event. A fun two-day event! Brandi helped Rock Tenn at their booth selling and promoting bins to their retailers. Thanks to Cheryl Hicks and the Rock Tenn staff for letting Queen Brandi be a part of it. We ended our month handing out watermelons slices at the Marine Corp Marathon held in Washington D.C. Thanks to Don Hiller with The Class Produce Group for providing all the packages of watermelons to hand out for this event. What a way to end a Marathon Run eating watermelon! Thanks to NWPB for setting it up and NWA for being part sponsor for us to attend.

We headed to Homestead for month of November, cheering on our No. 19, Driver Ross Chastain in the Nascar Truck Race. Queen Brandi handed out slices of our fall watermelons at the race track. All the fans enjoyed eating a slice of watermelon from Florida. The FWA board members and all of us are proud of Ross this year, as he has brought home the #19 car in the top 10 several times throughout this year. We want to wish him good luck in his next endeavors.

Queen Brandi and I ended our month of December joining our board members Jody and Laura Land along with Dan & Carrie Thomas, Heather Raulerson, Harry Vaughn, NWPB Mark Arney at the IFAS Meeting held in Gainesville, discussing topics on food safety, watermelon diseases, and marketing watermelons.

With our year coming to an end, Queen Brandi and I have had a wonderful year promoting watermelons. She has represented our association with great pride, dignity and dedication and always has a willingness to strive and do more. This year Brandi has taken and developed our Facebook page for the Florida Watermelon Association and has taken the dedication and time of posting weekly events and things on this page. On behalf of the Florida Watermelon Association and board members we would like to wish her the best of luck as she competes for the National Watermelon Title in February in Savannah, Georgia.

Until next time!
Debra Harrison
Phone: (863) 633-8306 Email: debra@flfwa.com
Florida Watermelon Promotions Coordinator



Queen Brandi and Katelyn Miller at the Crab Festival. Thanks Katelyn for chaperoning this promotion.



Enjoying Dinner at the Chart House. Thanks Mark and Jay for a wonderful dinner.



At Whole Foods in Delaware with Mar-Del Watermelon Queen Coordinator Dawn Collins and MDQ Chelsey Procino. We are all going to miss you Dawn next year!



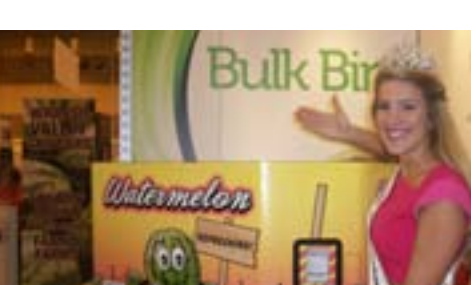
A future Watermelon Princess!



Thanks Sol- Marketing for providing the watermelons at "Our World Kids Festival".



Good Luck Brandi at Nationals! We are all proud of you.



Queen Brandi had an amazing time working at "Rock Tenn" booth during PMA.



Thanks "Rock Tenn" for a wonderful experience at PMA.



Memories that will cherish a life time with all the Queens.



The Watermelons Queens working the booth at the Marine Corps Race taking a moment to pose for a picture.



— Queen Brandi handed out packages of watermelon at the Marine Corp Marathon. Thanks Don Hiller with the Class Produce Group for providing them.



Ross Chastain youngest fan enjoying a slice of watermelon with Queen Brandi.



Nascar Truck Driver Ross Chastain and FWQ Brandi grabbing a slice of watermelon before the big race in Homestead.



Meeting and Chatting with Nascar Driver Todd Bodine in Homestead



It was nice seeing and visiting with Kendra Tomlinson Kennedy at the IFAS Meeting in Gainesville.



Second Vice-President Laura Land and Queen Brandi at the The Suwannee Valley Watermelon Institute and The University of Florida IFAS County Extension event promoting the Florida Watermelon Association.



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Georgia Report

Happy New Year everyone! The Georgia Queen 2013 Tour is winding down, and a new year is gearing up! Our 2014 GWA convention is returning to St. Simons, GA and will be held at the Sea Palms Golf and Tennis Resort. The hotel contact number is 1-800-841-6268. If you need assistance, call our office and 706-845-8575. The weekend is packed with exciting opportunities including educational sessions, receptions and live and silent auctions! Join us as we kick off the 2014 Watermelon Season! As the year closes, we want to issue a special thanks to all of our donors and sponsors for the 2013 promotions tour. Without your support, the association and the queen program would not continue to be the success it is today!

The month of October was jam-packed for Queen Carol Anne! First, we joined with other Georgia industry representatives and headed to Washington D.C. for the Washington Public Policy Conference. We marched Capitol Hill, and heard from Senate and House Agriculture Committee Representatives in one of the most historic times for our country. We sat down with Congressman Jack Kingston, among others, on the day of the shutdown – and even in that stressful time – it put a smile on his face to visit with growers and especially the watermelon queen. We took advantage of our time there to remind congressmen and women about the importance of the produce industry, and how the industry needs a farm bill and immigration reform. From there, Carol Anne and the Watermelon Association headed to the bayou for the Produce Marketing Association’s annual Fresh Summit meeting in New Orleans. We were able to network with produce buyers from across the country, and support all of the Georgia producers represented under the Georgia Pavilion. We also visited the NWPB’s exhibit and helped hand out watermelon samples! More time well spent marketing for the Georgia watermelon Industry!

At the end of October, Carol Anne joined with other state queens for the NWPB’s major promotional sponsorship with the Marine Corp Marathon and Fitness Expo in Washington DC. Final numbers for the marathon estimated that our queens, NWPB staff, and state coordinators distributed more than 48,000 watermelon samples. Fitness gurus, chefs, and athletes alike are beginning to realize the nutritional value of watermelon, and this event was a major contribution to that publicity! A HUGE thanks to Jenna Saxon, stand-in coordinator for Georgia, the NWPB for their event planning, and Don Hiller for supplying the watermelon! An additional Thanks to the NWA for their financial support to each association that participated! We accomplish so much as an industry when we team up together for promotional events!

Queen Carol Anne will represent GWA at the National Watermelon Associations 100th celebration in February in Savannah, Georgia. Carol Anne will do an excellent job for us there, and has been a blessing to work with this year. She is outgoing, friendly, has a true love for watermelon and the agricultural industry, and shows passion and excitement in everything she does. GWA is very proud of all she has done for us this past year, and we look forward to supporting her in February. As I come to my 1 year anniversary as promotions coordinator for GWA – thanks to all of you who have been a resource for me! Thank you also for letting me into the family with such grace and acceptance, and thank you for introducing me to an amazing segment of the produce industry! We look forward to seeing you at the upcoming conventions, and thank you again for your support of the Georgia Watermelon Association.

Sincerely,
Samantha Tankersley
Promotions Coordinator
706-845-8575



Carol Anne at the Georgia Grown Pavilion at PMA in New Orleans



Carol Anne with Rusty and Pam Autry at PMA



Watermelon Queens and Chef Poon at PMA



Carol Anne Passing out Watermelon at the NWPB Booth



Carol Anne talking about watermelon to Fitness Expo attendee in DC



Passing out watermelon at the Marine Corp Marathon!



Promoting at Whole Foods during the Mar-Del Queen Tour



Thanks to the Class Produce Group for the watermelons to pass out at the Marine Corp Marathon!



Shaking hands with Congressman Kingston at Washington Public Policy Conference



We marched on Capitol Hill on the day of the government shutdown.



Anne!



A Winning Line-up!

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NWPPB UPDATE



PMA Fresh Summit in New Orleans

The PMA Fresh Summit returned to New Orleans for the first time in 11 years. Over 18,000 attendees hailing from more than 60 countries were on the show floor this year, as there was a lot to see and be seen. Watermelon mastermind Chef Joe Poon amazed yet again with his watermelon carvings and watermelon queens made appearances throughout the show floor. With the assistance of Chiquita, Cal-Giant, and Rouses Supermarkets, our booth featured new watermelon recipes to sample, including crowd-pleasing watermelon smoothies and our watermelon dippers recipe. What a hit!

NWPPB staffers were able to make great connections with retailers and buyers, giving them tips and POS materials to help push the sale of watermelon year-round. The annual watermelon reception was another huge success. Bourbon Heat, located near the infamous Cat's Meow lounge on Bourbon Street, was a roaring good time. Our watermelon industry and guests really know how to "turn the heat up!"



Watermelon WOWS at the Marine Corps Marathon

Watermelon, watermelon, everywhere! In an effort to get watermelon in the national spotlight in our nation's capital, the watermelon industry participated as a sponsor, exhibitor, runner and rehydrator at the Marine Corps Marathon (MCM) events. The staff of the National Watermelon Promotion Board, the watermelon mascot J. Slice, the National Watermelon Queen from the National Watermelon Association (NWA) and each and every regional Watermelon Queen traveled to DC to pitch in.

The weekend included a 3-day expo at the DC armory and a kids run at the Pentagon parking lot. The main event of the weekend was Sunday's marathon and 10K run, which started simultaneously at 7:55 a.m. and ended at the Finish Festival in Rosslyn, VA. In addition to the 10,000 10K runners and the 30,000 26.2 milers, a total of 70,000 friends, family and athletes mixed, mingled and recovered at the Finish Festival. Post-race hospitality included tons of watermelon. In fact, here are our stats:

- 34 bins of whole watermelon
- A single bin is 660 pounds
- 25 pallets of 80 boxes in a refrigerated truck
- 24 5-ounce containers of fresh cut watermelon per box
- 48,000 samples of fresh watermelon

Healthy Sweets for Your Sweetheart

It's easy to share in the fun of Valentine's Day by serving those you love sweet treats that keep hearts healthy. Forget the expensive flowers, wines and chocolates. To really show you care, be a cupid and give your sweetie healthy, delicious treats that feature juicy watermelon. Naturally dressed in the holiday's hue of vibrant red, using this fabulous fruit in recipes adds color to the spread of any Valentine's Day party, whether large or intimate.

Mouthwatering watermelon treats

For an elegant, upscale treat, serve Watermelon Petit Fours, which feature sweet watermelon, candied almonds and is topped with your favorite decadent frosting. Get the kids in the kitchen with Watermelon Cupcakes for a new take on the beloved classic. Served with pineapple cream cheese frosting, kids will love helping you decorate these darling delights. If you really want to make their hearts skip a beat, carve an adorable Lips and Love Basket. Fill it with all of your sweetie's favorite fruits for a fresh, flavorful display they'll devour in a heartbeat. Remember, nothing shows your love more than edible gifts crafted by hand. For instruction on all of these sweet ideas and more, visit www.watermelon.org.

Bonus benefits

Your sweetie will love that they can indulge in the sweetness of the holiday without the guilt or inflated waistline caused by traditional Valentine's Day treats. A naturally low-calorie option, watermelon also boasts the following benefits:

- Vitamin A: Known to enhance eye health and boost immunity by enhancing the infection-fighting actions of white blood cells.
- Vitamin B6: Helps the immune system produce antibodies which fight diseases.
- Vitamin C: Boosts the immune system's defenses against infections and viruses. It also protects the body from harmful free radicals which accelerate aging.



Retail Dieticians Taste the Sweet Life

The **What's in Store** event is a sponsored reception attended by supermarket retail dietitians in conjunction with the **EatRight.org's Food Nutrition Conference & Expo**. Attendees of this event were treated to recipes and nutritional information by the sponsors and watermelon was thrilled to be one of them. The watermelon taste samples included the very popular Chipotle Maple Citrus Watermelon Wings—people couldn't get enough and many took home the recipes for sharing in their stores and with their families. Encouragingly the NWPB received great feedback on the Retail Dietician Toolkit launched in the spring, hearing from many dietitian attendees that they reference it "all the time" and that it's "an invaluable resource." The Toolkit and other Retail Dietitian resources can be found in the Health & Nutrition section of watermelon.org.



watermelon.org





Our Path Forward in 2014:

Patience, Fortitude & Tolerance

In the current circumstances that we all live and work, it is inherent that we all exercise one-two-or all three of those words to persevere. Patience – Fortitude – Tolerance. To put those ideas into action was pronounced loudly throughout the association and its members in 2013 far more than any of us could ever script in a novel.

To indicate that the 2013 year was historical would be an understatement of the evidence left behind in the wake of weather and government interactions (and legislative inactions) with our industry.

Radical weather patterns caused historic rainfall throughout the eastern seaboard of the country, creating diseases pressures and havoc that has not been seen in memories (possibly never to this extent). Drought conditions continued in Texas. Mexico had a most mysterious weather pattern that went from one extreme to the other. It was a meteorologist’s nightmare year to predict, and one that even the Farmer’s Almanac could not accurately predict.

During the year there were two significant government interventions that were endured. The Food & Drug Administration selected cantaloupe growers to inspect in 2013, which resulted in many watermelon operations also being inspected that also grow cantaloupes (or did in the recent past). And, the U.S. Department of Labor in conjunction with the Wage & Hour folks selected the watermelon industry as their primary target for audits.

And now, we move on to the ever-evolving legislative stand-off at the O.K. Corral (what we all know as Washington, D.C.) Let’s take a quick look at the major issues that they are facing in the next few months alone:

- Federal Budget, Huge Deficit and the Debt Ceiling
- Middle Eastern Violence
- The Affordable Health Care Act (ObamaCare)
- 2014 Mid-Term Elections
- 2016 Presidential Campaigns

With a list that is far longer than this, one can begin to see that Washington has their hands over-filled with work to do for the people. Unfortunately, the predictions for the near future are more rhetoric and ideological political standoffs, little deal making, party-posturing in preparation for next year’s mid-term elections, candidates preparing to officially announce their candidacy for the 2016 Presidential campaigns, and some legislation remaining on the sidelines.

We have two significant legislative items that Congress and the President must address this year without fail. We cannot allow them to push them aside again to focus only on the issues of the moment:

Farm Bill The House barely passed a Farm Bill that did not include the SNAP program (i.e. food stamps) for the first time in many years. And they also passed a nutrition bill (to address cuts to the SNAP program) that will be combined with the ‘farm only’ Farm Bill. As of this article writing, they will go to conference committee with the Senate to attempt to merge the two chamber’s bills, revote on the agreed-to package, and send it to the President.

Immigration Reform This lone topic is the one opportunity that the Republican-led House of Representatives, and the Republican Party have, to begin their long trek to regain lost ground with the ever growing Hispanic population (and key swing voters). If Congress does not complete their work on Immigration reform before the end of this coming winter, reliable predictions are that Congress will not be able to address it for another 6-7 years.

They have their hands full with a great deal of legislative work to accomplish in a short period of time. But yet, we must not allow them to forget about us. We

FDA Taking Closer Look at ‘Antibacterial’ Soap

Just when we thought that it was safe to wash our hands with antibacterial soap we find two federal agencies in a new review.

When you’re buying soaps and body washes, do you reach for the bar or bottle labeled “antibacterial”? Are you thinking that these products, in addition to keeping you clean, will reduce your risk of getting sick or passing on germs to others? Not necessarily, according to experts at the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

Every day, consumers use antibacterial soaps and body washes at home, work, school and in other public settings. Especially because so many consumers use them, FDA believes that there should be clearly demonstrated benefits to balance any potential risks. In fact, there currently is no evidence that over-the-counter (OTC) antibacterial soap products are any more effective at preventing illness than washing with plain soap and water, says Colleen Rogers, Ph.D., a lead microbiologist at FDA. Moreover, antibacterial soap products contain chemical ingredients, such as triclosan and triclocarban, which may carry unnecessary risks given that their benefits are unproven.

“New data suggest that the risks associated with long-term, daily use of antibacterial soaps may outweigh the benefits,” Rogers says. There are indications that certain ingredients in these soaps may contribute to bacterial resistance to antibiotics, and may have unanticipated hormonal effects that are of concern to FDA.

In light of these data, the agency issued a proposed rule on Dec. 13, 2013 that would require manufacturers to provide more substantial data to demonstrate the safety and effectiveness of antibacterial soaps. The proposed rule covers only those consumer antibacterial soaps and body washes that are used with water. It does not apply to hand sanitizers, hand wipes or antibacterial soaps that are used in health care settings such as hospitals.

According to Rogers, the laboratory tests that have historically been used to evaluate the effectiveness of antibacterial soaps do not directly test the effect of a product on infection rates. That would change with FDA’s current proposal, which would require studies that directly test the ability of an antibacterial soap to provide a clinical benefit over washing with non-antibacterial soap, Rogers says.

Antibacterial soaps (sometimes called antimicrobial or antiseptic soaps) contain certain chemical ingredients that plain soaps do not. These ingredients are added to many consumer products in an effort to reduce or prevent bacterial contamination.

A large number of liquid soaps labeled “antibacterial” contain triclosan, an ingredient of concern to many environmental and industry groups. Animal studies have shown that triclosan may alter the way hormones work in the body. While data showing effects in animals don’t always predict effects in humans, these studies are of concern to FDA as well, and warrant further investigation to better understand how they might affect humans.

In addition, laboratory studies have raised the possibility that triclosan contributes to making bacteria resistant to antibiotics. Such resistance can have a significant impact on the effectiveness of medical treatments.

Moreover, recent data suggest that exposure to these active ingredients is higher than previously thought, raising concerns about the potential risks associated with their use regularly and over time.

need a Farm Bill. We need Immigration reform that creates a legal workforce. And then, we need to get this Congress to work on ‘fixes’ to the food safety law and reduce regulations that are burdensome to agriculture.

After the year that you endured in 2013, let’s make sure that our legislators are doing their jobs for us – House – Senate – President. The people should come first; not politics and ideologies.

FDA is emphasizing that hand washing is one of the most important steps people can take to avoid getting sick and to prevent spreading germs to others. Another good source for tips and information about benefits of appropriate hand washing is the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Consumers can go to www.cdc.gov/handwashing.

How do you tell if a product is antibacterial? Most antibacterial products have the word “antibacterial” on the label. Also, a Drug Facts label on a soap or body wash is a sure sign a product contains antibacterial ingredients. Cosmetics must list the ingredients, but are not required to carry a Drug Facts Label.

FDA and EPA are reviewing the effects of triclosan from two different perspectives.

EPA regulates the use of triclosan as a pesticide, and is in the process of updating its assessment of the effects of triclosan when it is used in pesticides. FDA’s focus is on the effects of triclosan when it is used by consumers on a regular basis in hand soaps and body washes. By sharing information, the two agencies will be better able to measure the exposure and effects of triclosan and how these differing uses of triclosan may affect human health.

Jake Owen Blessed With Family, Watermelon & Camera

October 8, 2013; Written by Alison Bonaguro – CMT News



It’s that time of year again when we start to reflect on all the blessings in our lives. Those lists usually start with family and end with more family. But Jake Owen’s list? His has a few out-there items that may make you think outside the box when you start to count your own blessings.

Owen, of course, has his wife Lacey and his baby girl Pearl at the top of the list.

“They are the ones to hit the pause button on my crazy life,” Owen told People magazine in their latest country issue. “My little girl, when she looks at me, I’m her caretaker, her provider and her comforter. It puts a lot of responsibility upon my shoulders, but it’s a responsibility that I truly enjoy and am thankful for.”

Owen also says he is grateful for his dog Merle and for the health of his father, who’s now 100 percent cancer-free after eight months of treatment for throat cancer.

But here’s where Owen’s list takes kind of a sharp turn. He’s thankful for cold watermelon.

“Growing up in Florida, I was always eating watermelon,” he said. “I still think of all the times I got to sit with my granddad under his carport and talk about life while we’d spit watermelon seeds out into the yard. Then my grandma would get mad when the vines would start growing.”

Also on his list is his camera because he says he can “snap a moment in time and preserve it.” Like when his dad got to hold Pearl.

“When my dad was in the hospital, he got to hold my little girl, and that was the one thing that put a big smile on his face,” Owen recalled. “And I got a great photo of that.”

Illiana Report

The end of the year has been a busy time for Queen Briston. In October she attended the PMA Fresh Summit in New Orleans where she helped distribute information in the exhibit hall where we shared booth space with the Indiana Department of Agriculture. Also attending from our area were Mouzin Bros. Farms and Wabash Valley Growers. A big thank you to Mitch Mitchell of International Paper for sponsoring this event.

One of Briston’s most memorable events would be the Marine Corps. Marathon held in Washington D.C. October 24th - 27th where we gave away 32,000 individual containers of watermelon. Thank you so much to the NWA and NWPB for giving us this wonderful opportunity and allowing us to be a part of this!! She was in awe of the runners appreciation to receive watermelon at the end of the marathon.

Then on November 23rd, Briston, along with 3 of our festival queens, braved the frigid temperatures and wind to be in the annual Christmas Parade of Lights held in Vincennes, IN. Thank you so much to Tim Dunn and his wife Colleen for all of their time helping me get the float decorated and for pulling our float, and thank you to Kelly Tyner of Hoosier Fresh Farms for sponsoring our event.

On December 5th Queen Briston attended the Kroger Grand Re-Opening of store number 86 on 65th Street in Indianapolis where she also presented a check to Riley’s Children Foundation on behalf of IWA for \$12,000.00.

Looking ahead to the end of the year we are looking forward to bringing in the New Year with a show, “Gallagher’s Last Smash”, followed by festivities at the Riverfront Pavilion including pictures with our very own Queen Briston and Gallagher, watermelon carving by world famous Chef Poon, Gallagher look-a-like contest, watermelon smashing, and the countdown to the New Year with the releasing of 14 Knox County watermelons 75 feet to the Splatform below from the world famous 500lb. watermelon, with fireworks to follow ringing in the New Year!!

We want to wish you and your families a Happy New Year!

Sincerely,
Lori A. Edwards
Promotions Coordinator
iwapromocoordinator@gmail.com
812-396-9969



Briston enjoying a photo with the Chiquita Banana lady at PMA.



Dennis and Cathy Mouzin with sons Blake (kneeling) and Coleton with Mouzin Brothers Farms at PMA



Briston with Anita Field of Wabash Valley Growers at PMA



Kelly & Aaron Tyner with Hoosier Fresh Farms along with Vicki Horrahl Co-owner of Melon Acres and Hoosier Fresh Farms at PMA



At PMA Briston met up with Mary Jones of Sunstate Produce and sponsor of our Marsh store visits this past summer. Thank you very much!!



Kelly Tyner of Hoosier Fresh Farms, Bob Morrissey - NWA Executive Director and Mike Horrahl of Melon Acres and Hoosier Fresh Farms at PMA.



Queen Briston at the Marine Marathon with Queen Brandi from Florida and Queen Kendall from Texas.



32,000 Containers of Watermelon were handed out at the Marine Marathon



Serving watermelon at the Marine Marathon was one of the highlights of Briston’s reign.



Thank you Kelly Tyner of Hoosier Fresh Farms for sponsoring our float!!



Briston braving the COLD weather for the Christmas Parade of Lights.



IWA check presentation to Alaina with Riley Children’s Foundation.



Briston thanking Kroger stores for supporting the association and allowing us to do in store promotions to promote watermelon which in turn allowed us to form a relationship with the Riley Children’s Foundation.



Alaina (Riley Children’s Foundation), Anita Field (Wabash Valley Growers), Dennis Mouzin (Mouzin Bros. Farms), Phil McGovern (Caito Foods), Queen Briston, John and Lori Toth (Indian Hills) on hand for check presentation to Riley Children’s Foundation.



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Mar-Del Report

Greeting from the Mar-Del Watermelon Association

Since our last Vineline our Fall has been a busy one. But to start where we left off After the National Queen Tour of MD and De we attended the DE. Dept. of Ag's 1st Garden Festival. This was a very nice event where we served samples and had a seed spit contest. The next night we went to the Sharptown Carnival. Before a tremendous thunderstorm made us take cover we served slices to the attendees. The next day Caitlin Givens traveled to Wilmington with 2012 Queen Terra Tatman for a Meet the Farmer Night at the Blue Rocks Stadium. Chelsey and I were on our way to the Carytown Watermelon Festival in Richmond. Thousands of people were touched by watermelon during this day! Then it was Mar-Del's night at the Delmar Race Track. We served slices then Chelsey & President, Jay Rider presented the trophies to the winners. The next day was Evans Farms Watermelon Day. Although it rained it was a fun day selling watermelon to all that braved the weather. Off to Hunt Valley, Md where we served samples at Wegman's. We were treated with the MD Sec. of Ag, Buddy Hance and the Dept. Sec. of Ag Mary Ellen Setting as helpers. Magee Farms supplied watermelons for the Farmer and the Chef competition. Our chef with his delicious watermelon dish came in 2nd place. Then we were the cheerleader for a watermelon eating contest at the AMUSE Rest. in Rehoboth Beach. The money raised went to the Autism Assoc. of De. A new promotion at the Lakeside Assisted Living was a nice event. The residents appreciated Chelsey helping with the event. Then Chelsey served slices and help a seed spit competition at the Waste Water Expo and the Nemours Healthy Kids Day. Chelsey then was off to Capitol Hill to speak to the Congressman and Representatives from both of the states she represents. Flying the friendly skies to New Orleans and PMA was next. A big Thank you to NWPB and Md. Dept. of Ag for all your support during PMA. Also, a big thank you to Bob and Rob Gibson for all the dinners, support and laughter. With a few days home we were off to Washington, DC for the Marine Corp. Marathon. What a great event!!! The NWPB did a great job getting this event together. Thousands & thousands of people were treated with the sweet message and taste of watermelon. Awesome promotion!!!!

As we reflect back on the year Chelsey and I want to thank all that have supported our Association and our Queen, Chelsey. We appreciate our supporters time, financial support and love.

As many know as of the National Convention I will be retiring and I truly from the bottom of my heart want to thank everyone for the love that I have been given. It truly is a Watermelon Family and I love you all. You will love my replacement Mrs. Caitlin Givens. She will do a wonderful job for our Association.

Watermelon Wishes,
Dawn Collins
Mar-Del Queen Coordinator



Chelsey w/ MD. Dept. of Ag Stone Slade at their booth during PMA.



Thank you NWPB for all your support. Pictured here are the state Queens & NWPB Staff.



A group photo @ the Marine Corp Expo in Washington



Chelsey handing out watermelon to the thousands of runners @ the Marine Corp. Marathon



Thank you to Don Hiller of Class Produce that supplied the watermelon for the Marine Corp Marathon and helped with the event.



Ross Chastain youngest fan enjoying a slice of watermelon with Queen Brandi.



At the Laurel Auction Market, the Queens rode in the back of Chelsey's family restored watermelon truck for the Auction. Thank you to all the donors and the buyers!!



Melon 1 treated the Queens to a wonderful luncheon and T-Shirts at their office. Thank you Melon 1



We worked hard but had tons of fun @ the Rotary Crab Feast in Annapolis. Thank you to all that came out to help - we needed every hand that we had available!



Md. Sec. of Ag Buddy Hance & Md. Dept. of Ag Karen Fedor came by to help @ Whole Foods in Annapolis



Chelsey had quite the big helper @ the Sharptown Carnival. She was assisted by the Wright's Watermelon Princess.



We attended the Carytown Watermelon Festival in Richmond, VA. Thousands of people came to the festival. Thank you Josh Rowe of Multicorr for all your support and the T-Shirts.



We were able to participate in 3 races at the Delmar Race Track with one being our sponsor night. Here Chelsey is pictured with our billboard on the track.



A fun day is Watermelon Day at Evans Farms Produce Stand!!! Thank you Kevin, Katey and Kenna for everything.



Handing out samples at Wegmans in Hunt Valley was very busy but we had great helpers. Md. Sec. of Ag, Buddy Hance and Deputy Sec. of Ag Mary Ellen Setting came out to help.



Chelsey is pictured here with Matt Whaley, our chef at the Farmer and the Chef and Ellen Magee from Magee Farms that supplied the watermelons for the event.



At the Farmer and the Chef Chelsey was able to talk with Sam Calagione of Dogfish Beer. We need to convince him to make watermelon beer.



Chelsey was the cheerleader at the AMUSE Rest. for the watermelon eating contest to raise money for Autism in Delaware.



A fun time was had by all @ the Waste Water Expo. We handed out samples & had a watermelon seed spitting contest. Pictured here w/ Chelsey are her grandfather Bob, Uncle Brandon and mother Patty.



- During the United Fresh Conference on Capitol Hill Chelsey was able to talk to Congressman and Representatives from MD and DE. Here she is outside DE. Congressman John Carney



We stopped to talk to Steve and John at the Multicorr booth during PMA. Thank you Multicorr for all your support.



A big thank you to Bob & Rob Gibson of Gibson Produce for everything while in New Orleans. The dinners, company and laughter made PMA unforgettable.



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North Carolina Report

Greetings from North Carolina,

Fall arrived in North Carolina with some cool temperatures but North Carolina Watermelon Queen, Allyson Brake kept the watermelon promotion program running hot. Several events dominated our fall promotions both inside and outside of our state.

The PMA Fresh Summit Convention & Expo in New Orleans was a great opportunity for Allyson to promote North Carolina watermelons. The North Carolina Watermelon Association booth located within the North Carolina Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services Pavilion was a busy place. NCWA members Michael Bunch, Don Hiller and Queen Allyson answered expo attendees' questions about NC watermelon, while distributing the NC Fresh Link Grower-Shipper Directory and watermelon recipes. Allyson also spent time with the other state queens giving out watermelon samples and recipes in the National Watermelon Promotion Board booth. The annual Watermelon Industry Reception at Bourbon Heat was lots of fun. Allyson enjoyed meeting lots of watermelon industry members during the event hosted by NWA and NWPB. A special thank you to the reception sponsors for making it such a great night out in "The Big Easy". On the second day of the expo, Allyson had the opportunity to explore the show floor and learn about all the products at the event. We would like to thank Nick Augustini, NCDA Marketing Specialist for organizing our participation in PMA.

This fall Allyson represented the NCWA at the Delhaize Group - Food Lion, family picnic at the company headquarters in Salisbury, North Carolina. Hundreds of employees came by our tent to meet the queen and pick up watermelon recipes, coloring books and nutritional information. During the picnic Allyson had the opportunity to meet Mr. Ralph Ketner, one of the original founders of Food Lion. Everyone had lots of fun throughout the day enjoying the amusement rides, playing games, and eating lots of great food. Allyson served as the keynote speaker for the Person County Farm City Week Banquet in Roxboro, NC. During her presentation she discussed how to get youth involved in promoting agriculture. She used many of her NC Watermelon Queen experiences as examples for being an agriculture advocate.

Allyson's trip to Washington, DC for the Marine Corp. Marathon (MCM) was the highlight of the fall activities. Upon arriving to DC, Allyson and other state queens assisted the NWPB staff in manning the watermelon educational booth at the MCM Health and Fitness Expo in the DC Armory. Allyson engaged many of the expo participants to discuss the value of watermelon in the runner's diet. The morning of day two allowed us some free time to tour our national capitol. That afternoon we were back at the expo meeting runners and enjoying their stories of using watermelon to rehydrate after a race. Sunday morning all the queens were up bright and early to get to the marathon. The NWPB, The Class Produce Group and Mr. Don Hiller had everything coordinated for the queens to distribute prepackaged watermelon samples to runners at the MCM Finish Festival. All of the runners were very appreciative and complimentary of our efforts to be part of the marathon. A special thank you to Stephanie Barlow with the NWPB for having our schedule so well planned and to the National Watermelon Association for helping sponsor Queen Allyson to the event. It was a great promotion!

Next we are off to Savannah for the NWA National Convention - See you soon.

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



NCWA promotion booth at the Food Lion Family Picnic



Watermelon Queens' in the NWPB booth during PMA



Queen Allyson got to meet Tony the Tiger at the picnic



Queen Allyson with Michael Bunch manning the NCWA booth at PMA



Food Lion Founder, Mr. Ralph Ketner and Allyson at the picnic



Nick Augustini and Allyson enjoying the NCDA reception during PMA



Allyson with Chef Joe in the NWPB booth at PMA



NCWA members Vanessa and Nicholas Bunch with Allyson at the Watermelon Industry Reception



NWPB sign invites everyone to enjoy the watermelon



Allyson distributing watermelon samples during PMA



NC, TX and FL queens in the watermelon educational booth at the MCM Health & Fitness Expo



All the queens getting ready for the MCM Finish Festival



Exploring the expo during PMA



Allyson and Carol Ann discuss watermelon nutrition with runners



Queen Allyson with the agriculture poster contest winners at the Person County Farm City Week Banquet



Meeting the "Ocean Spray Cranberry Guys" at PMA



Allyson getting ready to distribute watermelon samples at the MCM



Mr. Don Hiller and Allyson at the MCM. Thank you to The Class Produce Group for supplying the great watermelon samples



PMA Expo fun on "Watermelon Way"



The runners enjoyed the watermelon



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Farm Bill Conference Committee Must Produce Now

As of this article writing, the House and Senate were engaged in what we call Congressional gymnastics: a conference committee on the farm bill.

For starters, let’s examine why the House and Senate now find themselves in conference committees. A conference committee is an effort to merge bills on the same subject passed separately by the House and Senate. The House approved a farm bill. The Senate did too. But as you might imagine, the bill budget forged by the GOP-controlled House is a lot different from the product yielded by the Democratically-operated Senate. The Senate signed off on its version with relative bipartisan ease, despite a \$4 billion cut to food stamp programs (Sometimes called SNAP - Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Programs). Meantime, the House labored to finish its own farm bill. One version of the measure melted down on the House floor as Republican leaders were unable to convince enough of their own members to vote ‘yea’. That iteration of the farm bill struck \$20 billion from food stamp programs. The House eventually resorted to cleaving the bill. It passed a “farm-only” portion. A few weeks later, the House passed a “food stamp-only” package, hiking the number of SNAP cuts to almost \$40 billion.

If conference committees are successful, they produce blended versions of both packages, called “conference reports.” The unified conference report then goes back to both the House and Senate for another set of approvals. Both bodies must vote in favor of the new conference report.

But as suggested earlier, the farm bill conference committee must come up with something which can pass both chambers. That’s because the farm bill is just that: a bill with the potential to become law. There could be economic consequences affecting the everyday lives of Americans if they can’t weld together a farm bill.

In many respects, the stakes are high for the farm bill. And some prognosticators are already forecasting catastrophic results if the sides falter in efforts to reach a farm accord. Let’s understand how a farm bill works and explore why a worst-case scenario might not come to pass – at least not right away – if House and Senate conferees strike out.

Farm bills run for five years. In fact, the House and Senate were supposed to approve a new farm bill to replace the

ate were supposed to approve a new farm bill to replace the 2008 package last year. But the House could never conjure the votes to pass one. Eventually Congress re-upped most farm programs for just a year in the so-called “fiscal cliff” measure okayed this past January 1.

Farm bills set current policy, but are not permanent law. Those two phrases are important. Permanent law for U.S. farm programs date back to the early 20th century and specifically, major pieces of legislation passed in 1938 and 1949. So if Congress is unsuccessful in passing a new farm bill to establish new, current policy, then permanent law kicks in. That’s where doomsayers worry about crazy price fluctuations for groceries, milk, meat and the basic tenets of America’s food supply.

For the sake of argument, let’s assume that there’s no deal on a new farm bill and no additional extension of existing programs. The first problem facing the agriculture sector is what some have dubbed the “dairy cliff.” The 1949 law would kick in come January. The 1949 statute incurs an antiquated price support system for dairy farmers, forcing the government to purchase milk products at levels well above market prices. Economists predict milk would spike as high as \$8 a gallon. Similar issues follow with the next commodity in the queue, winter wheat. It wouldn’t take long until weekly trips to the grocery store for families devolved into major pocketbook busters. This could create a run on certain goods, reminiscent of “bread riots” in old Europe.

But it probably won’t get to that. Here’s why: Imagine Congress never updates the farm bill and the nation reverts to permanent law. It would take the Department of Agriculture weeks if not months to write new policies on how to execute the old law. And that’s to say nothing of weeks and months of potential “comment periods” where stakeholders can weigh-in on the new provisions. This could take a while – thus delaying the real deadline to solve all of this well past January 1. At the very least, Congress could also approve another extension of the 2008 farm bill which is now on the books.

To cut a deal, the sides must vault the most-daunting of hurdles: food stamps. Not in recent memory have there been such stark policy differences in companion pieces of legislation passed by the House and Senate. The cost of SNAP has more than doubled since 2008.

The current thinking is that the Senate is going to have to come up (on its dollar figure of cuts for SNAP) and the House is going to have to come down. But that spirit of compromise doesn’t satisfy those trying to protect the food stamp program. Hardliners want to protect food stamps ‘as is’ and take away from farm programs.

That’s what worries lawmakers on both sides of the aisle. People are still smarting over the failure of

Congress to finish the measure last year. The implosion of the original farm bill in the House in June with \$20 billion in SNAP cuts still resonates. No Democrats would vote for even the \$20 billion in SNAP reductions. That coupled with a number of moderate Republicans who jumped ship, too. So the only measure which could pass the House was \$40 billion in cuts. And nobody quite knows what is the vote mixture is in the House for tolerating more than \$4 billion in cuts on the Democratic side and less than \$40 billion on the GOP side.

Such are the tales of the farm bill conference committee. The stakes are high for the farm bill. And that conference committee must produce a result soon – or stomach some very onerous results.

What Are These Mini Watermelons?

For a melon the size of a grape, this fruit sure has a lot of names: Mouse melon, cucamelon, Mexican sour gherkin, Mexican miniature watermelon, cuka-nut, and sandfita (Spanish for ‘little watermelon’).



Whatever you want to call them, mouse melons are an adorable addition to salads, salsas, and stir-fries (and doll-house tea parties, if you have young children!) The vine-growing mouse melon is native to Mexico and Central America, though seeds are readily available in the U.S. Its flavor and texture are similar to a cucumber’s, though with tangier undertones. The mouse melon’s hint of citrus flavor makes it an ideal vegetable for pickling, though it is equally delicious served fresh in salads, or just eaten plain as a healthy snack.



Brazilian watermelon shows tolerance to mosaic virus

A new watermelon from Agristar do Brasil has shown strong tolerance to key diseases that affect the fruit, while also producing a sweet and crunchy intense red flesh.

Agristar expert in cucurbits and product development, Eduardo Cleto, told RuralBR the Explorer watermelon showed reduced losses from the watermelon mosaic virus and zucchini yellow mosaic virus. “Compared to other materials that are now being sold in the market, it actually provides a condition of decreased losses from virus attacks,” Cleto was quoted as saying. “The Explorer is on average 10% to 20% more productive.” While the fruit had improved productivity, Cleto said it was still important to control the aphids and thrips that transmitted disease.

“Farmers need to control these vectors. If the virus reaches the area, it is necessary to eliminate the plants that have symptoms, and avoid staggered plantings,” the expert told RuralBR. The productivity results come from plantations where the Explorer has been introduced in the states of Rio Grande do Sul, Santa Catarina, São Paulo, Mato Grosso do Sul and Goiás, as well as parts of the northeast. Cleto added the variety had good post-harvest characteristics during transport.

www.freshfruitportal.com

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Texas Report

Happy New Year Y'all! I pray everyone had a wonderful Christmas. We have been very blessed to have Queen Kendall as the 2013 Texas Watermelon Queen. Kendall has been a wonderful queen. She has been very helpful, easy to travel with, and always willing to try new things. I have asked her to give a review of her year from her perspective, so she has written the rest of this letter.

Best wishes,
Barbara Duda TWA Secretary/Coordinator

Hello friends!

Most recently I attended our annual Texas Watermelon Convention at South Padre Island. This was a bitter sweet weekend. I was so happy to be there and share my year with everyone, but finally realizing that my year representing the Texas Watermelon Association is coming to an end was a very surreal moment. I would like to thank everyone who supported me and helped make my year as incredible as it was. I would like to extend a big thank you to Borders Melons, McWhirter Farms, Anderson Produce, and Javi Farms for a great promotion in Plains, TX. I fell in love with this small town in the one day I was there. Everyone came out to the festival sharing their love of watermelon by playing games, shopping, listening to music, and catching up with friends. I had a blast playing games with everyone and even judging a car show!

Attending Race for a Cure in Minneapolis was an amazing promotion thanks to Warren Produce. We were able to hand out an abundant amount of watermelon cups to runners and by standers who were all there to support the fight against breast cancer. Although it was freezing cold we still put on our watermelon eating contest, and boy was that something else! Watermelon was everywhere! This promotion really stood out to me because we were there to help support a good cause and hand out watermelon to hydrate those who were "running for a cure."

This year I made two trips to Washington, D.C. and although I went to the same city both times, it didn't feel like it at all. During our first visit to Washington, D.C., the government shut down. This first time Mrs. Duda and I flew out to attend the United Fresh Public Policy Conference. We were able to meet with Congressman, Sam Johnson, and talk about bills that affect the watermelon industry. We also attended the many seminars put on by United Fresh that really helped to expand my knowledge on all aspects of the farming business. My next trip to Washington, D.C. was for the Marine Marathon. I met so many new people on this trip who shared their stories with me, all which I was very inspired by. This was the first promotion that all the state queens were able to attend together; it was great to see everyone. Thank you to the National Watermelon Promotion board. It was an amazing feeling for all of us queens to finally give a little something back to those who serve our country. We were able to pass out over 32,000 individually packaged watermelon chunks to runners as well as by standers.

This summer I also was able to do my one school promotion in the small town of Yantis, Texas. A teacher in this school won a contest put on by the National Watermelon Promotion Board, so Mrs. Duda, Mrs. Barlow, and myself flew out to celebrate and reward the school. The kids were great and loved to play all of our fun watermelon games. We had two bins of watermelons to slice and the kids just couldn't get enough. The watermelons were delicious! This summer's watermelon travels also consisted of the First Annual Alamo Watermelon Festival and Edinburg Steak Cook-off. During both of these promotions it was extremely hot outside, so of course the free watermelon was a hit with everyone!

This year has been an amazing experience and a true blessing to me. I feel so honored to have spent my year traveling and representing such a great association. With my travels I was able to meet many inspiring and friendly people along the way. The relationships I have built within our association and through my travels are what I cherish the most. I greatly enjoyed each of the promotions I attended this year, all of which brought awareness to the watermelon industry. I cannot thank all my sponsors enough, as well as one of my biggest supporters, the Texas Watermelon Association. I am very excited to continue representing Texas Watermelon Association at the National Convention in Savannah! It has been an honor being your Texas Watermelon Queen.

Best regards,

Kendall Duke



Early in October Queen Kendall enjoyed visiting the Capitol and all of Washington, D.C.



Kendall learned a great deal about issues facing farmers at the United Fresh Public Policy Conference.



Queen Kendall visited with Texas Congressman, Sam Johnson in his office.



Kendall and a group of Texas lobbyists at the congressional offices



The Illiana Queen, Briston Anderson, National Queen, Amber Nolin, Georgia Queen, Carol Anne Mitchell, Alabama Queen, Jordan Skipper and Queen Kendall at the reception for congressional aides.



Later in October Kendall was back in Washington, D.C. at the Marine Marathon.



Kendall and the Florida Queen, Brandi Harrison, visited with servicemen from England and the U.S.



Kendall with Florida Queen, Brandi and the Illiana Queen, Briston had fun passing out watermelon at the Marine Marathon.



Ken Mears, the TWA President, Mark Dickerson, Queen Kendall and I had a great time at the TWA Convention in South Padre Island, Texas.



Rocco Fasano and Kendall visited at the President's Reception at Louie's Backyard.



Kendall demonstrated her seed spitting skill- never easy with a crown on one's head!



The youngest seed spit contestant



Queen Kendall with her proud parents, Ken and Sonja Duke



Queen Kendall made sure to thank Mark Dickerson and his beautiful wife, Helen for her gift.



Great sponsors, Tony and Cheryl Anderson, also bought an auction item for the Queen.



Rick Linkenhog and Sue Ellen Thomas did some catching up with Kendall, learning about her year.



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Western Report

IT'S CONVENTION TIME!!

January 18, 2014

**New York, New York Hotel & Casino
Las Vegas, NV**



The Western Watermelon Association will hold it's annual convention on January 18th, 2014 in Las Vegas, NV. This convention brings together growers, shippers, distributors and related service providers of the watermelon industry in a relaxed environment. We have an exciting line up of guest speakers this year. Breakfast and lunch will be provided as well as a three hour long social hour for members to gather together and exchange ideas and meet one another. All are welcome and encouraged to attend! Please contact the Western Watermelon Association for more information.

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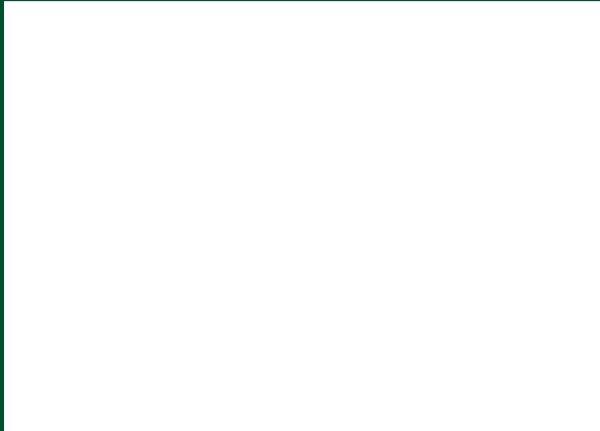


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In Search of Monday Morning Quarterbacks

An editorial by Bob Morrissey, Executive Director - NWA



A lyric from a Frank Sinatra song seems to be appropriate for today “But then a Monday morning quarterback never lost a game”. And quite possibly, we can use that lyric as a mantra to create positive change - Change that is needed desperately in Washington.

In the current economic and political environment that we live in, there exists a solitary question that most Americans will ask of themselves, and unfortunately the answer that will come back in the mirror (in the majority of cases) is ‘No’. That questions is Can one citizen (Me) make a difference in Washington? It is by far one of the most daunting questions that we can ask of ourselves, coupled with frustration and a whole range of other emotions.

It is no secret to any of us that Washington is dysfunctional. Partisan politics has crippled the city and is alive and well, while it truly derails the potential for most legislation to occur at all.

The President and his White House Administration have their mission and priorities that they continue to deploy directly to the American people through a significant and consistent public relations outreach effort that has never been seen before.

The Senate, controlled by the Democrats, has shown a few signs of life recently by being the first Congressional chamber to pass a comprehensive Farm Bill and a comprehensive Immigration Reform bill. But, they continue to bang heads with the House of Representatives, with both leaderships remaining dutiful to their own party’s principles. And they surprisingly have done this limited



work with three parties active in the chamber – Democrats, Republicans and Tea Party.

The House of Representatives, controlled by the Republicans, continues to disagree with the Democrats as they did when their leadership roles were reversed during the Bush Administration. But, the House is in a much different place than the Senate, which is by design since their jobs are up every two years. Divisions exist within the Republican Party, with conservatives disagreeing with moderates, and then add in the Tea Partiers, and we become witnesses to a Hollywood-style reality show with surprises thrown in the mix almost on a weekly basis that at times creates divisions wider than we have ever seen before, and inter-party battles that cripple the Republican leadership’s efforts to ‘do the work of the people’.

This is the overall reality of a federal government that exists with an approval rating of Congress at 12%. Think about that for one moment One in twelve Americans has confidence in our Congress. And the President’s approval rating is declining as well, and is currently at an all time low for him.

The reality of our situation is that the drama will continue for the unforeseen future. How long that will be may be a good question for a fortune teller. We can continue to do little to nothing while increasing our frustration with the partisanship, political gamesmanship, and next year’s reelection campaigns. We can do what many American voters have done for the past 3+ election cycles by changing out their current legislators for another warm body every two years.

Or, we can set expectations with our legislators. Ladies and Gentlemen, there is a lot that we can do. We can email them as often as we wish. We can call their district and Washington offices to tell them what we expect from them. We can write them as often as we wish. We can attend town hall meetings to tell them face to face what we expect of them. And, when they ask for contributions to their political campaigns next year to try to get reelected, the first question ought to be the words from a long ago Janet Jackson song, ‘What Have You Done For Me Lately?’

Unfortunately we find that it is all too common for many legislators to accept political campaign contributions to get elected or reelected, and then they follow the party line in Washington (and in many cases forget about what is happening back in their districts). Here is where we can all come in, and try to make a difference:



If you want to push them to pass a Farm Bill that makes sense for America and our association and your business, then call or email them today, and next week, and the week after, and so on until they do their job.

After all They work for you, and they are in a temp job at that. If you want them to pass an immigration bill that includes a guest worker program to create a legal work force for agriculture, then call them, or email them. Do both every week until they get the message.

You do not have to be a lobbyist to do this; Not at all. And you do not even need to travel to Washington and leave your business to do this. You can get this done in the comfort of your business or home. As a citizen and voter of the United States of America, you have the right to tell your elected leaders what you expect of them as your elected representative. And if they don’t or won’t do what you ask, then you have an important vote to cast next November in the polls on election day when that same representative will want your vote. They want to keep their temp job; you have a vote in that final decision.

So, my question to you is this What are you going to do? Are you going to call and email your legislator’s office to tell them to pass a Farm Bill and create an Immigration bill to provide a legal work force for us, or will you be like most Americans and sit on the sidelines? We are looking for every Monday Morning Quarterback to engage with the House of Representatives this week, and next week, and every week until they do what is right, and do what our members and your association requires of them. Join us in this effort. This is your Call to Arms. Are you ready? Let’s Roll! Together, we will get their attention!



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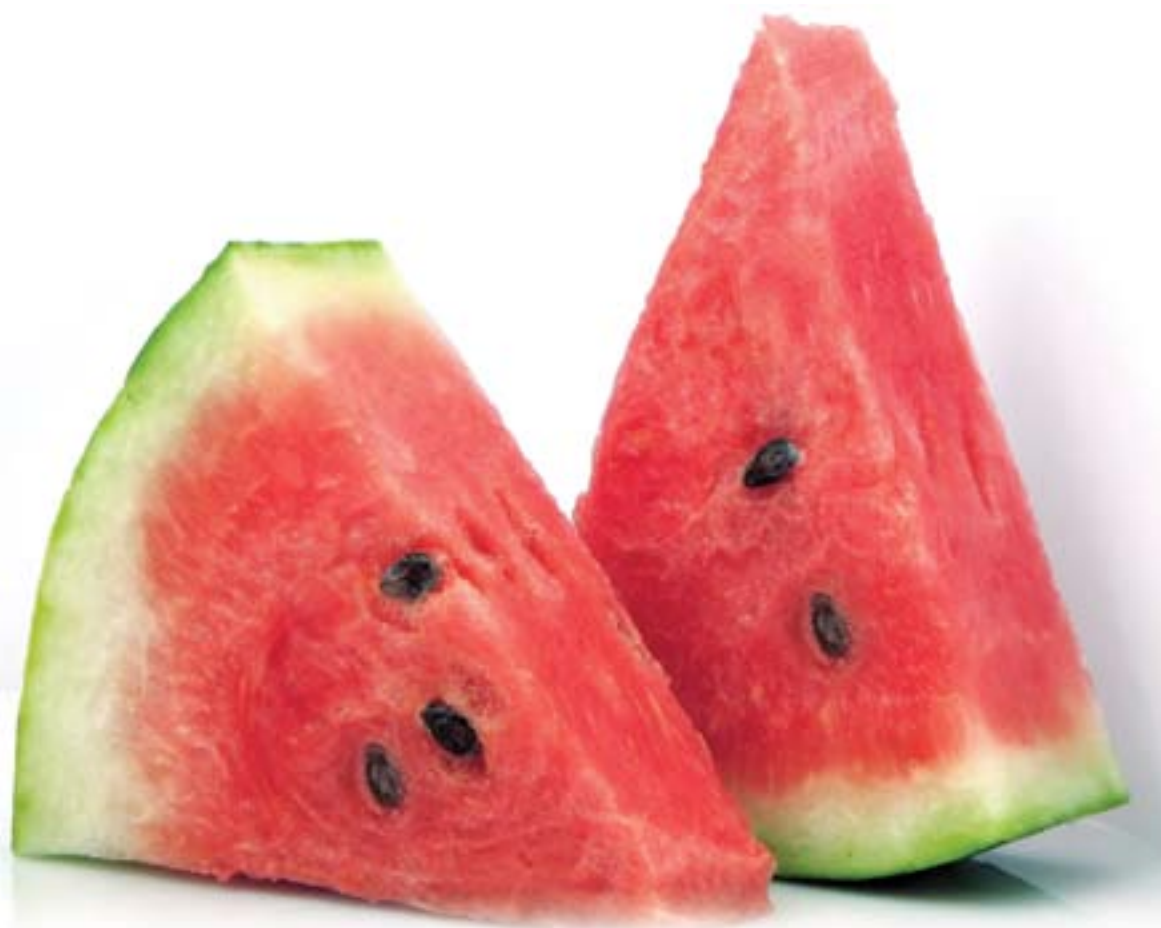
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