



# How food safety knowledge can affect your health

Whether you’re feeding yourself or feeding your family, it’s important to know that the food you’re eating is safe and nutritious. But perceptions about finding a balance between those two essential factors have become muddled in recent years. While there is an increased effort to promote the consumption of healthy foods, particularly fruits and vegetables, there are also conflicting messages about their safety.

Concerns about food safety range widely, from the use of pesticides to medications given to livestock to outbreaks of diseases. Unfortunately, those concerns can affect the amount of healthful foods in Americans’ diets. “Feedback from consumers and practicing nutritionists is beginning to show that concern about pesticide residues is having a negative impact on consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables,” says registered dietitian Dave Grotto. “What we need to do is encourage - not discourage - greater consumption of healthful produce.” It might seem that the most logical solution would be to research whether foods are safe. A lot of information about this subject is available on the Internet, but that’s not always a practical option. Busy families that have schedules filled from morning to night don’t often have time to add an extensive research project into the mix. Luckily, there are some new resources available - often on mobile platforms - to help you make sense of the food safety headlines.

**HEALTH** continued on page 17



# Senate Agriculture Chairwoman Speaks out

Senator Debbie Stabenow, Chairwoman of the U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry, penned an op-ed published in The Hill, highlighting how the Farm Bill can both create jobs and reduce the deficit.



Senator Debbie Stabenow

Chairwoman Stabenow says Congress must pass a Farm Bill this year and not kick the can down the road with any piecemeal short-term extension – to provide certainty that farmers and small businesses need to continue investing and growing.

Chairwoman Stabenow said that by focusing on streamlining and consolidating programs to make them more efficient, the Senate and House Agriculture Committees have developed a strong foundation for a Farm Bill that cuts \$23 billion from the deficit, while still strengthening and improving programs that are critical to the economy and creating jobs.

# Continued growth for agriculture industry critical for creating jobs

By Sen. Debbie Stabenow  
March 8, 2012

Americans overwhelmingly agree that the nation’s top two priorities should be creating jobs and reducing the deficit. The farm bill, set to expire this year, gives Congress the opportunity to pass bipartisan legislation to accomplish both.

That’s why Congress must pass a strong farm bill this year and not kick the can down the road with a short-term, Band-Aid extension, as has become all-too-common in Washington. The farm bill is a jobs bill. Farm bill programs give small businesses and farmers critical tools that help them invest and grow.

**SENATOR** continued on page 17

# Vilsack calls for farm bill, immigration reform



Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack called on Congress to pass a farm bill and immigration reform in this election year, noting that in 1862 the Civil War did not stop Congress from doing two things “big and bold.”



Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack

“In 1862, the land grant university act and the Homestead Act were established by Congress in the middle of the Civil War,” Vilsack reminded a crowd of more than 2,000 attending Agriculture Outlook Forum 2012. He repeated the reference at a news conference later in response to a question on labor and immigration reform, which he called a “divisive political issue.”

“We should be deeply concerned with the ongoing stability of the workforce,” Vilsack said. “This issue is not going away anytime soon,” he said, citing incidents in Georgia where fruits and vegetables didn’t get harvested on time, and in California, where producers report it is increasingly difficult to maintain a workforce. The secretary’s comments on immigration brought a round of applause during his keynote address, which outlined what American producers need now and in the future.

“We do not have the workforce to get the job done,” Vilsack said, calling on Congress to find the will to pass comprehensive immigration reform. “Everyone admits it is not functioning. We should be fixing it, and fixing it now.”

Vilsack also emphasized the importance of attracting and keeping the next generation of farmers. “We need to be far more creative in crafting the next farm bill,” he said, facing two rows of university students whose essays on the topic “Agriculture as a Career” earned them spots at the forum. Future generations need a commitment from the country, he noted. “After all, nobody – nobody – can do their job very well without food,” Vilsack said.

**BILL** continued on page 17

# Bad Story, Good Ending

Fans of the watermelon smashing comic Gallagher can breathe a sigh of relief. Gallagher came out of a medically induced coma following a heart attack he suffered on March 14th just before a show at a Lewisville bar near Dallas.

Doctors slowly woke up Gallagher. His promotional manager, Christine Scherrer, said that Gallagher immediately recognized his family and started talking to them. She says he’s breathing on his own, moving and joking around.

Scherrer says Gallagher had two stents replaced after collapsing before a performance. Gallagher had a minor heart attack last March after collapsing while performing in Minnesota.

Scherrer isn’t sure how long Gallagher will remain hospitalized. She says he appreciates his fans’ thoughts and prayers.

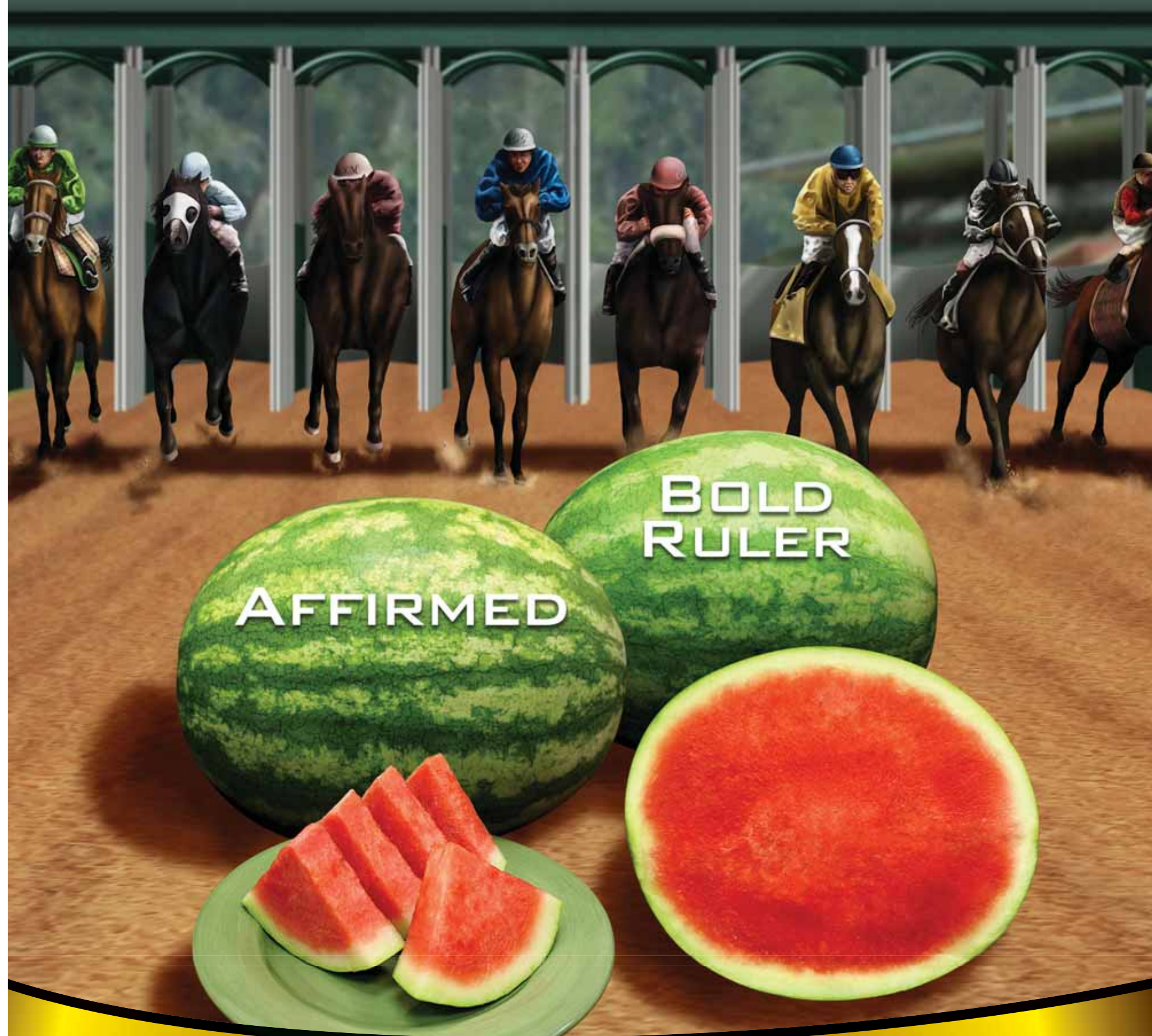


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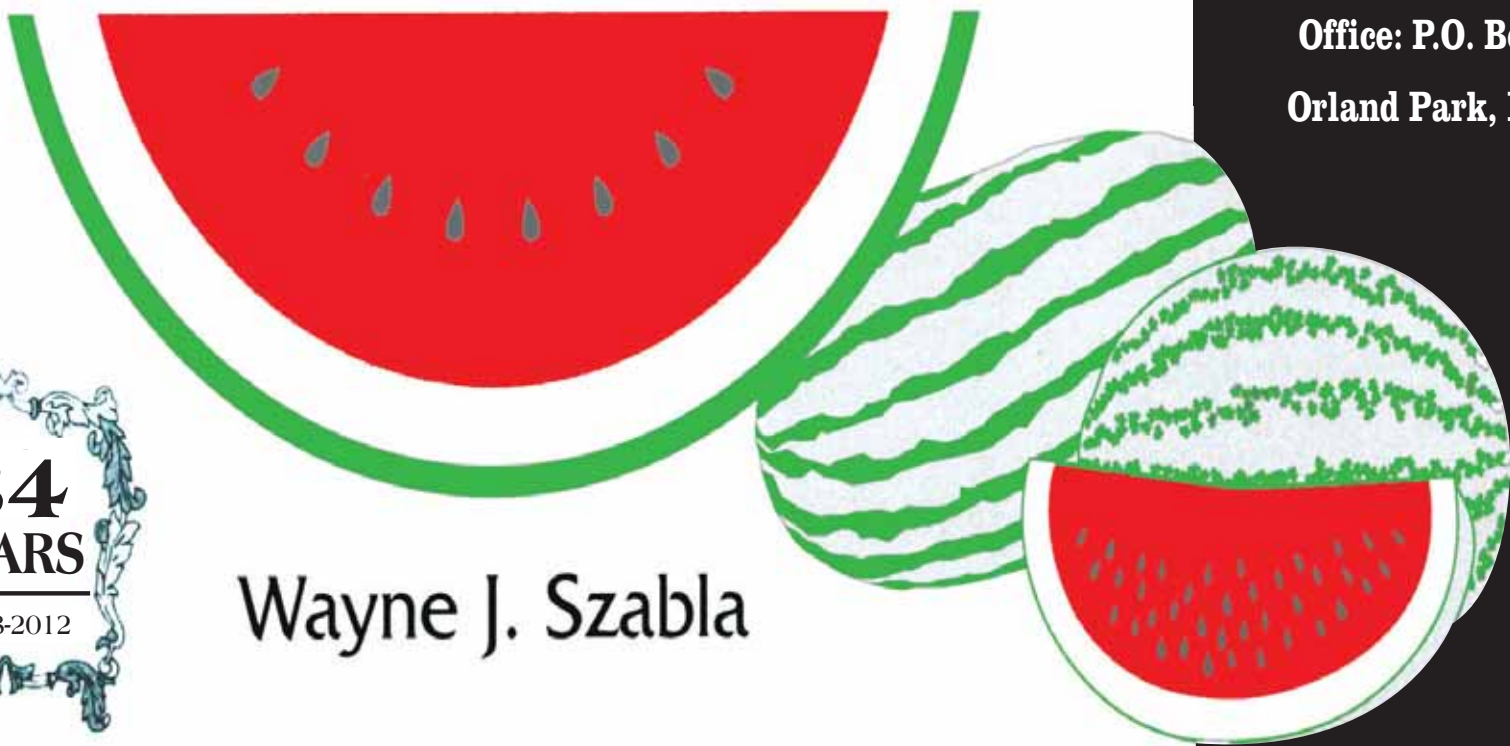
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# CBO report says healthcare law could cause as many as 20M to lose coverage

As many as 20 million Americans could lose their employer-provided coverage because of President Obama’s healthcare reform law, the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office said in a new report. The figure represents the worst-case scenario, CBO says, and the law could just as well increase the number of people with employer-based coverage by 3 million in 2019.

The best estimate, subject to a “tremendous amount of uncertainty,” is that about 3 million to 5 million fewer people will obtain coverage through their employer each year from 2019 through 2022. The new report adds more detail to a recent CBO update of the law’s coverage provisions. Compared to a year ago, the law is now anticipated to cover 2 million fewer people but cost \$50 billion less over 10 years, after factoring penalties paid by individuals and businesses that don’t get or provide healthcare coverage.

Republicans immediately pounced after the new numbers came out because they appear to violate Obama’s pledge that people who like their health plans will be able to keep them. Last year, CBO’s best estimate was that only 1 million people would lose employer-sponsored coverage.

“President Obama’s string of empty promises is quickly becoming a disappointing trail of broken promises,” House Budget Committee Chairman Paul Ryan (Wis.) said in a statement. “He promised Americans that his overhaul of the health care sector would not jeopardize the health coverage of those who liked what they had. As nonpartisan analysts made clear today, millions of Americans will soon learn the hard way that Washington’s overreach into their health care decisions will result in sharp disruptions to their coverage and their care.” The White House for its part argues that the latest projections are in line with what the CBO estimated when it scored the bill at the time of passage two years ago.

“The report does not project major changes in the number of workers who will get coverage through their job,” Jeanne Lambrew, the deputy assistant to the president for health policy, wrote on the White House blog. “At the time of passage CBO projected a change of 3 million people; last year CBO projected 1 million; this year 4 million – out of the roughly 150 million people get insurance through their job today. Other respected independent analysts have concluded that the number of Americans who get their health insurance at work will not change in a significant way.”

Under CBO’s best estimate, 11 million mostly low-wage workers would lose their employer coverage. About 3 million would choose to drop their coverage to go into the new subsidized health exchanges or on Medicaid, while another 9 million would gain employer-sponsored coverage, for a net total of 5 million people losing employer coverage in 2019. CBO defended its methodology after Republicans highlighted business surveys that found a bigger number of employers threatening to drop coverage because of the law.

“Some observers have expressed surprise that CBO and [the Joint Committee on Taxation] have not expected a much larger reduction in the number of people receiving employment-based health insurance in light of the expanded availability of subsidized health insurance coverage that will result from the” health law, the report says.

“CBO and JCT’s estimates take account of that expansion, but they also recognize that the legislation leaves in place some financial incentives and also creates new financial incentives for firms to offer and for many people to obtain health insurance coverage through their employers,” the report adds.

Employer surveys, CBO said, “have uncertain value and offer conflicting findings.”

# Court action could prolong health care

The late March challenge to the Obama-sponsored health care law could affect the care available to most Americans, alter the balance of power between Washington and the states and remain a flash point through this presidential campaign.

The core of the law is a requirement that most people buy health insurance by 2014 or face a tax penalty. But looming over the case is a federal policy that restricts the timing of lawsuits connected to the assessment and collection of “any tax.”

On the first day of their historic session March 26-28, the justices considered that policy to address whether people who challenge the insurance requirement must first pay the disputed tax and seek a refund before bringing a lawsuit. If the answer is yes, the legal fight over a key part of the law could be delayed, possibly until 2015.

None of the main parties to the litigation is arguing for that option, which would prolong confusion over the law’s constitutionality. Yet the high court could find that the law demands it. Further, the nine justices are deeply divided ideologically, and the option might be a way to avoid deepening the fault lines and edge the court out of the spotlight this election year.

It is difficult to predict how the justices would respond to the claim that the legality of the mandate requirement must be put off. They have taken the question seriously enough, however, to appoint a special lawyer to argue March 26 that the case must wait until someone seeks a refund.

When the law was passed in March 2010, Obama and other supporters avoided calling the penalty a “tax.” But it is contained in the Tax Code and would be collected by the Internal Revenue Service.

In the litigation, the position has won few lower court judges’ votes. Still, it was adopted by one federal appeals court, the Richmond-based 4th Circuit, in a majority decision, and by one influential conservative judge, in a dissent on the Washington-based U.S. appeals court. “The Tax Code is never a walk in the park,” D.C. Circuit appeals court Judge Brett Kavanaugh wrote in his dissent. “But the statutory analysis here leads to a firm conclusion that the (Tax) Anti-Injunction Act bars this suit.”

Kavanaugh did suggest that Congress could pass a law that allows an immediate challenge to the individual mandate, removing it from the tax code rule. A tax or a penalty?

In earlier court hearings, Obama administration lawyers argued that claims against the individual insurance mandate had to wait until after someone sought a refund on the 2014 tax penalty, which under the 2010 law would be assessed and collected by the IRS. The administration abandoned that stance when it began losing in lower courts and the political imperative for a resolution on the merits kept building.

Robert Long, the lawyer appointed to make the argument, stresses in his brief to the high court that Congress could have written into the law an exemption from tax policy that would have allowed immediate judicial review of the constitutionality of the minimum coverage provision. “But it has not done so in this case,” he said, contending that the court should not decide the case prematurely because of the general rule that judges avoid deciding constitutional issues unless necessary. Lawyers for those challenging the health care law — 26 states, the National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB) and individuals — say the tax law timing restriction should not apply.

“The individual mandate is a free-standing legal requirement obligating virtually every American to obtain health insurance,” lawyer Michael Carvin, representing the NFIB, told the court. He says Long wrongly argues that the “penalty” for not buying insurance can be characterized as a “tax.”

Paul Clement, representing the state challengers, similarly argues that the court should address the constitu-



tional merits of the mandate. The Anti-Injunction Act does not apply “for the most basic reason of all,” he told the court. “The challenge here is to the mandate, and not the penalty that enforces it.”

The Obama administration asserts that because payment under the individual-insurance provision is termed a “penalty,” rather than a tax, the Anti-Injunction Act doesn’t bar the lawsuit. Yet the administration does not go as far as the challengers. It says that if the justices deem the payment a tax, they cannot separately review the constitutional merits of the requirement to buy insurance.

“The two provisions are inextricably intertwined,” U.S. Solicitor General Donald Verrilli told the justices. “The only consequence of failing to maintain minimum coverage is payment of a penalty.”

## Main questions

The challenge to the health care law, known as the Affordable Care Act, raises four key issues, beginning with the tax-policy issue:

- Whether the Tax Anti-Injunction Act prevents individuals from challenging the mandate until after they pay the tax and seek a refund.
- Whether Congress had the authority, under its power to regulate interstate commerce, to require most Americans to buy insurance or face a penalty.
- Whether Congress improperly put new burdens on states when it expanded eligibility under Medicaid, the federal-state medical program for the poor, to those people with incomes up to 133% of the poverty rate.
- Whether, if one part of the law is declared unconstitutional, it can be separated from the rest of the law or dooms it entirely.

Only one of the four U.S. appeals courts that have heard the litigation said the challenge to the mandate could not go forward because of the tax law provision. When the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit ruled on the case, Judge Diana Gribbon Motz wrote that the Anti-Injunction Act strips courts of jurisdiction. “The Affordable Care Act uses the Internal Revenue Code’s existing tax collection system to implement the penalty,” she wrote. “Only a ‘taxpayer’ is subject to the penalty, and the Code defines a ‘taxpayer’ as ‘any person subject to any internal revenue tax.’ “

Alan Morrison, who submitted a brief on behalf of two lawyers who were IRS commissioners, says the tax law provides substantive reason not to reach the merits yet. For a court that wants to avoid a polarized ruling on the law, the tax rule is a good option, he says. “If the court decides that postponement is the better part of discretion,” he says, “it could rely upon this long-standing and very forceful tax law to say that Congress has told us when we can intervene and when we can’t.”

It is anticipated that a final decision on the merits of this case will be announced by the U.S. Supreme Court by June.





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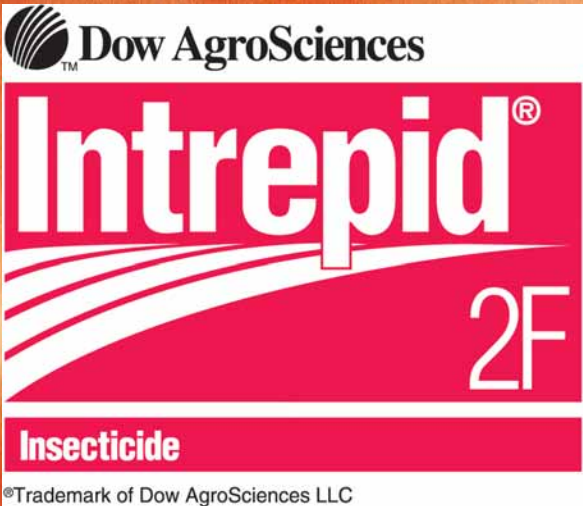
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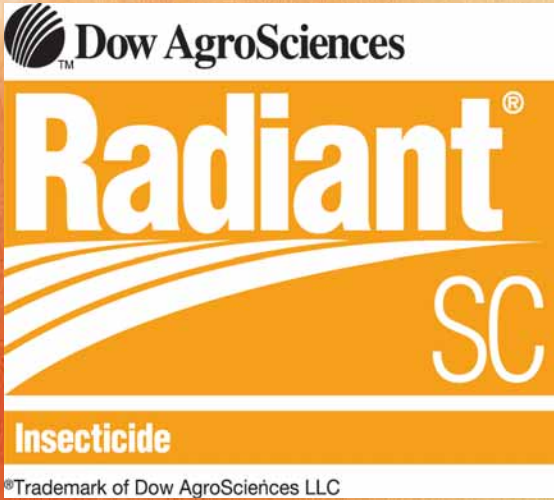
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# NASCAR watermelon truck makes Daytona debut representing watermelon groups



The Toyota Tundra pickup truck parked on the lawn of the Ritz-Carlton resort Feb. 25 drew a crowd, as one might expect a pickup truck parked on the lawn of a Ritz-Carlton would. But this truck was not here by accident. In fact, it was a crowning moment of the 2012 National Watermelon Association Convention, held here Feb. 22-26.

This particular Toyota Tundra, which made its debut at Daytona International Speedway just the night before, is the SS Green Light Racing No. 08 entry in the NASCAR Camping World Truck Series 2012. Sponsored by the National Watermelon Association and the National Watermelon Promotion Board, and driven by NCWTS Rookie of the Year candidate Ross Chastain, 19, of Fort Myers, FL, the truck still bears the scars from the previous night’s action. The National Watermelon Association is celebrating its 99th year by sponsoring Mr. Chastain’s truck, which is emblazoned with the NWA emblem on the hood and bears the watermelon.org web address of the association’s marketing arm, the National Watermelon Promotion Board, on the rear and either side. The bed of the truck is painted to appear as if it is filled with watermelons that, in the words of NWA Executive Director Bob Morrissey, “looks like they’re being hauled around the track at 190 miles per hour.”

“We are so excited about this opportunity to promote watermelon to the entire nation,” Morrissey said before the debut race. “We are proud to be associated with a great young driver like Ross Chastain. Although he is only 19 years old, Ross is a smart driver who knows how to take care of his equipment and be there at the end of races. Our expectations are realistic, Ross will have a veteran crew behind him and anything can happen at Daytona.” Morrissey’s words proved prophetic.

Coming down the homestretch in his first-ever race at Daytona, Mr. Chastain was in the middle of a tightly knit pack, jockeying for position and a chance to put up a solid point performance in the race for the season ending championship. Another truck in the middle of the pack got loose and was turned to the inside at 190 miles per hour. The pack began to fall apart, and the loose race truck veered sharply to the right and careened nose-first into the SS Green 08 right behind the driver’s door where the battery and cables are located. Ross Chastain steered through the mess, pulling off a remarkable series of spins and turns, managing to avoid the outer and inner walls of the track and keep the truck intact.

But after the spinout, the truck would not restart because the battery was ripped out along with the cables to power the race machine. Young Ross Chastain exuded a cool confidence, not cocky, just certain. His goal is to become the NCWTS Rookie of the Year and make a run at the championship his first time out. “I’m excited about hauling watermelons around the track,” Mr. Chastain had said before the race. He was a little less so the morning after, given the disappointment of the previous night.

“First, I just want to thank you all for your support,” he said from the podium before inviting conventioners out on the lawn to view the vehicle. “I think we’ve got a chance to win Rookie of the Year and make a run at the cup, and I want to be known as the driver of ‘the water-

# NWA convention is part business, part fun, part genuine Americana

Part business, part fun, part genuine Americana, the 98th annual convention of the nation’s oldest produce trade organization, the National Watermelon Association, held Feb. 22-26 at the Ritz-Carlton resort, here, raised issues, a couple of eyebrows and at least one bona fide ruckus. Comprised of executive and committee meetings, an indoor beach party with Jimmy Buffet’s part-time backup band, educational sessions and forums featuring some of the industry’s heavy hitters, banquets, a four-hour live auction and the crowning of a new National Watermelon Queen, the 98th annual convention of the 99-year-old NWA was a study in disparity. From definitely down-home to decidedly uptown, the convention covered all the bases. The irony of a Friday morning watermelon seed-spitting contest on the impeccably manicured lawn of the Ritz was offset by the seriousness of matters being discussed inside.

The convention opened Wednesday, Feb. 22 with golf and skeet tournaments and a welcoming reception that evening. Feb. 23 began with the opening of the business exhibition and NWA committee and executive meetings. The President’s Reception was later that afternoon, followed by an indoor beach party featuring a low country boil and music from Jimmy Stowe and the Stowaways as attendees danced and batted beach balls around the room.

The next morning began with breakfast and the convention’s opening general session, where the eight NWA Chapter Queens began their competition for the title of National Watermelon Queen with a series of speeches. After a few other business matters, the proceedings took a fun turn with the annual seed-spitting contest.

The noon buffet luncheon was followed by a boisterous four-hour live auction that raised hundreds of thousands of dollars. Items ranged from sports memorabilia bidding for futures on 40,000-pound truckloads of watermelons.

On Feb. 24, conventioners gathered for a breakfast and reports from the nine state chapters of the association. Then came the convention highlight -- a state-of-the-industry panel discussion featuring NWA Executive Director Bob Morrissey, United Fresh President Tom Stenzel and Reggie Griffin, who recently retired as the head of Kroger’s produce program. Charles Hall, director of the Georgia Fruit & Vegetable Association, joined the discussion about halfway through.

Food safety, government regulation and the pending 2012 farm bill were the early topics of discussion. “Food is an emotional subject,” said Mr. Griffin. “If we’re going to continue to reassure the American consumer their food is safe, we have to move this industry to item-level traceability. As a retailer, our goal is to accommodate every consumer’s need in the United States, and you say that’s very holistic, and it is, but let me dial it down a little bit. Think about your expectations when you go to the store. Now parlay that across 50 states. In your industry, from my point of view, you believe your customer is people like me. But my message is that your customer is the same customer I serve; if we align ourselves in trying to service the needs of the ultimate customer, the one that comes in every week with their cash, that is how our industry will be successful.”

Speaking about the farm bill, Mr. Morrissey said, “The [congressional] super-committee obviously failed at the end of November to do their thing, and all of the wins from agriculture committees became dust in the wind.”

melon truck.’ It’s a unique opportunity for me and for us. We have a unique opportunity to do some things and promote watermelon. I think we’ve got a really good shot to do something and I can’t thank you guys enough for giving me this opportunity and just hope we can keep moving forward and make something out of this.”

Mr. Chastain signed autographs and posed for pictures. At one point, he even climbed behind the wheel and



Mr. Stenzel was a bit optimistic. “I think we’re going to get there,” he said. “I’m not going to be overly optimistic and say we’re going to have a farm bill before the election, but I think we’re going to get there. Certainly both in the House and the Senate there’s a commitment to try and move a farm bill.”

Added Mr. Griffin, “In 2006 I joined the United Fresh board. I knew nothing about lobbying, I had no idea what happened in Washington, and quite frankly, as a retailer, I didn’t care. Over the course of the next year or so my eyes were opened so wide. [Congress] is absolutely amazing, these are smart people -- they just don’t know what we do, they don’t have a clue what we do. It is our job to educate and inform them so they can help make laws or policies or regulations that are favorable to our industry. Lobbying is not a spectator sport, and I was spectator. You have to be involved, you have to talk to the legislators, you have to inform them what your needs are.”

Those topics all seemed trivial after Mr. Hall took the stage and the talk turned to labor. Georgia farmers sustained more than \$140 million in crop losses when workers could not be found to harvest last spring in the wake of anti-immigration legislation passed by the Georgia Legislature. “Georgia has become the poster child nationally for E-verify and the need for a guest worker program,” Mr. Morrissey said. “What can go bad happened there last year.” Mr. Stenzel told Mr. Hall, “I admit we talk about what happened in Georgia when we try to get Congress to look at a guest worker program that would work.” Illegal migrant workers “were afraid they were going to be stopped at the state line and be arrested because they didn’t have papers,” Mr. Hall said. “The rumor mill was going, there were rumors about roadblocks being set up in Valdosta” near the state’s southern border.

Under mandate from the state legislature, several industry organizations in Georgia partnered with the University of Georgia to conduct a study to “document what happens if you pass an E-verify or enforcement law without a guest worker program to go with it. We’re going to have foreign workers picking our produce,” Mr. Hall said. “The question is do we want them picking it in our country or in their country? We could lose the whole fruit and vegetable industry in the U.S. if we don’t figure out some way to do this guest worker program.”

As an industry, agriculture employs just 1 percent of the U.S. population, “so as loud as we are, we’re still kind of

*CONVENTION continued on page 38*



fired the ignition. As the engine roared to life, Ritz visitors began to leave their rooms and step out on their balconies to see what was causing the commotion.

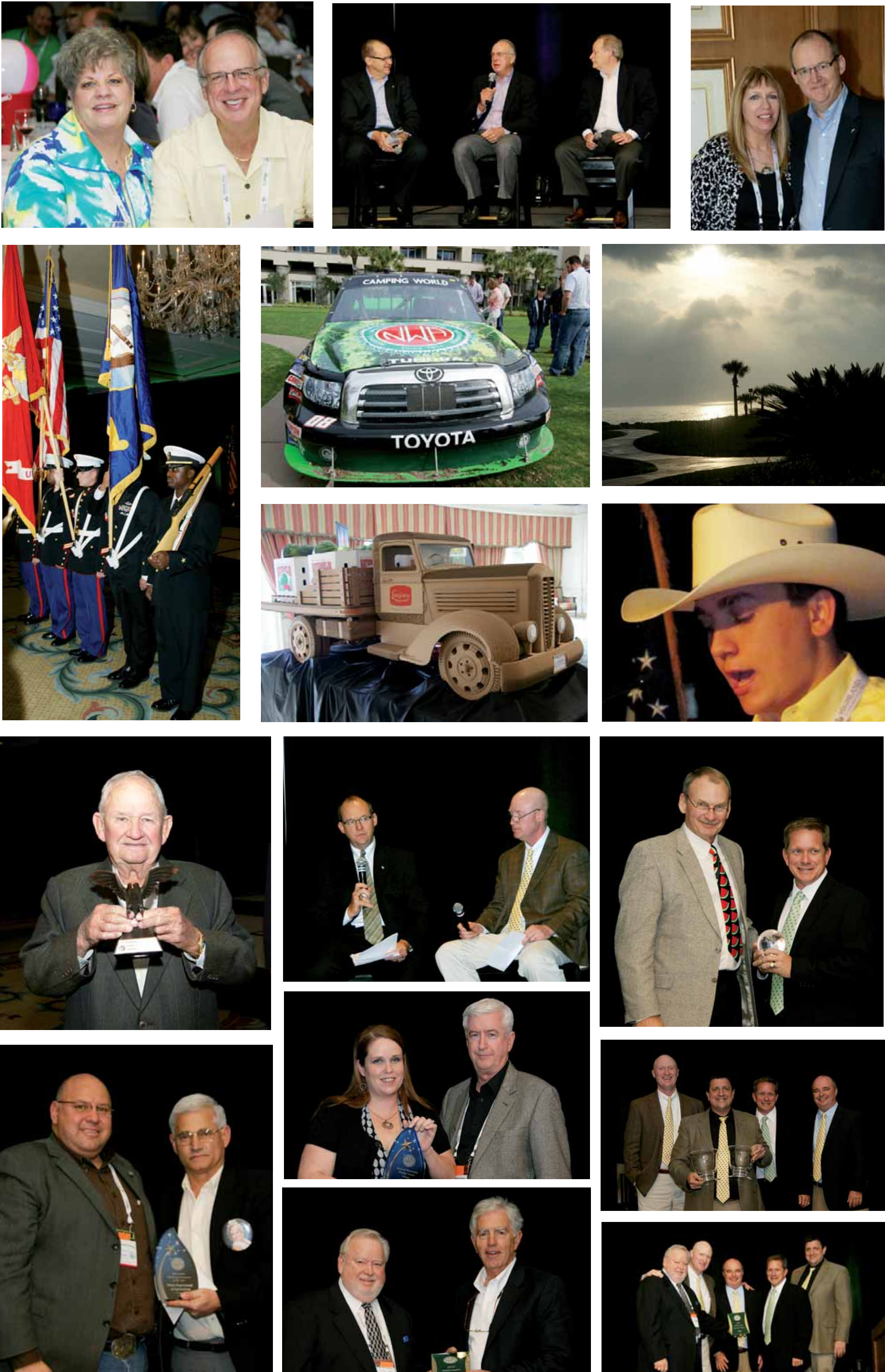
He will get many more chances to erase that experience before his rookie campaign is through. And if he continues to drive like he did in Daytona Feb. 24, the NWA and NWPB will wind up with the marketing bargain of the year.



# NWA 2012 Convention, Amelia Island FL









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# National Report

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Miss Katelyn Kelley crowned 2012 National Watermelon Queen



Whitney Crowns Katelyn Kelley, 2011 Florida Queen the 2012 National Watermelon Queen!



1st Runner-up Jenna Saxon, Georgia and 2nd Runner-up Holly Whatley, SC



First Vice President John Corsaro presents Queen Katelyn with tray and check from NWA



NC representative presents Katelyn with check from Brent & Debbie Jackson in memory of their son Adam



Kelly & Jean Marinaro present Katelyn with a Waterford Crystal vase and a check in memory of Kelley's parents Frank & Barbara Marinaro



Steve Crowder presents Katelyn with a check from MultiCorr for \$1000.00



Greg Leger presents Katelyn with a \$500.00 memorial from Sue Childers in memory of her husband Oren Childers



Leslie and Chris Bloebaum present her with a \$500.00 memorial in memory of his Dad Bob Bloebaum!



Rusty Autry of Monsanto, presents her with a check for \$500.00 from Seminis



Carrie Smith presents Katelyn with luggage purchased for her at the auction from Midwest Marketing



Chris Hogg of Nunhems Seed presents her with a gift from Nunhems



Richard Wojciak of presents Katelyn with a camera from Abbott & Cobb



Miss Katelyn Kelly, 2012 National Watermelon Queen



Katelyn's proud Family!



Former National Queens welcome Katelyn to the Watermelon Sista's



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Usage	FRESH/ FRESH PROCESS
Fruit Shape	Blocky
Approximate Days To Maturity	88
Fruit Rind Description	Modern style, dark green, crimson rind pattern
Fruit Weight Range (US - LBS)	15-18
Pip Size	Small-Medium
Fruit Flesh Description	Red flesh color. Penetrometer readings of 2.5-3.0 lbs.



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# National Pictures



NWPB's Gordon Hunt with Whitney at PMA in Atlanta



Special thanks to NWPB for all you do!



Thanks to Temple-Inland for co-sponsoring us to the Georgia Fruit & Vegetable Show



Mr. Buddy Leger, of Leger & Son another co- sponsor poses with Whitney!



Whitney enjoyed Watermelon Day with Susan Harrison's class in Nogales



Visits Sponsor, Brent, Susan, and Shelly of Al Harrison Co. in Nogales, AZ



Special thanks to our Co-Sponsor Fresh Produce Association of the America's



SC President and sponsor (Melon 1) Hamilton Dicks IV welcomes Whitney to SC Convention



Whitney thanks Berry Tanner of Abbott & Cobb for helping sponsor!



Whitney visits with Casey Vaughn and thanks John & Alisa Lapide for sponsoring



Great looking group of girls in SC!



Thanks to Melon 1 again for sponsoring the Homestead Truck Race, Whitney, Rich, Katelyn, John & Alisa



Watermelon's Favorite Driver Ross Chastain with Whitney & Katelyn!



Ranell, Stephanie (2005 National Queen) and our own Ms.Wanda, welcome Whitney to Austin and to the Texas convention!



Whitney & Veronica Congratulate Kimberly Duda, 2012 Texas Queen!



Watermelon Time Mar-Del Style!



Congratulations to the 2012 Mar-Del Watermelon Queen!



GWA President Jamey Adams & wife Rachel welcome Whitney home to Georgia!



Queen Jenna and Queen Whitney!



These beautiful ladies congratulate the 2012 Georgia Queen!



Alabama President, Cheryl Hicks and Whitney chat at the AWA convention!



The AWA group and all the girls!



Congratulations to 2012 Alabama Watermelon Queen!



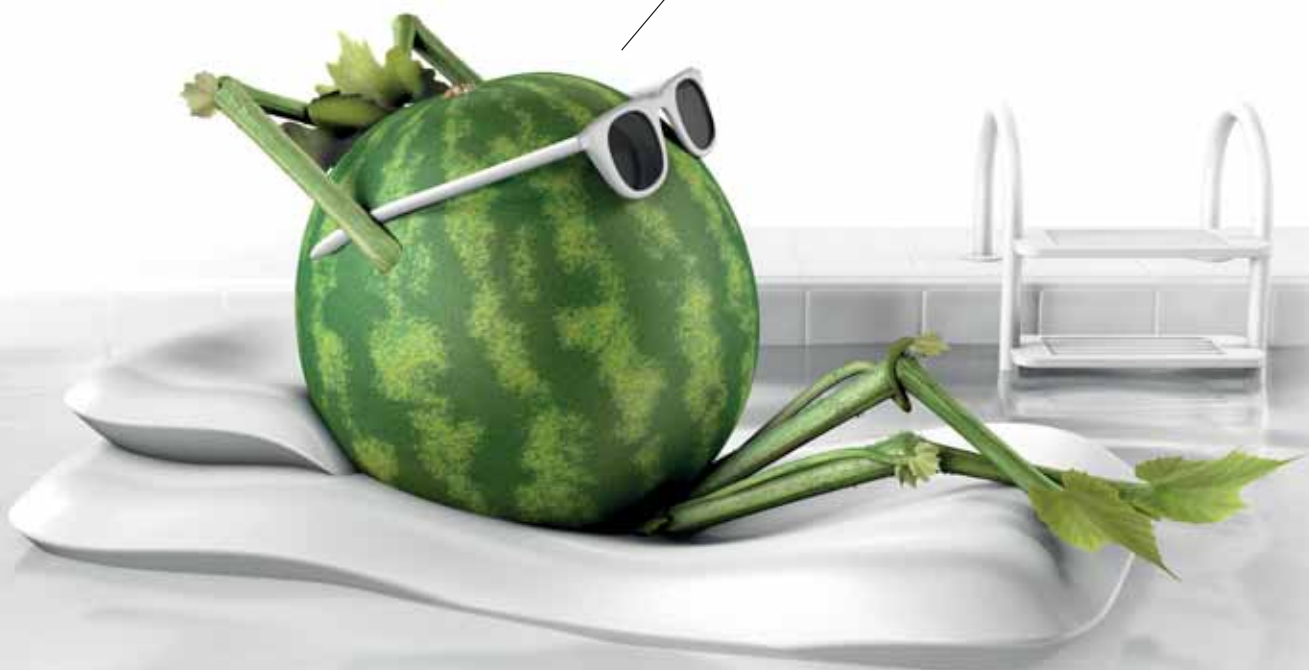
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# Farmer and State Senator – Performing Double Duty for AG



Following the completion of his first year as the State Senator of the Tenth District of North Carolina, the NWA’s Bob Morrissey asked Senator Brent Jackson of Jackson Farming Company in Autryville, North Carolina about his new experience:

**NWA: First of all Senator, I would like to congratulate you on the election and wish you the best of luck in Raleigh. Tell us about a typical session, a typical day or week while serving your district in the Senate in Raleigh.**

SEN: I commute back and forth each day to Raleigh which is about 1 hour and 10 minutes each way, which honestly I enjoy. It gives me time in the morning to mentally prepare for my day and then on the evening commute gives me an opportunity to digest all the information I have received during that day. But the main reason I commute is that the Farmer in me wants to be at home at night.

In order for you to understand somewhat of my schedule, I would like to describe a normal week. We started our long session on January 26, 2011. The NC General Assembly convenes at 7:00 PM on Monday nights. We meet, adjourn for the evening, go home and need to be back at 7:30 to 8:00 depending upon our committee meetings. We have met as long as 4 hours and adjourned, to reconvene at 12:01 AM on Tuesday morning. The hectic hours were more toward the end of the session in June.

Our sessions in the Senate (on the average) last about 1 to 2 hours, and the rest of the day is either spent in committee meetings or meetings with constituents. I serve on the following committees: CO-Chair of the Agricultural/Environment/Natural Resources committee, the Appropriations/Base Budget committee, Vice-Chair of the Rules committee( the committee that decides what legislation is heard during any session) I also serve on Commerce, Insurance, Mental Health and Youth Services, State & Local Government, Transportation and the newly formed Emergency Disaster committee after the tornadoes in April as a regular member. Our committee meeting rooms are scheduled at one-hour intervals in two different buildings in order to accommodate a lot of committee meetings in one day; so time is of the essence. Tuesdays and Wednesdays are the busiest days of the week, and normally by 4:00 PM on Thursdays we are winding down. EXCEPT in the last few weeks of the session when all of the budget items are coming together. Then we meet on Fridays and have even had some Saturday meetings this past session.

I serve on 10 different committees that meet at least once a week and being Co-Chair on NER Subcommittee (Natural and Economical Resources) Appropriations and Full Appropriations, we can have as many as 2 to 3 meetings in one day. The last two to three weeks of session are called the marathon as we normally will go in and out of session many times in one day, and can run until midnight and dismiss and return at 12:01 AM to continue where we left off. This is due to how our constitution is written. The latest I believe we adjourned was at 2:30 AM, and by the time I got home it was 4:00 AM with a turn-around to be back in Raleigh by 9:00 AM that same morning. I made everyone laugh in the Senate when I told them I

loved these hours, because I thought we were shipping watermelons and cantaloupes. We all know about the hours involved in this business. LOL

**NWA: Now that you wear another hat as a Senator (while being a farmer, packer, shipper, sales company, husband, father, grandfather and much more), how has your life changed?**

SEN: Monday mornings and most Fridays we are expected by our voters to attend functions within the district. My district is three large counties, which takes about 2 hours to travel from one district to the other without stopping. Most Saturdays, during the spring and fall, are filled with festivals that we can attend. There are always receptions and meetings you can attend nearly every night somewhere either in Raleigh or in the district. There is not too much private or personal time anymore which is probably the biggest change, along with not getting to see my grandchildren but about 1 to 2 times per week instead of my normal 5 to 7 times that I had enjoyed prior to beginning my campaign. I have always liked to be busy, and I certainly got what I wished for in this new role.

**NWA: Is being a North Carolina Senator what you thought it would be, or something different? Are your expectations being met? What about your constituents’ expectations of you?**

SEN: It is somewhat what I expected, and I have had a few pleasant surprises as well. For instance there is a Bible study every Monday afternoon at 5:00 that a lot attend when they don’t have committee meetings scheduled. And the biggest surprise is every Wednesday from 12:30 PM to 1:00 PM they have chapel in a little tiny room under the master staircase that is enjoyed by House and Senate members and their staff employees. This was certainly a surprise.

For the most part I have been extremely pleased with the progress we have made in the NCGA this past year. We took office with a \$2.5 Billion deficit and a mandate to have a balanced budget by July 1st. We actually filled the hole we were in, passed a balance budget in both houses, only to have the Governor veto it. So, we worked to override the veto and passed a 20 billion dollar budget without increasing taxes and also allowing a .01 cent sales tax to expire that was promised by the previous NCGA. My constituents seemed to be pleased with our work and accomplishments this past session. The previous Senator never used computers much, so we do a weekly newsletter that has been a real big hit for the folks that receive it. The ones that don’t get it via email can pick it up by three of the papers that carry it along with 4 chamber of commerce newsletters that forward it to their members. We are reaching an estimated 60% of the citizens in my district.



**NWA: We are aware that only about 1% of legislators across the country have an awareness of farming, which makes our jobs very tough. What do you see as the major obstacle(s) or opportunity(ies) to placing AG at the forefront when Congressional leaders typically know very little about AG?**

SEN: Agri-business is NC’s #1 Industry, around the 75 billion mark annually. When I took office I soon learned what we had heard about the legislators that they knew little to nothing about AG was true. I have told folks that most of my fellow members in Raleigh were very AG-friendly, but very few actually depended upon AG for their living, or so they thought. I am the only NC State Senator that derives 100% of his income from farming and agri-business. There are only 3 in the NC House. So, we have 4 members out 170 that really depend upon AG. This

was one of the main reasons that I ran for the Senate in the beginning, and thankful that I really believe we have reversed the downward side that AG was on in NC.

My AG Commissioner nearly hugs my neck every time he sees me. Most agencies in NC got cut from 6% to 20+%, but due to me and few others, NC AG only received a 4% cut, mainly because they had been cut so much in previous years that they couldn’t stand any more. In some areas we actually gave them a huge increase in special provisions. One of the first things I did upon learning that there were caucuses for nearly everything, and learning that there had never been an AG Caucus, I got with my friend and mentor on the House AG committee to help me start the first ever NCGA Joint and bi partisan AG Caucus. Our main goal has been to educate the members on the very important issues that face AG. We would meet every two weeks from 8:00 to 8:30 to have fresh strawberries, watermelons, honeydews, cantaloupes and anything

*DOUBLE continued on page 38*

## Labor Shortage, E-Verify Would Threaten U.S. Food Supply

There are continuing efforts in several states and in Congress to enact mandatory e-verify legislation. State lawmakers and some in Congress seemed determined to push e-verify laws onto the nation’s businesses. Requiring agricultural employers to use e-verify will deprive America’s farms and ranches of a majority of their current skilled workforce and nearly the entire pool of people willing to fill farm jobs unless Congress provides a workable agricultural labor program at the same time.

Lawmakers must constantly be reminded that farms provide jobs. Economists estimate that each farmworker in labor-intensive farming supports at least two to three jobs upstream and downstream in the economy. These are mostly year-round, good jobs filled by Americans. Additionally, mandatory e-verify without a workable guest-worker program will mean that much more of our food will be grown in other countries, and good U.S. jobs will disappear. A sufficient domestic food supply is a critical part of this nation’s security, and we must be very careful of the impact e-verify could have on that supply. The situation in Georgia and Alabama has provided dramatic examples of the consequences of rushing to implement e-verify without pausing to understand the economic implications. Studies in Georgia have shown mandatory e-verify caused farm labor shortages as high as 30 percent to 50 percent and economic losses in the hundreds of millions of dollars. A University of Georgia study showed the loss of over 3,000 full-time U.S. jobs.

Agricultural organizations across the country have opted not to take a position on the relative merits of e-verify. Instead, they have focused on the simple fact that if e-verify were made mandatory for farmers without accompanying reforms that would ensure access to a legal workforce, as much as three-quarters of the current, experienced agricultural labor force would be screened out. No seriously informed person contends that a willing and available domestic labor force would suddenly materialize, apply and perform these jobs. A recent study by the National Council of Agricultural Employers found that less than 5 percent of U.S. applicants for farm jobs finished the season. Further, the current H-2A agricultural guest worker program is seriously flawed and has been regulated to the point of being dysfunctional. It must be reformed. Yet even with reform, the H-2A program structure is too unresponsive and inflexible to meet current labor needs on America’s farms, much less future needs.

A three-part solution to the problem is available, and Congress should act. First, agriculture needs reform of the H-2A program so that those growers who have invested significant capital in the program can use it efficiently. Second, a companion program which is more flexible, realistic and market-based, such as the legislation proposed by U.S. Rep. Dan Lungren of California, should be enacted. Last, legislation that would provide work authorization for the current, experienced farm workforce must be the final piece of the solution. Agriculture’s labor supply problem is real. The threat to a sufficient domestic food supply is also real. Congress should act to support the solution, not out of political expediency but because it’s the right thing to do. It’s the right thing to do for farmers and their workers, for the consumers of our nation, and for the security of our food supply.





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# Ever wonder what things are like on the other side of the world?

Below is an excerpt from a monthly newsletter that is published by the melon association in Australia and New Zealand. It is interesting to read about what the other side of the world is experiencing.

‘I had the pleasure to meet the Aussie Chairman, Mark Daunt, about four years ago, and have found my new friend to have a genuine concern for his fellow growers and the future of the watermelon business in OZ (their lingo for Australia). Here is what is happening on the other side of our planet’ .....

*I’d like to begin by thanking people for their support with regards to sponsorship. The Association values the generous support of industry to function and to participate in our various projects.*

*The association recently hosted a food safety meeting in Brisbane, involving growers and industry experts from all over Australia and overseas. The main purpose of the meeting was to encourage growers to not be complacent when it comes to food safety, in light of some big food safety issues that have occurred around the world recently. We want to be proactive and put procedures in place to encourage growers to also be proactive.*

*Another important issue facing growers is the use of dimethoate for New Zealand export protocols. As you’d be aware, growers are still able to use it up until October, after which the APVMA should have completed its review of the chemical. Beyond that date, we’ll need to do a lot more research on the effects of dimethoate. There are plans for a project to provide research data for a label registration for dimethoate, and we’re looking for growers who are able to assist with the funding of the project.*

*Finally, I’ve been a bit concerned about the way the major retailers are trying to force down the price of a number of fruit and vegetable lines. It’s disappointing to*



*to see two major retailers fight their battles at the grower’s expense. My feeling is that if they choose to battle, they should do it at their own expense. If the major retailers purchase a product, they should at least purchase the product above the cost of production. What we’ve seen over the last few months, is melon growers selling melons below the cost of production. However, there are other perspectives on this issue that are worth considering.*

*I’ve heard some people argue that growers have brought this problem on themselves by growing more product without necessarily having a market for that product, causing an oversupply situation. Others may argue that the poor weather in all capital cities has created a poor demand among consumers. Some even think it’ll be good for the industry, as a means of forcing the rationalization of the industry. Another view is that, by lowering the price in store, the major retailers have been effective in moving a glut of product over the past few months.*

*Differing perspectives aside, however, I don’t like to see growers hurting. It’s my belief that the retailers tend to forget that so many farmers have had many years of drought, now followed by recent years of flooding rain. Now they want to push the prices down, and growers have had enough.*

*Meantime, consumers are unaware of the situation behind-the-scenes. They become accustomed to the lower prices and then, when there’s an undersupply or a disaster—as we’ve seen in the past year or so—there’s buyer resistance to higher prices. I can’t help but wonder if the situation might have been different, had we access to the marketing and promotion funding that would have been available through the levy.*



Mark Daunt, Australian Watermelon farmer and Chairman of the Australian Melon Association

*I’ve been seeing a lot of advertising for other produce. If we’d had a similar campaign underway, we may not have experienced the glut of the past twelve months. This is also relevant for growers in New Zealand, many of whom will lose their crop, while for growers with crop, their prices will increase. Essentially, in our industry, we’re reliant on other people’s misfortune. If we had more marketing and promotion, we could have prevented that situation. We may also have found ourselves better able to deal with the challenges we now face in the retail sector. It’s food for thought.*

*G’Day mates.  
Mark Daunt*

## BILL continued from page 1

Vilsack also touched on barriers to transferring land to the next generation, which he said are buried in state and federal income tax codes. “We need to free up opportunities of land transfer.”

Even in the face of a shrinking budget, Vilsack said, the country must recognize that American producers will continue to need:

- Reliable sources of credit
- Help when disaster strikes, with crop insurance premiums that are fair
- Markets for products both here and abroad, and relief from unfair trade barriers and rising oil prices
- Conservation assistance and flexibility
- Continuing research, which he credited for making agriculture one of the most productive aspects of the economy. “Research must grow if we are to meet the needs of the future,” he said.

## HEALTH continued on page 17

One resource, the website [www.safefruitsandveggies.com](http://www.safefruitsandveggies.com), developed and operated by the nonprofit Alliance for Food and Farming provides consumers with scientific data that’s been translated to a user-friendly format. For instance, scientific research available to consumers about the amount of pesticide residue on foods can be filled with confusing numbers and terminology. But this site’s pesticide residue calculator gives you information about how much of a particular food item you could eat without any effects at all from any small amounts of pesticide residues that may be present. This can be based on either gender (for adults) or age (teens and children). For example, according to the calculator, a child could consume 154 servings of apples - even with the highest pesticide residue recorded by the USDA - in a day without any effect, or an adult woman could eat 2,332 servings of kale. The calculator is also available for download as a smart-phone application.

“Of course we know a child couldn’t consume 154 servings of apples in a day, but by providing more science and perspective on the safety of produce, we are hoping to give consumers more information to help them when making purchasing decisions in the produce aisle,” says Marilyn Dolan, executive director of the Alliance for Food and Farming. “And, we are also hoping to halt the trend toward continuing decline in consumption of fruits and vegetables in America by reassuring consumers about the safety of both organic and conventionally grown fresh produce.” If consumers are still concerned, they can simply wash their produce before eating.

The benefits of nutritious foods like vegetables and fruits are so far reaching that excluding them from your diet can adversely affect your health. With new resources that aim to help consumers understand the facts about food safety, it’s easier than ever to ensure that the meals you serve your family are full of healthy, delicious ingredients.

## SENATOR continued from page 1

More than 16 million Americans have jobs because of agriculture, and America’s farmers keep growing more jobs. American agriculture exports reached record levels at nearly \$140 billion last year — it is the only area of the U.S. economy with a trade surplus, and it is continuing to grow as demand for American agriculture products is on the rise. Continued growth in the farm sector is critical to boosting the U.S. economy and creating jobs.

But farmers cannot continue investing in their operations or boost production when they’re surrounded by uncertainty. Passing a farm bill would provide the certainty that America’s farmers need to continue meeting the demands of a growing world. Failing to pass a bill would damage our farmers’ ability to compete globally and would undermine growth in the economy. Short-term extensions and piecemeal fixes threaten the health of a robust farm sector that’s critical to our economic recovery.

And failing to pass a farm bill before the current one expires would be a lost opportunity to reduce the federal deficit. Last year, when the Joint Committee on Deficit Reduction challenged each congressional committee to submit its plan for reducing the deficit in its area of jurisdiction, the Senate and House Agriculture committees stepped up and developed a detailed, bipartisan recommendation to streamline agriculture programs and cut \$23 billion in mandatory agriculture spending.

We proposed eliminating direct payment subsidies. We outlined ways to crack down on fraud and make programs more accountable. The plan consolidated programs, for example, reducing the number of conservation programs from 23 to 13. This was accomplished while still maintaining or even improving the tools currently available to accomplish critical conservation goals, in a

way that has earned the plan praise from a wide variety of conservation advocates.

We found real savings that allowed us to strengthen top priorities that help farmers plan for the future and create jobs, while still contributing our fair share to deficit reduction. Agriculture makes up about 2 percent of the federal budget, and \$23 billion in savings was just about 2 percent of the supercommittee’s deficit-reduction goal. Too often partisanship poisons the ability to compromise, but the Agriculture committees have risen above politics as usual. Our long-standing tradition of bipartisanship remains strong as we work across the aisle in both the Senate and the House to develop a farm bill that makes sense for our economy, showing that we can cut spending and strengthen critical priorities in a bipartisan, bicameral way.

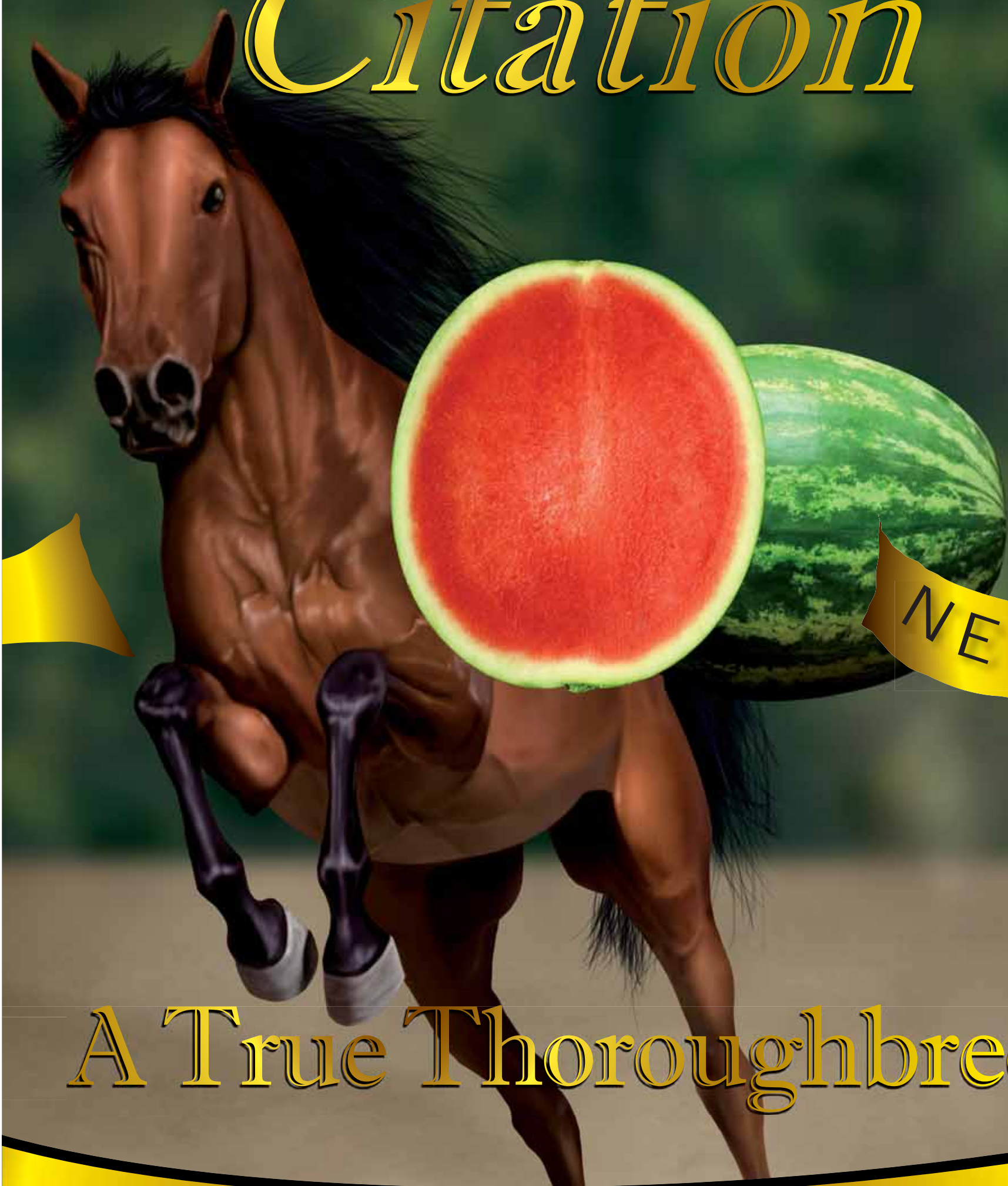
Agriculture is a bright spot in our economy, creating jobs and boosting entire communities. We have a responsibility to the American people to build on this momentum and provide the certainty that farmers need to continue producing a robust and safe food, feed, fuel and fiber supply.

The time to complete a farm bill is now. This Congress cannot afford to take another jobs bill down to the wire, throwing a key sector of our economy into uncertainty and disarray. The Senate Agriculture Committee will mark up a farm bill this spring. Having a bipartisan bill on the president’s desk by this fall would demonstrate the kind of leadership that the public should expect from its elected officials during these tough economic times.

*Stabenow is Chairwoman of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry.*



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# Alabama Report

Greetings from the Alabama Association!

The 32nd annual Alabama Watermelon Association Convention was held in February at the Beau Rivage Resort in Biloxi, Mississippi. The convention was full of fun, excitement, and even karaoke! This year was a great success and a special thank you to all the sponsors: Allen Lund Company, Billy Smith’s Watermelons, Inc., Clifton Seed Company, Genecco Produce, International Paper, LTF Greenhouses, McMelon, Inc, Morgan Wood Products, National Watermelon Association, National Watermelon Promotion Board, RockTenn, Sakata Seed, Sunny Fresh, Valdosta Plant Company, and Williams Manis Produce Marketing. Thank you all for making our convention not only possible, but a great success.

There are a few more people who received awards for their hard work, generosity, and support. Mr. Terry Jones, Southern Quality Shippers received the King Buyer Award and Mr. Rantz Smith, Smith Farms of Bell, Inc received the King Donor Award. Ray Gilliland of Ray Gilliland Melons received the Lifetime Achievement Award. Mrs. Corliss Smith of Billy Smith’s Watermelons received the Jan Ware Award. Mr. Jay Jones of Sakata Seed received the Outstanding Service Award. Thank you all for your dedication the association, it is greatly appreciated!

One last farewell to the 2011 Alabama Watermelon Queen, Miss Ann-Marie Urrutia. A special thank you for all your hard work and dedication, over the past year. You have represented the Alabama Association with great pride and elegance! Ann-Marie has been an outstanding representative for our association. In addition, thank you to all that helped make her year so special.

We had four outstanding young women competing for the 2012 Alabama Watermelon Queen position. Miss Meghan Patterson of Thorsby, sponsored by Sunny Fresh, Miss Leah Knight of Berry sponsored by McMelon, Miss Amber Nolin of Enterprise, sponsored by Billy Smith’s Watermelons, and Miss Jaime Minor of Muscle Shoals, sponsored by Gulf Seed. Congratulations to Miss Amber Nolin on your new role as the 2012 Alabama Watermelon Queen. Miss Amber is the 20 year old daughter of Greg and Renea Nolin. She lives in Enterprise and attends Enterprise Sate Community College.

Amber and I are both very excited to get this year started. We will be attending the Florida Watermelon Convention on March 23rd-25th in Tampa, FL. Following that Amber will attend the Queen Training hosted by the National Watermelon Promotion Board, visit elementary schools, attend watermelon festivals, and complete a farm tour. Amber is eager to start her year learning about and promoting watermelons.

Warmest Regards,  
Katie Eubanks  
Promotions Coordinator  
334-237-0600  
Katie.eubanks2@gmail.com



Visiting Queens, contestants, board members and special guest after the auction at the AWA convention.



Queen Ann-Marie receiving her beautiful watermelon jewelry from the AWA board.



Queen Ann-Marie and Queen Katelyn, Congratulations on Nationals Katelyn!



All the beautiful contestants ready for evening gown competition.



Contestants getting tips on the seed spit competition from Mr. Jeff Garrett.



Contestants ready for opening number.



An amazing group of "has beens!"



Newly crowned Queen Amber with her sponsor, Mr. Billy and Mrs. Corliss Smith.



2nd runner up, Leah Knight, Queen Amber, and 1st runner up Meghan Patterson



Queen Kimberly, Queen Whitney, Queen Amber, Queen Ann-Marie, and Queen Katelyn



Queen Amber with Mr. Kelley and Mrs. Jean Marinaro



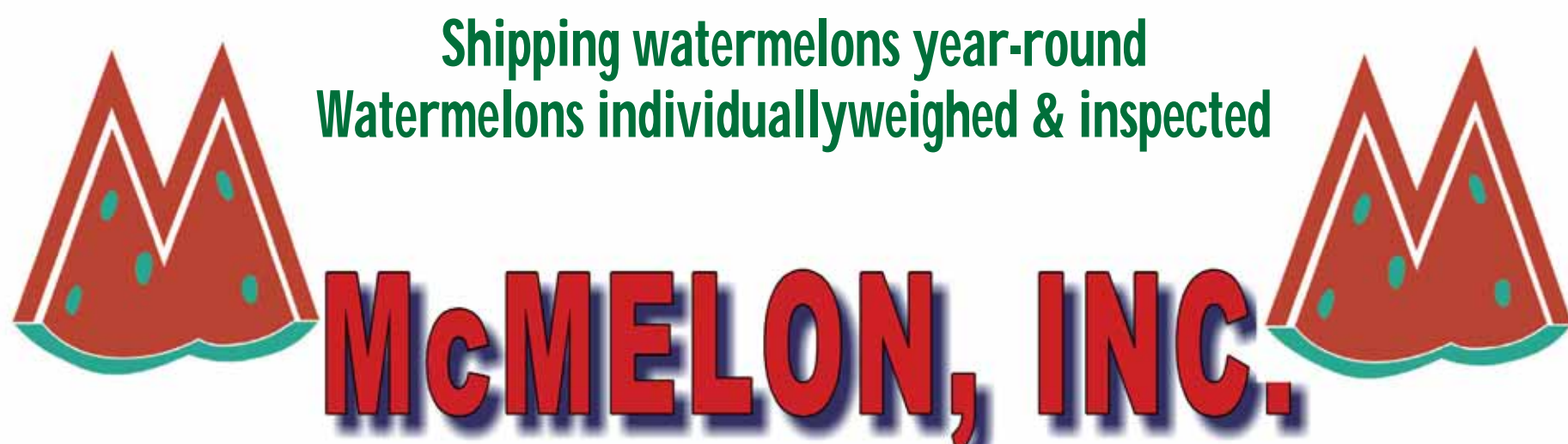
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# Florida Report

## Greetings from the Sunshine State of Florida

Our year started off right when we traveled to Columbia, South Carolina for the South Carolina Watermelon Convention held on Jan 13-14, 2012. Queen Katelyn was so excited to get to run into the University of Florida Basketball team and Coach Bill Donovan that weekend. A special thanks to our sponsors, Melon 1-John, Richie and Hami for making all of this possible. A big congratulation goes out to Katie Taylor.

On Jan 27-29, Katelyn and I traveled to the Georgia Watermelon Convention held in Cordele, Georgia sponsored by Melon 1 at the Lake Blackshear Resort. Thanks to the Georgia Watermelon Association for your hospitality and Jamey Adams and Julie Atkins for a wonderful convention. Congratulations to Laurel Higginbotham for being selected as their new 2012 Georgia Watermelon Queen.

February started off exciting when Katelyn and I traveled to the Mar-Del Watermelon Convention held in Cambridge, Maryland at the Hyatt Regency Chesapeake Bay Resort sponsored by Melon 1. Queen Katelyn and I didn't get to see snow this year but the weather was beautiful. Congratulations to Terra Tatman as the newly crowned queen.

Our next stop was my hometown, Biloxi, Mississippi for the Alabama Watermelon Convention, which was sponsored by Gulf Seed Company, McMelon, Clifton Seed Company, and International Paper. Thanks to the Alabama Watermelon Association for a wonderful convention. Congratulations to Miss Amber Nolin for being selected as their 2012 Alabama Watermelon Queen and good luck to Katie as you begin your new adventure as the Alabama Watermelon Promotions Coordinator.

As Katelyn neared the end of her reign she traveled to the Florida State Fair for the 34th Annual Florida Agricultural Hall of Fame Banquet with guest speaker Commissioner Adam Putnam on February 14th. The inductees were Gerald Mixon-Winter Haven, Robert Fuchs-Homestead, Laurence P. Cutts a third generation beekeeper of Chipley, Florida and Sidney Sumner-Bartow.

Then it was off to Amelia, Florida for the 98th Annual National Watermelon Convention. Congratulations to Queen Katelyn for bringing home the National Title. We are all very proud of you! National Queen Katelyn and I would like to thank everyone that came out and supported us. The Florida Watermelon Association is very proud of Katelyn for the job that she has done.

## CONGRATULATIONS KATELYN!

What an amazing year Queen Katelyn and I have had this year! We would like to thank all of our sponsors for making this a wonderful and memorable year. We would also like to thank Katelyn's family for sharing her with us this past year and providing lots of support!

When you are shopping at your local grocery store this summer season, pick up a couple of watermelons to take home with you. There are so many different ways you can eat it and the added health benefit is always a plus!

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

Debra Harrison  
Florida Watermelon Promotions Coordinator  
Email: [debrathreel@earthlink.net](mailto:debrathreel@earthlink.net)  
Home: (863) 494-1163  
\* Cellular: (863) 633-8306



A beautiful group of young ladies!



Congratulations Queen Katelyn from all your family and friends at FWA!



Queen Katelyn and the University of Florida Basketball Players, "Go Gators"!



Paul Sawyer - Seigers Seed, Queen Katelyn visiting with UF Coach Bill Donovan in South Carolina before his big game. Florida 79- South Carolina



Thanks Harry Vaughn and Paul Sawyer for the watermelon flashlight that Coach Donovan signed.



Enjoying the view at Lake Blackshear Resort with SC Queen Katie



It was good to visit Mike Browning with Browning & Sons in Cordele, Georgia.



A beautiful sunset with a bunch of "Handsomen Guys," Richie, Matthew and John.



"Congratulations Laurel Higginbotham"!



Thanks to Gordon Hunt with National Watermelon Promotion Board for all you do!



Thanks "Melon 1" for sponsoring us!



Congratulations to the 2012 Mar-Del Queen Terra Tatum!



Up early and flying back home from a wonderful weekend in Maryland.



Thanks Mary Jones for all the wonderful watermelon gifts at the Alabama Watermelon Auction.



Thank you so much for the beautiful watermelon necklace from Cheryl Hicks- President of AWA and the board members.



It's was good to see Mr. Kelly and Ms. Jean at the Alabama Watermelon Convention in Biloxi, Miss., we are glad that you are feeling better.



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TM



# Georgia Report

### Greetings from Georgia!

The Georgia Watermelon Association is proud of a successful Annual Convention held in Cordele, GA at The Lake Blackshear Golf and Resort. The Association held a Quail Hunt along with the annual Golf Tournament Friday. Friday evening we enjoyed the President's Reception in honor of our 2011 President Jamey and his wife Rachel Adams. The evening consisted of music, food and fellowship. The following day we held educational sessions, seed spit, lunch, live auction and banquet. The Georgia Watermelon Association is proud to present our 2012 Georgia Watermelon Queen Miss Laurel Higginbotham. Laurel is a student at ABAC in Tifton, GA. She is the 21 year old daughter of Ronald and Teressa Kimbrell. Laurel resides in Baxley, GA.

The success of our convention wouldn't have been possible without the help of our sponsors. We had eight fantastic contestants. Each contestant had a sponsor and our sponsors were: Albany Pallet exchange, Ricky and Charolette Jackson, C&L/Melon 1, James Adams King Farm, Leger & Son, McCranie Plantation, Darren and Tammy Deal and Craig Mathis/Syngenta Seed Co. Our first runner up is Miss Savannah Brown student at ABAC, sponsored by James Adams King Farm. Our second runner up is Miss Christina Noel Guzzardi student at Lanier Technical College, sponsored by Ricky and Charolette Jackson. Our Miss Jubilee winner was Miss Savannah Brown.

Our judges for our Queen competition were Mr. Gordon Hunt with the National Watermelon Promotion Board, Mr. Monty Sirmans, Former Georgia Watermelon Queen Ms. Jaye Frazier, Mrs. Ellen Eaton and Mrs. Pam Autry. The judges took their role very serious and we appreciate such a great job.

### Queen Sponsors:

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Seminis Seed  
Veazey Plant Co.  
Leger & Son

### Bronze Level

Helena Chemical Co.  
Miller Chemical  
Koppert Biological Systems  
RockTenn

Since being selected the 2012 Georgia Queen, Laurel has already hit the Georgia roads promoting watermelon! February 4-5, our former Queen Jenna Saxon filled in for Laurel at the Southeastern Produce Council held in Tampa, FL., sponsored by Leger and Son. Thank you Mr. Buddy and Greg for sponsoring our Queen to the show. March 13, Laurel along with Mr. Buddy Leger visited our Gov. Nathan Deal, where Laurel was presented her Proclamation. After the Georgia capitol visit, Laurel tended our exhibit booth at the Freight Depot for the 2012 Ag-Awareness Kick Off. We handed out watermelon Fire and Ice Salsa to over 400 4-H students. This annual event was a great success hosted by Gov. Deal and our Commissioner of Agriculture Gary Black. Laurel's next stop was on March 18th, The Cherry Blossom Parade in Macon, GA. Laurel represented the Georgia Watermelon Association along with several other commodity queens on the Georgia Commodity float. If you are interested in booking our Georgia Watermelon Queen, please call ahead of time and schedule a date for the 2012 Tour.

GWA would like to congratulate our 2011 GA Queen Miss Jenna Brooke Saxon. Jenna represented us like a pro at the National Convention held in Amelia Island, where she placed first runner up. We are so proud of you Jenna! We hope to see you all over the summer while we promote our Georgia watermelon!

Sincerely,  
Julie Akins, Promotion Coordinator • 770.842.3309 • akinsjulie1@windstream.net



2012 Georgia Contestants



Darren Deal and his contestant.



And...Queen Laurel's first seed spit of many more to come in her future.



Russ Beckham/Abbot & Cobb with 2012 Contestants.



Queen Laurel's first watermelon auction...she is a natural!



Cheryl Hicks/RockTenn with our queen contestants.



Miss Jubilee Winner- Savannah Brown.



Adult Seed Spit winner, Jim Mastropeiro.



GWA President Jamey Adams with Laurel and 2011 Georgia Queen Jenna.



Mr. Buddy and our Georgia contestants.



2012 Georgia Watermelon Queen, Laurel Higginbotham



First runner up Savannah Brown with Adams King.



Eight smart and qualified contestants.



Our GWA Family at the NWA Convention in Amelia Island



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Photos: National Watermelon Association Convention; Amelia Island, Florida.

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# Illiana Report

Spring has come early to Illiana! Hopefully this is a good sign for a fantastic Watermelon season

Sabra attended the South Carolina convention with Carrie Smith and they had a fantastic time. Thanks Carrie for standing in for me. From there it was off to the Georgia convention. Again we had an exceptional time and the weather couldn't have been nicer since we came home to snow.

A send off party was held for Sabra at Vincennes University where she got to show us her fabulous wardrobe and the IWA surprised her with a beautiful ring. Sabra's remark was that thank you didn't quite express her feelings as she was a little overcome. It will be a wonderful keepsake of a memorable year. The Knox County Chamber of Commerce Breakfast Bandwagon was hosted by IWA where Sabra presented her speech. They were happy to see their biggest attendance yet.

Sabra's final convention was the National Convention at the beautiful Amelia Island. She took first place in the shooting team of the women and had a wonderful time. Not only can she shoot she can spit, as she took first place in the Queens Seed spit contest. The NWA and Florida put on a fantastic convention! Congratulations to Katelyn Kelly the new National Watermelon Queen. I know she will do an excellent job. To the NWA, NWPB, and all of the associations who have sent their queens and coordinators to help with the national convention we want to say thank you.

A quick two weeks later we spent Thursday evening serving watermelon at the Knox County AgDay Celebration. From there a quick trip landed us at the Casino Aztar in Evansville Indiana for our annual convention. IWA was honored to host National Queen Katelyn and Miss Eleanor. After a very successful auction Sabra prepared to give her crown to a new queen. Her Queen Video Tour and speech made us realize just how wonderful she is, how well she has served Illiana, and how much she will be missed.. The 2012 Illiana Watermelon Queen is Sidney Vieck from Vincennes, Indiana. Sidney is the daughter of Lura Turner and Patrick Vieck. She attends South Knox High School and Vincennes University. She will attend the University of Southern Indiana next year and major in Political Science. Sidney receives a \$1500 scholarship from International Paper and Multicorr. She also receives a wardrobe allowance as well as paid promotions.

Claudia Padgett is the 1st runner-up and receives a \$500 scholarship from International Paper and Multicorr. She also won the Miss Jubilee , \$100 sponsored by Freyco Produce, and the seed spit contest.

2012 Illiana Watermelon Association Board of Directors:  
Chairman of the Board – Carrie Smith  
President- Brad Johnston  
1st Vice-President- Mike Horrall  
Promotions Coordinator- Francie Scott  
Secretary-Treasurer- Jill Frey

Thank you to everyone who supported the 2011 Illiana Watermelon Queen Tour and Queen Sabra. We truly appreciate it. We also want to thank everyone who attended the 2012 Illiana Watermelon Convention and contributed to its success. As the new Promotions Coordinator Sidney and I look forward to working with everyone this year. If you would like to book Sidney for a promotion or help sponsor an event, please contact me at the information below.

Thank You.  
Sincerely,  
Francie Scott  
Promotions Coordinator  
Illiana Watermelon Association  
1703 Porter Avenue  
Lawrenceville, IL 62439  
618-928-0848



All the pretty ladies at the Georgia Convention.



Chocolate – Sabra's favorite flavor



Sabra models for NWA with the help of Mike Horrall



Sweet Watermelon Aggressive Team GO GIRLS!



Thank you Double T



Fun at Amelia Island beach



Champion seed spitter shows form



Sabra Awaits Evening Gown Competition



ISN'T SHE LOVELY!




Sabra crowns Sidney Vieck 2012 IWA Queen



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## Fruit Logistica

NWPB Director of Marketing and Communications Gordon Hunt attended the Fruit Logistica Show in Berlin this February to begin negotiations on US watermelon introductions to the UK and other potential European markets. Fruit Logistica is the largest annual produce show in Europe, and is the place where buyers and sellers meet to introduce new products and set deals for the coming season. Every major importer, producer, wholesaler and retailer attends the show to either exhibit, walk the floor or hold private meetings. A tentative agreement was reached with a major melon import group to bring in US watermelon in conjunction with the NWPB and the North Carolina Department of Agriculture later this summer. A major retailer's participation will be confirmed in the spring months.

## Crisis Communications Training

The NWPB is proud to share that this year's crisis communications training session was doubled in attendance! This means that twice as many of our industry's faces are versed in telling the watermelon story, whether through a potential crisis or ahead of publicity and media inquiries. This year we were given an extra special training segment from Vanessa Gallo, focusing on body language and subtle communication cues. It is important that the watermelon industry is proactive, positive and consistent in our watermelon messages. Thank you to everyone who made it to the training. Keep those notes nearby and practice; interviewing and camera-time only gets easier the more comfortable you are with your watermelon story.



## Food Bloggers - Our Next Big Target



The first of many food blogger conferences this year, FoodBlogSouth in Birmingham, Alabama, was a great success for watermelon! With record attendance at the event, Watermelon.org featured recipes, carvings, unique uses, healthy living tips, the year-round availability message and more to an active live audience who reaches a huge online audience. The food bloggers in attendance here alone garner upwards of 25,000 subscribers, which translates in to moms, chefs, teachers, foodies and nutritionists who are hungry for fun recipes and who all love watermelon! Next up in the food blog conferences will be Eat Write Retreat in Washington, DC in May followed by the BlogHer Food in Seattle, WA.



## Annual Queen Training Expands Again!

The ever-evolving watermelon queen media training has expanded again to include not just communication and presentation how-tos, but will now have an entire day dedicated to the production aspect of watermelon. Syngenta is sponsoring the queens in Naples, Florida and will be conducting test field tours, greenhouse walk-throughs and classroom training on seedless and seeded watermelon breeding and production. The NWPB would like to thank Syngenta for the generosity and opportunity in offering the watermelon queens such a well-rounded weekend of training.

## Family Feature's "Fill Up Without Filling Out"

NWPB put together a column feature that discusses how to incorporate watermelon for cutting calories and pumping taste after indulging in the holidays. You may be seeing this in your local community papers, as that is the main focus of Family Features. To date, this feature has earned print circulation placement of over 1m and online placement audience of over 22m!

## NWPB Welcomes its New Board Members

NWPB Welcomes its New Board Members  
The NWPB would like to extend a big welcome to our newly appointed members that include producer Brenda Ann Baker-Mack of Lake Wales, Fla.; public member Richard De Los Santos of Austin, Texas; and importer members Raul Paez of Nogales, Ariz.;

## Southeast Produce Council's Southern Exposure

NWPB Retail Representative Katie Manetti was on hand at this year's Southern Exposure in Tampa, Florida where Watermelon.Org was an exhibitor. The show was a great experience with over 1,400 retailers, and growers, packers, and shippers. This is one of a number of regional tradeshow the NWPB plans to attend this year. They include the New England Produce Council, Midwest Produce Expo, and the New York Produce Show. These are important shows to attend as they continue to keep us relevant in the industry and continue the networking process.

## Another Successful Watermelon Convention Season

We really enjoyed attending all of the state and regional watermelon conventions this year. Congratulations to all of the new Watermelon Queens and the new National Queen, Katelyn Kelley. We look forward to working with you and your associations this year as we continue working together to promote watermelon every day!



Spring is here! Scan here for recipe and carving ideas!



Alex Lopez of Nogales, Ariz.; Gabriel Hinojosa of Mission, Texas; John C. Gee of Temecula, Calif.; and Brian Arrigo of Estero, Fla.

Thank you for serving as a board member and we look forward to another great year for watermelon!





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# Mar-Del Report

Our year started off with the Delaware Agriculture Dinner in Dover, De. Jordan helped with the registration table and greeted the attendees. Jordan was able to talk to many political figures including, Senator Tom Carper, Congressman John Carney and United States Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack. The following week we went to the Maryland Agriculture Dinner. There Jordan served appetizers and mingled with guests. She was able to mingle with Maryland Governor Martin O’Malley and Maryland Secretary of Agriculture Buddy Hance.

The next day was the start of our convention. With Seminars on Friday afternoon and a Watermelon Luau in the evening we had lots of fun. Competition was on at the seed spit and the winners were Youth – Evan Hunt, Male – Jason Tennefoss, Female – Cherie Vincent and Queen – Terra Tatman. After a wonderful lunch we had an afternoon of auction items and loads. We had one of the best auctions ever and we appreciate everyone who purchased items or loads to help us be successful. At our banquet in the evening we handed out scholarship money to 2 deserving young people, Delaware Scholarship winner Miss Megan James and Maryland Scholarship winner Matthew Bellistri. Also recognized at our banquet were the Lifetime Achievement Winner and this year’s very deserving recipients were Tom and Carole Vincent of Vincent Farms. Congratulations to all we appreciate your commitment to agriculture. Also, at our convention we inducted our new president, Jay Rider and Vice President Will Hales. Thank you to Outgoing President, Mark Collins for your 2 years of service. We had 4 contestants for the 2012 Queen title but in the end we could only have one winner. The 2012 Mar-Del Watermelon Queen is Miss Terra Tatman. Terra is the 20 year old daughter of Ron and Jill Tatman from Milford, Delaware. She is currently a sophomore at the University of Kentucky studying Agriculture Economics. We welcome Terra into our watermelon family and look forward to working with her this year.

Then we were off to Nationals. Jordan represented the Mar-Del Assoc. wonderfully. Jordan was part of the female S.W.A.T. (Sweet Watermelon Aggression Team) Team during the skeet shooting competition. She thoroughly enjoyed her female competitors and the different style of skeet shooting. We had 33 Mar-Del Supporters attending this year’s National convention and to be Jordan’s cheerleaders for the weekend. We thank you for supporting Jordan and our association. We were thrilled that Jordan’s peers realized how special she is by voting her Miss Jubilee. Jordan Calloway will always be Mar-Del’s Jubilee – she is one special young lady that gave Mar-Del 110% of herself. Thank you Jordan for all your hard work and love for our association and the industry.

We have a busy spring ahead so don’t forget to visit us at Mar-Del Watermelon Association on Facebook or at [www.mardelwatermelon.org](http://www.mardelwatermelon.org) for more pictures of our promotions. Good luck to all in your planting season – until next time.

Watermelon Wishes,  
Dawn Collins Mar-Del Watermelon  
Association Promotions Coordinator



At the Delaware Agriculture Dinner Jordan spoke with Delaware Senator Tom Carper



Also in attendance at the Delaware Agriculture Dinner was Congressman John Carney.



Outgoing President, Mark Collins and myself posing with our adopted daughter at the Delaware Agriculture Dinner.



Mar-Del Board Member Kevin Evans posing with Jordan at the Delaware Agriculture Dinner.



Jordan always loves conversation and laughs with Maryland Secretary of Agriculture Buddy Hance.



Mar-Del Board Member Charles Wright posing with Jordan. Charles and wife Michelle are always there supporting our Association and Jordan.



Fun was had by all who attended the Watermelon Luau at the Convention. Pictured here are former Mar-Del President, George Collins and wife and former Queen Coordinator Marlene Collins dressed for the evening festivities.



Mar-Del Scholarship winners were – Delaware Scholarship winner Miss Megan James and Maryland Scholarship winner Matthew Bellistri.



Lifetime achievement winners Tom and Carole Vincent from Vincent Farms. Pictured here with their sons Raymond and Clay Vincent.



And the winner is..... Miss Terra Tatman !!!!



2011 Queen Jordan congratulating her new watermelon sister 2012 Queen Terra Tatman



The Magee and Collins Families at the National Convention ready to support our Queen, Jordan Calloway.



The S. W. A. T. (Sweet Watermelon Aggression Team) getting ready to shoot at the Skeet Tournament.



Mar-Del President Jay Rider with Jordan at Nationals. Thank you Jay for all your support.



Doesn't get much prettier than this !!! Jordan before Evening gown competition.



Jordan Calloway – Miss Jubilee!!!!



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# North Carolina Report

Greetings from the “Old North State” where watermelons grow wonderfully sweet!!! It hardly seems possible that I have now completed one year as the NCWA Promotions Coordinator!!! This has been an exciting year, and I am looking forward to the next year already.

Queen Alycia and I were blessed to be able to travel to Columbia, SC for the SCWA convention in February. We were joined by NWA Queen Whitney Conner and Coordinator Eleanor Bullock, FWA Queen Katelyn Kelly and coordinator Debra Harrison, and Illiana Queen Sabre Boyd and Ms. Carrie Smith. Fun and fellowship was had by all. We were able to celebrate with Queen Holly, and meet the new SC Queen, Katie Taylor. Queen Katie and Coordinator Ann Bryant have already been very busy.

February 22- 26 found Queen Alycia and me at the 98th Annual NWA Convention in beautiful Amelia Island, Florida. We joined all the other state queens in the bittersweet process of choosing a new national queen. From this exceptionally gifted group the 2011 FWA Queen, Katelyn Kelly, became the 2012 NWA Queen. The judges had a very difficult job indeed. Queen Alycia made NC so proud!!! She did a fantastic job in every category, and looked beautiful!!! She will be missed and always remembered, especially by Ms. Sue!!

Then it was time for our own 31st NCWA Convention!!! This year we enjoyed Wrightsville Beach at the Holiday Inn SunSpree Resort. We had a great time with the Craig Woolard Band on Friday night. Queen Alycia and I were so pleased that SC Coordinator Ann Bryant and Queen Katie could be with us, as well as Bob and Betsy Morrissey from NWA, and Gordon Hunt from the NWPB. Senator David Rouzer, who serves district 12, was our speaker for the banquet on Saturday night. He was so informative as to what our growers need to be aware of coming up in the legislature. We are so thankful to all who played a part in making our auction and convention the success it was. On Saturday night our new NCWA Queen Rachel Chavez was crowned! Rachel is the 20 year old daughter of Maria Faulkner of Clinton, NC. She is currently a student at East Carolina University seeking a degree in Political Science, with additional course work in religious studies. She is also passionate about the arts, and is a member of the East Carolina Magnolia Belles, which is an a cappella group that performs at various events on campus. I am looking forward to working with Rachel this year, and feel she will do a great job for our association. We are both looking forward to meeting the new state queen team at training in May. We want to do an outstanding job of promoting for our growers and buyers!!! We are already looking at a busy calendar for this year, and hope it only gets busier!! Let Watermelon Season begin!!



2012 Queen Contestants before the judges social



Queen Alycia and SC Queen Holly



Mrs. Melinda Page and Queen Alycia



Queen Alycia at the NWA Competition



NCWA Board of Directors



Queen Alycia at the NWA Social



NCWA President Joe Jones with Queen Alycia



Queen Alycia with 2012 SC Queen Katie



Queen Alycia and former NC Queen Stephanie M. Williams



Queen Alycia with Mr. Gordon Etheridge



Queen Alycia and her parents



Queen Alycia with NC 1st Runner Up, Sydney Edwards



Queen Alycia and her parents



Queen Alycia with NC Sargent at Arms, Zach Mussler



Queen Alycia and Queen Coordinator Sue Jenkins



Queen Alycia with the Watermelon NASCAR race truck



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# South Carolina Report

On January 13-15, 2012, the South Carolina Watermelon Association celebrated their 40th anniversary at the annual convention in Columbia, South Carolina. This year the convention was moved to the Hyatt Regency in downtown Columbia. All of those in attendance were able to enjoy the delicious food catered by Ruth Chris and also the many shops and restaurants of the downtown area. Our President, Hami Dicks, and Vice President, Angela Chappell, did a wonderful job planning and organizing this event. We were fortunate enough to have Eleanor Bullock and Whitney Conner from Nationals, Debra Harrison and Katelyn Kelly from Florida, Carrie Smith and Sabra Boyd from Illiana, and Sue Jenkins and Alycia McLamb from North Carolina at our convention this year. Many thanks also go to Melon 1, John and Alisa Lapide, and Rich Chastain for attending this year and helping to make our convention the huge success that it was. We sincerely appreciate all of your generosity to our queens and the queen program.

Welcome to Katie Taylor our new 2012 South Carolina Watermelon Queen. Katie is the 21 year old daughter of Glenn and Debbie Taylor of Anderson, South Carolina. Katie is currently a sophomore at The University of South Carolina in Columbia and is majoring in Hospitality Management. After being crowned, Katie put on her traveling shoes and has attended the Georgia Convention in Cordele, Georgia, the MarDel Convention in Cambridge, Maryland, the Alabama Convention in Biloxi, Mississippi, and is currently looking forward to attending the North Carolina Convention in Wrightsville Beach, North Carolina, and the Florida Convention in Tampa, Florida.

Holly Whatley, our 2011 S.C. Watermelon Queen, has just returned from Amelia Island, Florida and the National Convention. Holly made her South Carolina family very proud by bringing home 2nd runner-up at the convention. Amelia Island was spectacular and all of the queens did a fantastic job of representing their respective states. Congratulations to Katelyn Kelly, the 2011 Florida Queen and our new 2012 National Queen and also to Jenna Stafford, the 2011 Georgia Queen who took home 1st runner-up.

Holly has done a wonderful job for S.C. over the past year and we would like to wish her well in all of her future endeavors. We will miss her, but we know that she will always remain a part of our watermelon family.

Katie and I have a very busy year lining up with many promotions throughout the summer. We are looking forward to visiting with our watermelon family in the near future and ask that you contact us with any promotional requests that you may have. Katie is looking forward to seeing each and every one of you as we make our journey across the state of South Carolina promoting those sweet and juicy watermelons.

Good luck to everyone with the upcoming watermelon season and let's get out there and sell some melons!!

Sincerely,  
Ann Bryant  
S.C. Watermelon Promotions Coordinator  
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864-303-3995



S.C. Convention with contestants and visiting queens.



Katie thanks Melon 1 for the beautiful necklace.



2012 Contestants preparing for evening gown competition.



Congratulating new 2012 Mar-Del Queen, Terra Ann Tatman.



New 2012 SC Watermelon Queen, Katie Taylor, and her court.



Visiting with Jean and Kelly Marinaro in Biloxi, Mississippi.



South Carolina "Has Beens" passing the crown.



Congratulations to new 2012 Alabama Queen, Amber Nolin.



Katie with the South Carolina Watermelon Board.



Amelia Island and the 2012 National Queen Contestants.



Enjoying beautiful Lake Black Shear at the Georgia Convention.



Holly thanks the South Carolina Association for her auction gift.



Visiting Queens with new 2012 Georgia Queen, Laurel Higginbotham.





Contestants getting ready for interview.



Getting ready for the seed spit at the Mar-Del Convention.




New 2012 National Queen, Katelyn Kelly, 1st-runner-up, Jenna Saxon, and 2nd runner-up, Holly Whatley.



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# Texas Report

Greetings from Texas! We had a busy, yet fun time this January. The Texas Watermelon Association had its 46th annual convention in Austin, Texas at the Omni Downtown. Our chairman, Brandon Henderson, along with brother and TWA President, Jimmy Henderson, did an amazing job. The golf tournament was at the Grey Rock Country Club, then there was the President's reception at Maggie Mae's on 6th Street. The auction was held on Friday night with an excellent turn out and an almost record breaking night. Those who donated auction items and the buyers who purchased them were once again very generous. Thank you so much to all those who helped make the convention go so smoothly, and thank you again to all our wonderful sponsors. We also had help from some terrific volunteers like Ranell Borders, Teretha Jones, Jane Jennings, and Lacy Jones. We also had a surprise visit from Wanda Letson. It was wonderful to see her and visit with her and one of her grandsons. Saturday evening was the banquet where Veronica Kraemer, the 2011 Texas Queen, was honored for her busy year of hard work and it was when she crowned the new Texas Watermelon Queen, Kimberly Duda. Kimberly is a junior at Texas A&M University and is majoring in Psychology. She wants to become a child life specialist when she finishes school. She is extremely excited to be given the opportunity to represent Texas as the 2012 Queen and will give the association her best as she works to promote the watermelon industry. And yes, she is making mama and daddy proud.

The first event Kimberly attended as the Texas Queen was the Alabama Watermelon Association's convention at the spectacular Beau Rivage Hotel and Casino in Biloxi, Mississippi. We had a great time and learned a lot about putting on a fun convention. Cheryl Hicks, Marti Smith, Brenda Baker Mack and many others did a great job. We look forward to coming again in the future. In February Veronica and I attended the National Watermelon Association Convention in beautiful Amelia Island, Florida where Veronica competed against the other lovely and capable young ladies for the national crown. Congratulations to Katelyn Kelley for the honor of being chosen as the National Queen. May your year ahead be blessed. We know you will do a great job.

Finally, our most recent stop brought Kimberly and I to a promotion for an HEB store in San Antonio where Kimberly had her first experience promoting watermelon as she handed out watermelon salsa. We had a great time and we look forward to the months ahead and our time of travel and meeting all the wonderful people associated with this awesome agricultural marvel- the watermelon!

God bless you all.  
With fond regards,  
Barbara Duda  
TWA Coordinator/Secretary  
bcduda62@yahoo.com



Whitney and Veronica visiting at the President's Reception.



Queen Veronica and the contestants: Erin Butler, Laura Bennett, Kimberly Duda, and Karla Monje.



Veronica and I at the "Keep Austin Weird" themed auction.



Ranell Borders, 2004 Texas Queen Stephanie Duda Reissner, and 2011 National Queen Whitney Conner were having fun with Miss Wanda.



Kelton Borders surrounded by some pretty girls. No wonder he's smiling!



Queen Veronica and her proud parents, Patrick and Victoria Kraemer.



Our judges, Lacy Jones, Myron Harrison, Sarah Williams Daly, and Kristen Goeke. Thank you all!



Queen Veronica and some adorable future Texas Queens.



Miss Wanda, surrounded by some of her past Texas Queens and lots of love.



The new 2012 Texas Watermelon Queen, Kimberly Duda, with Queen Whitney and Queen Veronica.



Queen Kimberly with TWA President Jimmy Henderson and his children, Colton, Macy, Hailey, and Lori.



"The Bad Box Boys" Varney Prejean, Myron Harrison, and Mark Arney singing karaoke with Kimberly and an AWA contestant.



Miss Eleanor -who looks fantastic- with Queen Kimberly and NWA Queen Whitney.



The National Watermelon Association Queen contestants looking their best in their beautiful gowns.



Veronica congratulates the new NWA Queen Katelyn.



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## Western Report



Spring has officially sprung out here in the West and watermelons are in full demand! Due to an abnormal winter, shippers down in the Nogales area are having a hard time coming up with supply. The market is strong right now and product is somewhat scarce. Things are hoping to turn around in the next few weeks as we are shifting growing regions down in Mexico.

The outlook for the 2012 season is shaping up to be a positive one. We have been experiencing higher temperatures than normal for this time of year, and we are hoping the trend continues into the summer months. Domestic as well as export sales are projected to increase this year from last year. With consumers becoming more and more health conscious these days, retailers have been promoting watermelons more than ever, helping to drive sales both domestically and internationally.

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

For more information on the Western Watermelon Association, please visit our website at [www.westernwatermelon.org](http://www.westernwatermelon.org).



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## Development and evaluation of quantitative early monitoring techniques for Squash vein yellowing virus, the cause of watermelon vine decline

Scott Adkins<sup>1</sup>, Craig G. Webster<sup>1</sup> and C.S. (Shaker) Kousik<sup>2</sup>

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Watermelon vine decline caused by whitefly-transmitted Squash vein yellowing virus (SqVYV) is an emerging disease that has caused severe losses to Florida watermelon growers in recent years. Although the late stage symptoms of watermelon vine decline are basically diagnostic for the presence of SqVYV, early symptoms are not as obvious and may be confused with other causes including the recently introduced whitefly-transmitted Cucurbit yellow stunting disorder virus (CYSDV) and Cucurbit leaf crumple virus (CuLCrV). During the two most recent NWA funding cycles, we have developed a simple and reliable ELISA (enzyme linked immunosorbent assay) diagnostic test for early monitoring of SqVYV, and a quantitative early monitoring real-time PCR (polymerase chain reaction) test for SqVYV that is able to detect the virus up to eight days before the earliest symptoms of vine decline appear.

Accurate identification is the first step in management of any pathogen including SqVYV. Multiple, independent detection methods are normally required to identify a given virus with certainty. On the other hand, a rapid, reliable yet simple virus detection method is required to routinely analyze sufficient numbers of plant samples from commercial farms with certainty. ELISA diagnostic tests are routinely used for this purpose with other viruses due to their specificity and simplicity. With partial funding from NWA, a rapid and reliable ELISA test for SqVYV was developed. This test complements the two previously developed complex diagnostic assays (tissue blots and conventional PCR) that have significant drawbacks limiting widespread implementation. Development of an easily visible yellow color in the newly developed ELISA test indicates the presence of the virus in the plant sample (Figure 1).

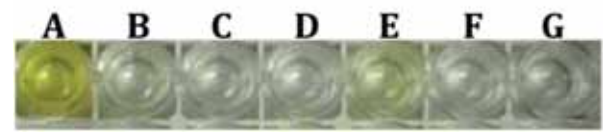


Figure 1. ELISA diagnostic test for SqVYV. The yellow color visible in samples A and E indicates the presence of SqVYV, the virus that causes watermelon vine decline.

The SqVYV ELISA diagnostic test has been demonstrated for growers, and transferred to scientists at University of Florida and Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services for use in their diagnostic programs. This ELISA diagnostic test is expected to detect the virus if it is present in sufficient concentration in the sample. However, a more sensitive (able to detect smaller amounts of SqVYV) and quantitative nucleic acid-based diagnostic test for SqVYV would be useful as a second, independent means of early monitoring. During the current funding cycle, we developed and optimized a robust real-time PCR diagnostic test for SqVYV to address this need. A region of the SqVYV genome that was unique among cucurbit viruses was specifically targeted for this test.

Validation of the ELISA and real-time PCR diagnostic tests with greenhouse and field samples demonstrated that both tests were capable of sensitively detecting SqVYV in watermelons and several related cucurbits, while showing no significant reaction with healthy (non-infected) watermelon and squash plants. A selection of additional viruses commonly infecting watermelons and other cucurbits in Florida, including recently introduced whitefly-transmitted CYSDV and CuLCrV, and long-

present aphid-transmitted Papaya ringspot virus type W (PRSV-W), Watermelon mosaic virus, Zucchini yellow mosaic virus and Watermelon leaf mottle virus, did not react in the SqVYV ELISA or real-time PCR diagnostic tests. In contrast, a variety of SqVYV isolates collected from watermelons and cucurbit weeds were detected by both tests highlighting their ability to detect multiple isolates of the virus. Both of these diagnostic tests are expected to detect all SqVYV isolates currently known given the similarity of SqVYV isolates collected across Florida during the past six years.

The sensitivity of the newly developed real-time PCR diagnostic test was compared with our previously developed SqVYV ELISA and conventional PCR diagnostic tests. Although all three techniques correctly detected SqVYV in most samples, the real-time PCR diagnostic test always detected SqVYV in additional samples demonstrating the increased sensitivity of this method. In addition, watermelon and squash plants inoculated with SqVYV in the greenhouse were monitored daily for symptoms of infection. Samples were collected daily for testing by the newly developed real-time PCR and previously developed conventional PCR and ELISA diagnostic tests. The real-time PCR diagnostic test detected SqVYV eight days before symptoms appeared in watermelon highlighting the promise of its use for early monitoring because the virus was detected one day earlier than by conventional PCR and two days earlier than by ELISA. In contrast, all three diagnostic tests detected SqVYV one day before symptoms appeared in squash.

Towards the goal of detecting two viruses with a single test, we also developed and optimized a robust real-time PCR diagnostic test for CYSDV. SqVYV, CuLCrV and PRSV did not react in the CYSDV real-time PCR diagnostic test. In contrast, CYSDV was detected by the real-time PCR diagnostic test in a selection of field samples previously determined to be infected with CYSDV by conventional PCR.

The ELISA and real-time PCR diagnostic tests we developed are able to accurately detect SqVYV in infected watermelon plants, even if they are also infected with closely related viruses. The sensitivity of the SqVYV real-time PCR diagnostic test allows it to reliably detect even small amounts of virus, making it possible to detect SqVYV in watermelon plants eight days before the earliest symptoms of vine decline appear. We will continue to improve the SqVYV and CYSDV real-time diagnostic tests. We are currently working to combine them into a single test capable of detecting both viruses, and to optimize them for virus detection in whiteflies. In the future, we would like to develop a single test for SqVYV, CYSDV, CuLCrV and PRSV-W so that these four watermelon viruses can all be detected at once.

## Who’s Afraid of a Guest-Worker Program?

These days there is little appetite in Congress or on the campaign trail for addressing illegal immigration in ways other than calling for more enforcement. But a new national poll suggests that the public may be open to a different approach.

With unemployment currently above 8% and millions of Americans out of work, a guest-worker program for immigrants might seem like a hard sell. Yet when voters were asked about a guest-worker program for agriculture, 70% of respondents expressed support, and 64% said that they would be more likely to vote for a candidate who backed it. It should be noted that support is strong among Republicans (74%) and Tea Party supporters (71%).

The results also reveal that despite a high level of economic anxiety, and restrictionist lawmakers at the federal and state level, voters aren’t interested in scapegoating the foreign born. Fewer voters believe that immigrant farm workers are a cause of unemployment at all.

The electorate seems to appreciate that foreign nationals fill niches in the workforce that help grow the U.S. economy -- and that giving these economic migrants more legal ways to enter the country means that fewer will come illegally.

*DOUBLE continued from page 15*

else we had growing on the farm at that time. We have no authority to act upon any legislation, but it gave us an opportunity to educate our fellow members on what we really needed to get passed. In our first year we gathered over 50 members, with an average attendance of 40. I am extremely proud of this because this was in part why I ran and got elected; I truly believe that it was to educate our NCGA members on the importance of AG.



**NWA: If one of your sons ever decided to run for office in the years to come, what advice would you give to him? To anyone in the association?**

SEN: Always be honest in all of your dealings, and be yourself. But, be prepared that you will not get rich being a NCGA member, and you will certainly need other income to survive. We make \$13,900.00 per year with a \$5,000.00 expense account and a \$104.00 per diem when we are in session only. The in-session and committee meetings in Raleigh have been the easy part for me. Trying to attend everything that you humanly can in the district has been the challenge, and this is expected without compensation, as it should be. My advice is ..... if you are not willing to serve for just the pleasure of helping folks, then seek another venue. We are considered and paid as part-time legislators that really work full time. Due to all the corruption in the past, our new ethics laws went from one extreme to another in NC. From what I have been told in the past everything was okay, but now we can’t even take a piece of chewing gum from a lobbyist or a lobbyist employer. It is typical government, going from one extreme to the other.

Senator, congratulations to you and your family, and thank you for your service to the farming members of North Carolina, and to the education of Agriculture to your fellow members. God Bless!

*CONVENTION continued from page 7*

a small voice when we’re alone,” Mr. Stenzel said. “We have to make sure our entire supply chain is involved in this, they need to understand that they can also talk to their congressmen. This is a political battle, let’s be frank, it’s very polarized and very angry and we won’t win it just by ourselves. I’ve never seen Washington more polarized and I don’t expect to see a lot done before the election. People are in their own camps with their intransigent positions; it’s a battle for the heart and soul of America right now.” “We have to reach out and educate the rest of the 99 percent, and I’m not talking about an ‘Occupy’ movement,” Mr. Griffin concluded. “The American consumer has no idea where their food comes from or what it takes every day to grow it or move it across the United States.”

Conventioneers got a break from the political frenzy when Mr. Morrissey introduced NASCAR driver Ross Chastain and invited attendees outside to view a racing truck sponsored by the NWA and the NWPB.

If the curiosity level of non-convention guests at the Ritz wasn’t raised by now, it must have been piqued by the presence of the race truck -- painted to look like “it’s hauling watermelons at 190 miles per hour,” Bob Morrissey observed -- parked outside the conference room Saturday. Just hours before, Ross Chastain (the driver) had represented the watermelon industry in a NASCAR truck series race at Daytona International Speedway. The truck on the lawn still bore the battle scars of that tilt. When Mr. Chastain hit the ignition switch, the truck rumbled to life, sounding more like a jet than a pickup, loud enough to draw onlookers from inside their rooms onto their balconies.

Following an afternoon seminar on public relations crisis management by renowned expert Carmine Gallo, the convention wrapped up with its annual awards banquet later that evening.

Reigning Florida Watermelon Queen Katelyn Kelley was named the 2012 National Watermelon Queen and will represent the industry around the world as an ambassador for the next 12 months.



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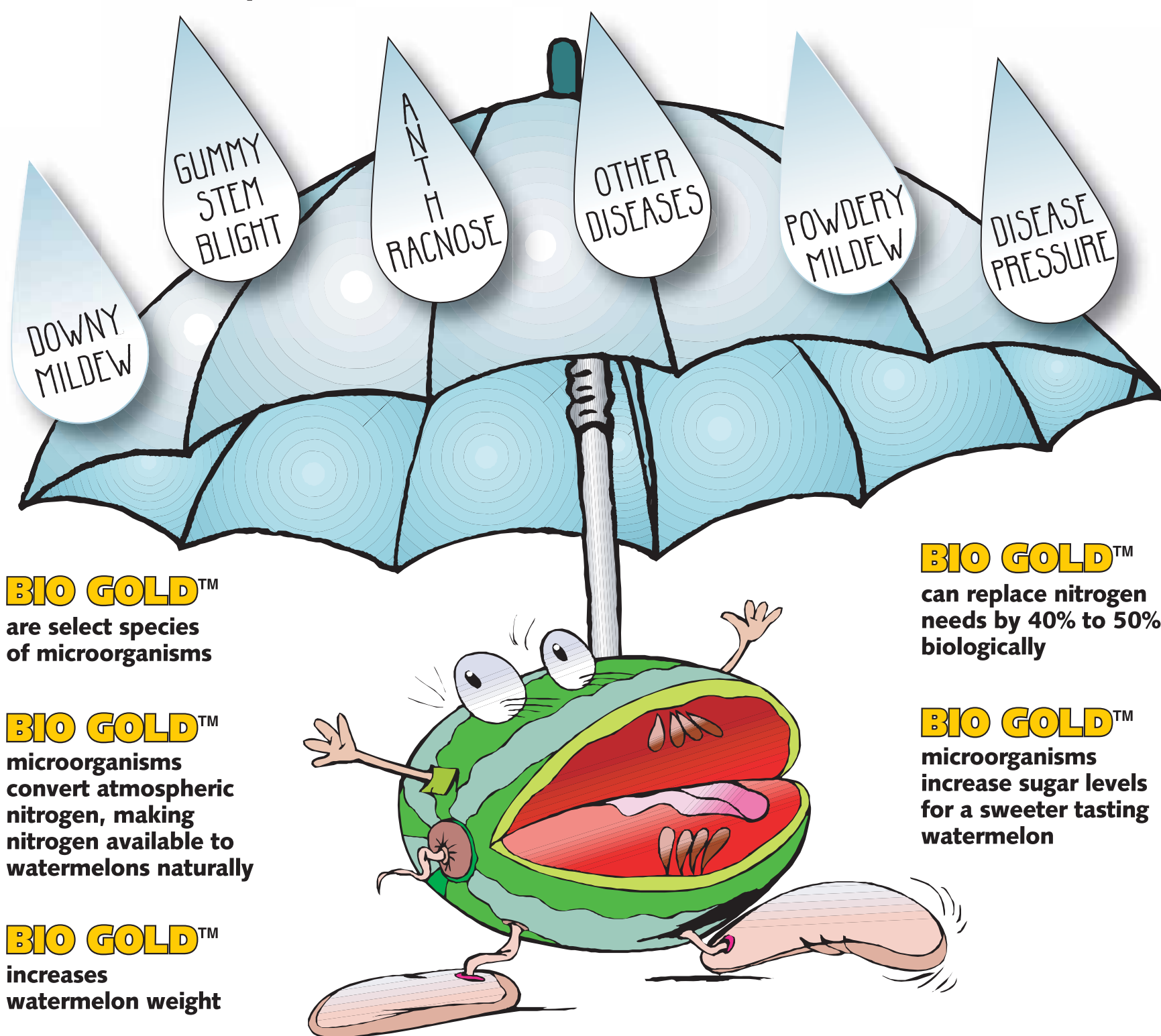


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