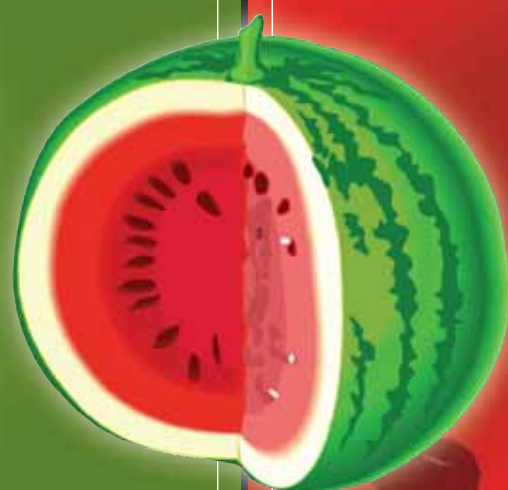


the vine line

Winter 2010

Official Newsletter of the NATIONAL WATERMELON ASSOCIATION



Creating Drought Resistant Crops



Van Andel Institute®

Van Andel Research Institute (VARI) researchers have determined precisely how the plant hormone abscisic acid (ABA) works at the molecular level to help plants respond to environmental stresses such as drought and cold. Their findings, published in the journal *Nature*, could help engineer crops that thrive in harsh environments around the world and combat global food shortages. The findings could also have implications for stress disorders in humans.

VARI scientists have determined the structure of the receptors that plants use to sense ABA, a hormone that keeps seeds dormant and keeps buds from sprouting until the climate is right. Locating these receptors and understanding how they work is a key finding -- one that has eluded researchers for nearly a half-century. This discovery is crucial to understanding how plants respond when they are under stress from extreme temperatures or lack of water.

"The plant community has been waiting for this discovery for many years," said VARI research scientist Karsten Melcher, Ph.D., one of the lead authors of the study. "It could have major effects on nutrition and crop yields, especially as fresh water sources become scarcer."

Melcher works in the VARI Laboratory of Structural Biology led by distinguished scientific investigator H. Eric Xu, Ph.D. The lab began studying abscisic acid signaling in March this year because a proposed ABA receptor was reported to be a member of G-protein coupled receptors, a group of proteins that the lab studies. More than 50% of all drugs on the market target these proteins, but it has been extremely difficult to determine their atomic structure.

Xu's laboratory uses a technique known as X-ray crystallography to determine exactly how and why the drug compounds work in molecular detail, which can then help drug developers engineer more potent drugs that have fewer unwanted side effects.

Although it later resulted that the abscisic acid receptors were found to be members of another protein family, Xu's lab continued their studies on the newly identified ABA receptors. Their findings could help to develop crops that grow in drought, cold, salt water environments, and other harsh conditions, perhaps aiding in stemming or reversing food shortages around the world. Additionally, proteins central to ABA sensing are related to human proteins involved in cellular stress responses and may have implications for stress disorders in humans.

Feds launch massive investigation into employer records



The Department of Homeland Security launched a new campaign to compel employers to use the E-Verify on-line system by issuing notices of intent to audit records to 1,000 employers across the country.

The announcement came at a Nov. 19 symposium in Washington, D.C. The symposium was hosted by two DHS agencies, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Citizenship & Immigration Services.

"It appears some of the firms receiving the notices of intent are agricultural employers," said Frank Gasperini, executive vice president of the Washington-based National Council of Agricultural Employers.

The audits focus on businesses under investigation relating to I-9 forms, required documents verifying the eligibility of new workers, or because they are connected to public safety and national security, according to an ICE news release. The names and locations of the businesses were not released.

The agency also used the symposium to announce a new "I E-Verify" campaign, which highlights employers' commitment to working with DHS to maintain a legal workforce and to reduce the use of fraudulent identity documents, the release said.

"This action emphasizes the importance of careful and accurate completion and proper retention of I-9 documentation, including proper training and self audit procedures for every employer," Gasperini said.

In 2009, 142 firms received notices of intent, compared with 32 in all of 2008. The year's fines could total nearly \$16 million.

The 1,000 notices of intent mark the second major audit effort since the new Administration took office. In July, 654 businesses were issued notices. Sixty-one of those businesses were issued notices of intent to fine. Those fines could total more than \$2.3 million.

"It is clear the emphasis continues to be on enforcement at the employer level, that I-9 compliance is critical, and that there is a major effort under way to push all employers into the E-Verify program," Gasperini said.

USDA Specialty Crop Block Grants



The Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP) was authorized in 2004. The Act authorized the Department of Agriculture (USDA) to provide grants to states to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops.

In 2008, the Act was amended which established the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program -- Farm Bill (SCBGP-FB). The agency, commission, or department responsible for agriculture within the 50 States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands are eligible to apply for grant funds directly to the USDA.

GRANTS continued on page 15

USDA STUDY FINDS 54.9 MILLION ACRES OF U.S. FARMLAND NOW IRRIGATED



Figures Show 5 Percent Increase Since 2003

USDA's 2008 Farm and Ranch Irrigation Survey has found that farmers and ranchers are now irrigating 54.9 million acres farmland across the United States, an increase of nearly 5 percent since 2003. U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) collected the data for the Irrigation Survey earlier this year.

ACRES continued on page 15



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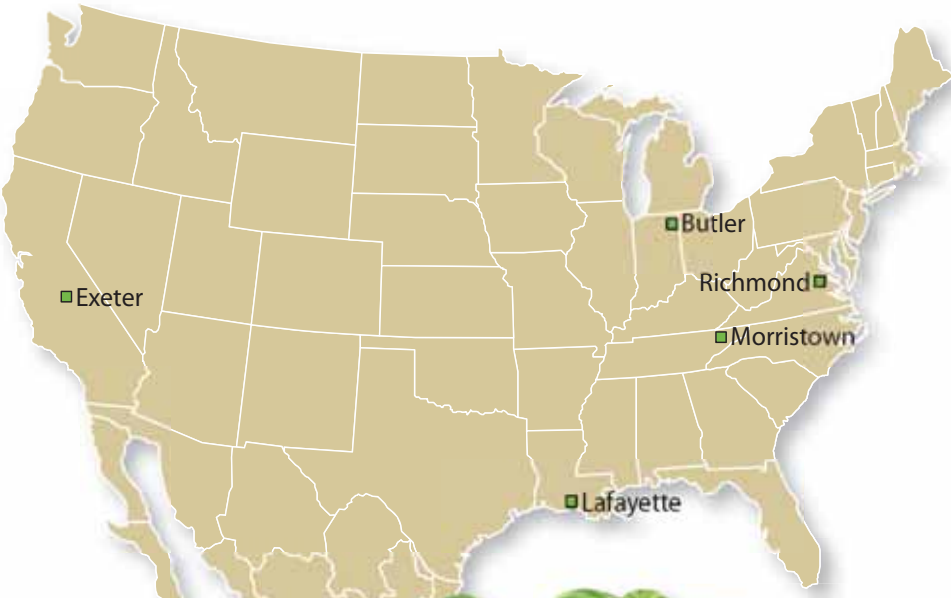
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The Year Ahead...



Over the past 5 years, this association that we represent has seen tremendous change. Our industry has experienced a significant increase in the varieties of watermelon (i.e. yellow meat, personal size and fresh cut), record imports during the winter months, and exports to foreign countries in Central America, Europe and Japan. Similarly, your association has grown into a trade association serving near 1,000 member companies in 3 countries throughout the Western hemisphere.

The past 5 years haven't always been easy for either NWA, or the members that we represent. This past year especially required courage. I'm sure we won't soon forget the economic down-turn that continued to affect all of us over the past 18 months. We tightened our belts, watched expenses, maximized efficiencies and focused our efforts where they would have the most impact. And we sought the comfort of our watermelon family when we came together at the National Convention in Charleston with another year of record setting for the organization. And as is the case when we visit with friends and family, we left rejuvenated with renewed energy, while also beginning to see new hope in the early signs of our country's economic recovery.

Throughout our work here at the NWA, we have sought to act with character and in the best interests of our members, one and all. We have much to be thankful for, and yet much to do in the coming year to accelerate our momentum.

Scientific research grants and the pursuit of solutions to growing issues has become a key cornerstone of your organization. If we can solve farmer issues, everyone in the industry will benefit. We continue to work with researchers on projects such as grafting economics and disease prevention. Dr. Wayne Fish (USDA) is working with a Texas farmer on a prototype machine to process abandoned or diseased watermelons into ethanol and other value-added watermelon products in an effort to create an economical new market for un-saleable watermelons.

Food safety (and traceability) have been a high focus area for the past 3 years, and will continue in 2010. The 2nd edition of the Commodity Specific Food Safety Guidelines for the Fresh Watermelon Supply Chain is in direct parallel to the legislation being considered by Congress, and has been recognized by the Food and Drug Administration as "comprehensive" and "an excellent example to other crop industries". In the guidance, we recommend item-level traceability which places watermelon ahead of most other fruits & vegetables. Additionally, our efforts included work with the Foreign Ag Service (USDA) in a pilot program in Mexico, focusing on food safety practices and traceability for imports into the U.S.

Public affairs in Washington, D.C. continues to be a NWA focal point. It can be a tough job with numerous issues and legislation being debated or written simultaneously. Compounding the tasks are differing view-points or needs by crop industries accompanied partisan politics. Yes, it is a challenge many times, but the key is 'relationships'. When lobbying, relationships are vital, and one must nurture them to gain insights, be able to provide input and achieve support on key issues. The National Watermelon Month designation, the Farm Bill accomplishments for Specialty Crops in block grants and research, the addition of fruits & vegetables to the WIC program, support for a Watermelon Stamp being pursued by the NWPB, monitoring numerous issues that could affect agriculture, and much more are all indicative of the work that is being done.

The expansion of our relationship with the National Watermelon Promotions Board (NWPB) has created new and expanded promotions for our membership, and the industry. The NWPB is playing a key role in Queen promotions, and has taken our National Queen on promotions to Canada and Japan in 2009. Their support of the program allows us to get watermelon out into the press very positively and in numerous ways. We just completed the second year of a joint print program with major produce publications, which has allowed us to jointly promote watermelon to your customers while increasing 'positive' watermelon exposure in the trade press. In 2009 we saw the beginning of a National Display Contest with winners from various states, and Canada. The success of any display activity in retail stores is the pursuit of valuable real estate (floor space), and we achieved that with good success in our first year.

Our main communication vehicles, The Vineline magazine, the Off The Vine newsletter and the NWA web site continue to expand, evolve, and provide our members with up to date information that is important to you. The Vineline has been expanded to 40-pages which will allow us to communicate additional, vital information in each issue to our members. The Off The Vine newsletter is emailed on a quarterly basis to our members, and includes additional information that is important to our members. Your web site is indicative of what the NWA does for its members, and is updated on a regular basis. If anyone ever wants to know what the NWA is doing, and can do, have them log on and see for themselves.

The National Watermelon Convention continues to enjoy tremendous growth and interest. The cities and properties that will host our future conventions offer us the continued opportunity to provide the most economical convention of any national produce organization in a first class method, coupled with business, education, entertainment and fellowship. The convention is becoming a destination for our members, and in some cases the industry. Our supporting advertisers, sponsors, exhibitors and donors are the reason why we are successful, and set the stage for a memorable experience and a kick-start for the new year.

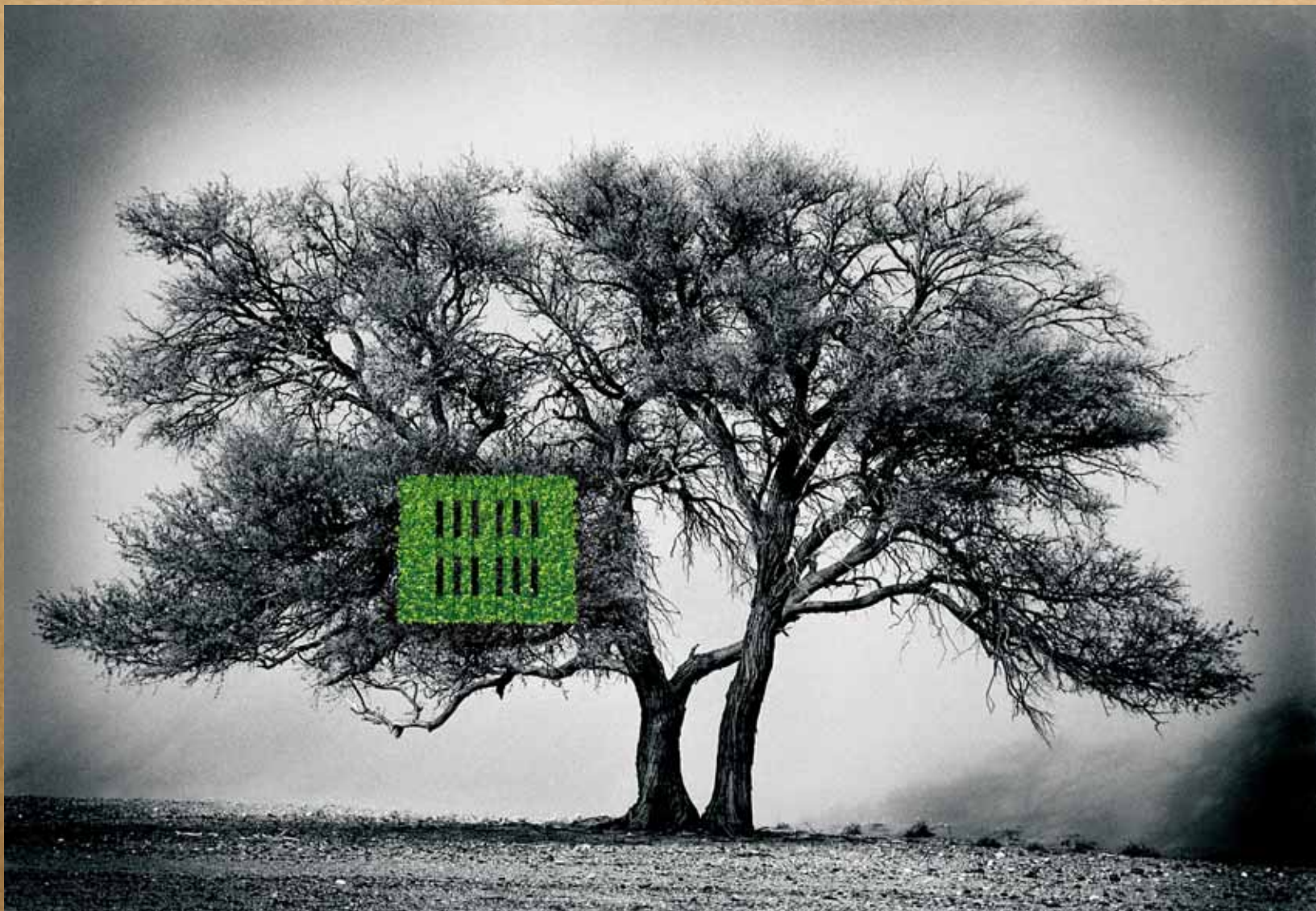
In the year ahead, our focus will be on supporting the NWA membership with two areas of emphasis. First, we will create more opportunities for our members to get involved in your association as committee leaders, and help our association to groom tomorrow's leaders in the process. Second, we will bring an expansion of our membership base, driven through our chapters as we extend the NWA's presence across North and Central America. Of course we will continue to advance the issues and topics of most importance to you, our members.

As we face the changing world and economy in the year ahead, we have much work to do. But we are the watermelon industry, so we will persevere. The staff and I look forward to continuing our partnership with you in 2010, and we thank you for your continued support. You continue to amaze me with your support and care for your organization, and I appreciate every one of you greatly. As we say goodbye to the old year and see a new one begin, I wish you and yours peace, health and prosperity – today, tomorrow and always. Keep Smiling!

Bob Morrissey

Executive Director
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EPA Worker Risk Assessment

EPA has released and is inviting comment on a policy paper that describes how the Agency plans to use revised methods in conducting risk assessments for pesticide uses and exposures not governed by the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act (FFDCA). Implementing this policy will increase protections, especially for agricultural workers and children of workers in agricultural fields.

Because science has advanced, EPA is updating and changing the way it approaches pesticide risk assessments. This new approach will result in more comprehensive and consistent evaluation of potential risks of food use pesticides, non-food use pesticides, and related occupational exposures.

EPA intends to apply risk assessment techniques developed in implementing the Food Quality Protection Act of 1996 (FQPA) to any pesticide risk assessment, whether it falls under FQPA or not, so long as application of the risk assessment technique is consistent with good scientific practice and is not otherwise prohibited by law.

Specifically, this will include:

- using an additional safety/uncertainty factor to protect children
- considering aggregate exposures to pesticides from multiple sources
- considering cumulative effects that may occur from exposure to multiple pesticides with a common mechanism of toxicity
- reporting potential risks for individuals who had not been explicitly considered, specifically workers age 12 – 17 and children taken into agricultural fields while their parents work

Taking this step has important environmental justice ramifications. EPA’s commitment to environmental justice and good science compels the Agency to act expeditiously, where consistent with statutory authority, to incorporate the risk assessment techniques developed in the implementation of FQPA in assessing pesticide risks under FIFRA.

EPA licenses or registers pesticides for sale and distribution under the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA). The Agency establishes tolerances, limits for pesticide residues in or on food, under section 408 of FFDCA. In contrast to the risk/benefit standard for registration under FIFRA, FFDCA applies a risk-only standard for tolerances and explicitly sets certain approaches for assessing risks.

These risk assessment approaches include:

- incorporating an additional safety factor to protect children
- aggregating all non-occupational (food, water and residential) exposures to a pesticide



- considering the cumulative effects of pesticides with a common mechanism of action

The risk-only standard and the mandated risk assessment approaches were added to FFDCA by FQPA. Although FIFRA does not require EPA to use these risk assessment approaches in assessing worker risks or non-food use pesticides, FIFRA does require the Agency to consider whether pesticides pose an unreasonable risk. In assessing risk, EPA believes it should use the best scientific techniques available. Using the FQPA risk assessment approaches for all pesticides is consistent with good science.

Some of the new methodology changes can be implemented immediately, while for others, further research into available data and data needs must first be undertaken and science policies must be developed. Consultation with the FIFRA Scientific Advisory Panel and request for public input may be needed for new science policies. EPA’s proposed implementation strategy is summarized in the Agency’s policy paper. After considering all comments and input received, EPA will make any changes needed in the new policy and implementation strategy.

Salad bars in schools discussed on Hill

Beyond all the statistics and logic why salad bars make sense for schools, Wendy Slusser remembers a Los Angeles boy kissing an orange. The day a salad bar opened in one south central Los Angeles school, she saw a boy kissing an orange, saying it was the best day of his life, said Slusser, medical director of UCLA FIT for Healthy Weight Program at UCLA Mattel Children’s Hospital, Los Angeles.

“That energizes me,” she said Dec. 2. “That’s why I am here and why I flew across the country to share that story, to share what children tell me every day.” Slusser was one of several advocates of salad bars on Dec. 3-4 in Washington, D.C. to brief lawmakers and staffers on Capitol Hill. Slusser asked Congress to provide increased funding so schools can serve more fruits and vegetables and purchase salad bar equipment and other needed cafeteria items so more schools can have salad bars.

The group also scheduled visits with food and nutrition officials at the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The visit coincided with a legislative effort by Rep. Sam Farr (CA) to promote salad bars in schools and help districts buy salad bar equipment. Farr and Rep. Adam Putnam (FL) introduced the bill, called the Children’s Fruit and Vegetable Act, in the House on December 3.

Slusser said implementing salad bars in Los Angeles re-

sulted in an additional serving of fresh produce consumed by students each day. “Over half the kids at any one time choose the salad bar over the hot lunch menu,” she said. In addition, she said salad bars shift the less healthy foods out of kids’ diets, which is important in the fight against obesity.

About 60 schools out of 400 schools in the Los Angeles district have salad bars, she said, and one of the main barriers is the cost of the equipment. “I definitely feel this is critical for the health of children in the long run,” she said.

Esperanza Zendejas, superintendent of the Alisal Unified School District, Salinas, Calif., said she believes

salad bars can be good for student health and positive for school district budgets.

Zendejas, also in Washington on behalf of United Fresh, said she started bringing salad bars to school districts in 1988. “I’m a staunch supporter and believer of salad bars as ways to increase children’s exposure to fresh fruits and vegetables,” she said.

Salad bars allow students to select fruits and vegetables they like, which she said reduces waste and saves money. “Children are selecting what they want to eat,” she said. “In our school district, kids love vegetables, and it is because of their exposure to them at a very early age.”

The Center for Pollinator Research at PSU to Host International Conference

Penn State’s Center for Pollinator Research will be hosting the first International Conference on Pollinator Biology, Heath and Policy from July 24-28, 2010.

The Center for Pollinator Research at Penn State is a hub for research and education concerning pollinator health, especially the factors causing honey bee population declines. The Center consists of dynamic group of 26 independent faculty, including researchers, educators, extension specialists and outreach coordinators, spanning multiple departments and colleges at Penn

State. Research and education efforts cover a broad range of fields, including behavior, genomics, disease ecology, the effects of pesticides and other stressors on pollinator health, as well as conservation and management of native bees and honey bees.

According to Christina Grozinger, Associate Professor of Entomology and Director of the Center, the focus of the conference will be current research on pollinator biology and health, as well as policies related to pollinator

BEES continued on page 15

Graduate Fellowship for Honey Bee Health

Through a generous donation of the E. B. O’Keeffe Charitable Foundation, Penn State University announced a special graduate fellowship to support the educational training of a graduate student conducting research on honey bee health in the Department of Entomology at PSU.

Penn State recently formed the Center for Pollinator Research, with 26 faculty and other researchers working on pollinator biology and health, in the areas of honey bee functional genomics, honey bee immunity, pathogens of bees and native pollinators, role of pesticides in bee health, parasites of bees, effects of

infectious disease on bee physiology, and ecology and manipulation of native bees.

Applications are now being accepted for the O’Keeffe Foundation Graduate Fellowship in Honey Bee Health, to work with a faculty member of your choice in this area. This fellowship will pay a stipend of \$25,000 for the first two years of graduate study including coverage of full tuition and research expenses.

You can visit the Penn State departmental web site for detailed information on the application (<http://ento.psu.edu/>). PSU requires a completed graduate school application, GRE scores (and TOEFL scores if needed), transcripts, a statement of interests and future directions, curriculum vitae listing accomplishments to date, and three letters of recommendation. Applications should be submitted by January 21, 2010 for full consideration.

Questions? Please contact Dr. Gary W. Felton, Professor and Department Head, (gwfl10@psu.edu)



Farr, Calif., also spoke during a Dec. 3 hearing



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Fruit Logistica chooses Mexico as partner country

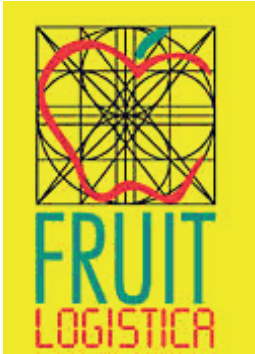
Mexico has been chosen the official partner country of Fruit Logistica 2010.

Scheduled for February 3-5 in Berlin, Germany, Fruit Logistica is the largest fresh produce trade show in the world. Mexico’s honor will come during the bicentennial of its independence from Spain.

Mexico will be represented by growers, organizations and trade associations and will feature the most extensive variety of Mexican fruit and vegetables ever presented in Europe, according to a Fruit Logistica news release.

Mexico’s agricultural minister, Mayorga Castaneda, will be a guest speaker at the show’s opening ceremony February 2 According to the World Trade Organization, Mexico is the world’s 10th biggest agricultural exporter.

It is the leading exporter of avocados, mangoes, papayas and watermelons; the second-largest exporter of onions, chickpeas, cucumbers, asparagus, pecans and limes; and the third-largest exporter of sweet peppers, tomatoes, spinach, pumpkins, cauliflower and strawberries.



USDA offers climate change cost estimates for produce

Proposed climate change legislation will increase average costs for fruit and vegetable growers by about 2% in the short term and close to 4% over several decades, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

USDA economist Joe Glauber testified Dec. 2 before the House Agriculture Committee, subcommittee on conservation, credit, energy and research about costs associated with climate change legislation. Though his testimony was focused on cost consequences of climate change legislation, Glauber said opportunities to provide carbon offsets to other industries would make climate change legislation a net positive for the farm community over the long term.

The cost analysis wasn’t as comprehensive as produce industry lobbyists had hoped. “The way the USDA data came out, they characterized it as relatively minor increases in production costs for fruits and vegetables,” said Kam Quarles, vice president of government relations and legislative affairs for the United Fresh Produce Association, Washington, D.C.

“However, their analysis only looks at on-farm production, and the reason that fruits and vegetables are disproportionately affected by increases in energy costs through climate change or other factors is because our energy consumption is huge once it leaves the farm,” Quarles said.

Quarles said United Fresh and other members of the climate change coalition had asked the USDA to look at the entire supply chain, not one that stopped at the farm gate.



He said United Fresh and other advocates of fruits and vegetables will continue to urge lawmakers to have a “360 degree” perspective of the issue. “It is important to know the cost increases and opportunities that are on the farm, but it is also important to focus on the entire supply chain,” Quarles said.

Higher prices could change consumer buying habits at retail and reduce produce consumption. “You also may be providing advantage to certain countries that are not burdened with the same climate change rules,” he said. Quarles said the costs must be understood before responsible legislation can be crafted.

He said the Senate will not take up climate change legislation until sometime in 2010, and mid-term election year politics may make the issue contentious.

In a teleconference with reporters Dec. 2, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack said that if there are crops — he mentioned fruits and vegetables — that would not receive a net gain from climate change legislation, farm programs and legislation could provide other assistance. “We are supportive of Sen. (Debbie) Stabenow’s legislation, which could provide additional assistance to those areas not positively impacted.”

Vilsack said America must show its leadership in acting to reduce greenhouse gases. “I can guarantee that if America were to punt on climate change, if (America) is not going to make a meaningful effort to respond to this, I can guarantee that other countries in trade issues will use that against us,” he said.

Glauber said that in 2007 fertilizer and agrichemicals accounted for about 18% of the variable cash expenses of vegetable and melon farms and 13% for fruit and tree nut farms. Meanwhile, motor fuels and oil used to run tractors, generators and irrigation pumps represented 5% of vegetable costs and 4% of fruit costs. About 4% to 5% of costs were estimated to represent utility services, mainly electricity.



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National Report

This is it, the last issue of “The Vineline” before our National Convention in Dallas. I hope you are all making plans to be there. This has been an exceptional year! We have had so many fantastic promotions. There is so much to share; I will attempt to catch you up! National Queen, Maggie Bailey has treasured each and every promotion, and been an awesome representative! My heartfelt appreciation goes out to all our sponsors that have made this outstanding year possible!

Borders Melons Sponsors King Sooper Grand Opening

Nowell sponsored the King Sooper Grand Opening in Castle Rock, Colorado. This event outsold any Grand Opening event I have ever attended! Busy was the word for this promotion. King Sooper welcomed Maggie with huge framed posters with her photos. She stayed busy helping the King Sooper shoppers and serving samples! FANTASTIC! We also enjoyed the beautiful sights around Colorado Springs. THANK YOU, NOWELL and BORDERS MELONS!

Iliana Watermelon Association Sponsors Race Week Events

We were sponsored to Indianapolis for the Kroger Bush Race and Race Week events. They included, Go Kart Races, where we met John Andretti, events at Riley’s Children Hospital, Television coverage with Chef Joe Poon, and a meet the drivers’ event at Kroger. The Race Day Watermelon promotion was a record breaking day. We surpassed all previous years, in the amount served! Several of our State Queens and Coordinators attended the race and events leading up to the Grand Finale, The Nationwide Race! It was a busy day and Watermelon Promotion at its best! IWA it was awesome! So much hard work and money goes into making this event happen, and we appreciate being a part of it! It was certainly a real success!

NWPB Sponsors Promotions in Corner Brook, Newfoundland, Canada

Coleman’s Supermarket in the Corner Brook Newfoundland area was the beautiful setting for some extraordinary Watermelon promotions. Maggie was interviewed and photographed by newspapers and appeared on the morning show of the CBC. We were welcomed by Judy Bennett of Coleman’s. Our first day was Stephenville and finished in Corner Brook. Judy arranged Watermelon eating contest for both days of in-store promotions, and contestants love the events. They were well promoted and a huge success!

They even had Midwest Marketing of Vincennes, melons for the promotion. Maggie, Gordon and I all agree that this is truly one of the most scenic areas ever visited. Thanks to NWPB for sponsoring and special thanks to Gordon and Judy!

Mar-Del Association Sponsors Annual National Queen Tour

The Mar-Del Promotion is always a treat, again this year the promotions were filled with media coverage, Television, Radio and Newspapers. Great Job Candice! Some of the promotions included Rehoboth Beach Boardwalk Watermelon giveaway, in-store promotions, the City Dock in Annapolis, the Laurel Auction Block, and a Maryland Crab Feast at the “Old Mill.” The finishing touch was a sunset sailboat ride around the Annapolis harbor. The Mar-Del Watermelon Association has been hosting the National Queen Tour since before my time, and that’s been a while! It is always a treat to spend time with them, I appreciate their sponsorship and all the effort they put into this event for our National Queen! Thank You!

Brent Jackson and Doug Dickerson Sponsor Carytown Festival & Kroger

Maggie was honored to be with the Kroger team working the Carytown Festival. This annual event in Richmond draws over 100,000 people, complete with media coverage. Watermelon Rules in Richmond at the Carytown Festival! What better place for our National Watermelon Queen to be!

Special thanks to Kroger’s team headed by Bob Coates, Al Cogar and Fran Orphan for having us, to the Kroger Stores and Carytown Festival. We thank NWPB’s retail rep Sheila Carden for stopping by with refreshing drinks! Special thanks to NWA’s Brent Jackson and Doug Dickerson for sponsoring us to Kroger,

NWPB Sponsors Retail Promotions in Vancouver, British Columbia

Next Stop...beautiful Vancouver, British Columbia., Vancouver is a majestic natural beauty nestled between the Coastal Mountains and the Pacific Ocean. What a beautiful setting for Watermelon promotions! We enjoyed promoting at the IGA in downtown Vancouver. They were so excited to have Maggie in their store; the local paper came for photos and an interview. She was also a guest on Global BC News morning show. While promoting in the Thrifty Supermarket, two television stations and a local newspaper turned out. The event was complete with eating and seed-spitting contest. We were in Vancouver with Brad Brownsey, retail rep for NWPB and NWPB’s Gordon Hunt. These promotions could not have been more productive, thanks Brad for all you help. Gordon and Brad had an appointment in Victoria, so the four of us took the Ferry over to the Island of Victoria. While they had their meeting Maggie and I enjoyed “Victorian Afternoon Tea” at the Fairmont Empress Hotel. On our return to Vancouver we even got to see a school of killer whales. Thank you NWPB! Thank You Brad and Gordon!

NWPB Takes Watermelon Promotion to Tokyo, Japan

We left Vancouver headed for Tokyo, Japan. This was a ground breaking event! US Watermelons had never been promoted in Japan. What a wonderful cultural experience. With Gordon Hunt along, we had a guide extraordinaire, he is like a walking encyclopedia and he even speaks the language! We met with the USDA’s Foreign Agricultural Service at the US Embassy, in-store promotions were arranged with the large Japanese retailer SEIYU. We promoted California grown watermelon from Dan Van Groningen & Sons and the quality was perfect. We promoted in two of the 20 SEIYU stores in Japan featuring the melons. Maggie loved promoting her product in Tokyo. The customers were very receptive and the kids loved her. They are a very polite culture and every customer acknowledged Maggie’s presence, with a bow and a smile! We had recipe brochures printed in Japanese, the Heart Healthy Stickers and delicious California Watermelon Samples. She was truly a hit, as well as the watermelon! We enjoyed some of the sights, and a personal fitting, complete with instruction on the Kimono, from a shop owner, only this was in her home complete with ceremonial tea! This was certainly an event like no other. Maggie and I thank NWPB, and Gordon for the opportunity to promote our product in Tokyo!

United Fresh, Public Policy Conference in Washington DC

Maggie and I were joined by all of our State Queens and their Coordinators, several of NWA members and Officers in DC for the informative Public Policy Conference. NWA Executive Director Bob Morrissey does a great job with getting our Watermelon Ambassadors involved in the event. We attended and exhibited again this year at the United Fresh Welcome Reception along with the star of the event Chef Joe Poon and his amazing Watermelon creations. He is always a hit! The three day event was filled with VIP Speakers, United States Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack, Commissioner of the US Food and Drug Administration, Dr. Margret Hamburg, and CNN Analyst Paul Begala to name a few. We had our march on Capital Hill and Congressional visits, and a tour of the US Capital. The girls all enjoyed a night tour of our Nation’s Capital in an open air tour bus; I will say a good time was had by all! Thanks Bob for helping make this happen!

Sunny Fresh Sponsors the High Heel Hike and Benefit Ball

Maggie and I were delighted to be invited to participate in this year’s High Heel Hike in Tampa, Florida. Kelly and Jean Marinaro of Sunny Fresh were our sponsors. The hike is a Jules Burt event and it benefits Generation Rescue, a parent founded, Organization started by Jenny McCarthy and Jim Carrey to raise awareness of Autism. Jules has several of these successful fund raisers throughout Florida. Jean joined us in Tampa, and treated us and Jules to dinner at the Hard Rock Hotel and Casino. Maggie had to return to classes and first runner-up Kaley Harper filled in her absence for the Grand Finale, Gala Ball at the Hard Rock Hotel. Thank You Kaley! The proceeds of evening’s silent auction were also to benefit “Generation Rescue.” We were joined by Jessica, the Florida Queen, Debra Harrison Coordinator. NWPB’s Executive Director and wife Karen also attended this worthwhile event. Thanks Kelly and Jean for sponsoring Maggie, Kaley and I to the High Heel Hike events!

NWPB Sponsors Produce Marketing Association’s Convention

NWPB sponsored us to the PMA convention in Anaheim, California. This busy three day event is always an exciting time where all the Industry’s Key Produce gathers. The booth looked great and won second place in the “Best of Show” at the convention! Congratulations NWPB, Great Job! This booth was always buzzing with visitors and excitement. Chef Joe Poon was on hand to carve and entertain! We also had Wally Amos, a long time Watermelon promoter and maybe better know for Famous Amos Cookies. All eight State Queens attended the show. What a wonderful experience for the girls! It is always a treat to visit our Industry people and retailers as they stop by the booth. We so appreciate the support and sponsorship of the Promotion Board and all you do for the industry! Thanks Mark and the rest of the gang! Maggie and all the girls that were still there enjoyed a limo tour of Hollywood and Los Angeles, thanks to Paul Sawyer and Mr. & Mrs. Jim Barfield. ...Jim and Paul that was so generous of you and I am sure it will be a lasting memory for the girls! Thank you again!

Cactus Melon and Al Harrison & Company Sponsor Nogales Produce Convention

Excitement, Fun and Fellowship in Nogales! Thanks to Barbara and Ramon Murillo, of Cactus Melon and NWA’s own First Vice President, Brent Harrison and wife Susan (my 1994 National Queen) for sponsoring us to Nogales! The Produce of the America’s convention was held in Tubac. We enjoyed the opening night gala and the opportunity to visit with industry people and sponsors. The Tubac Resort and Golf Club is a beautiful setting for the convention.

Friday Maggie read to all the Second Graders at Susan’s school. The kids loved her; we visited the classes of James and Eden Harrison, their beautiful children. We stopped by our sponsor, Cactus Melon office in Nogales, later Barbara Murillo treated us to lunch across the line in Mexico at famed “La Roca.” Delicious! We dropped by the beautiful home of convention chairman, Chuck Thomas and wife Patty for a reception. We joined Barbara and Ramon and their son, along with Shelly Harrison, Brent’s sister and a large group of Industry people for dinner. The Closing Fiesta Dinner Dance was loads of fun! Thank You, Barbara and Ramon, Brent and Susan for sponsoring us! It was a blast!

Until Next Printing, See You in Dallas!
Eleanor Bullock
NWA Promotion Coordinator
229.273.8638 • 229.322.9933 cell • 229.271.8111 fax
Email; eleanor@websign.net



King Sooper Welcomes Maggie



Maggie stays busy helping customers



Tours the Garden of the Gods



on the Air at WTHR in Indianapolis



Johnna, Stephanie & Maggie at the Riley Children's Hospital



at the Races with our Watermelon Car

National Pictures



on the air CBC Morning Show live



Gordon, Judy & Maggie enjoy the view in Corner Brook



Maggie poses with the Coleman's Watermelon Eating Contestants!



Jessica and Maggie following the Morning Show in Salisbury



Rehoboth Beach with Mar-Del group Jay, Doug and Dawn



Mar-Del Group at the Old Mill Crab House, Thank You Mar-Del!



Fran and Rod Welcome Maggie to Carytown



they roll out the carpet for Maggie at the Richmond Kroger!



Brad, Gordon & Maggie enjoy the Vancouver IGA promotion



on the air Global BC Morning News



What a Sunset!



TV interviews at the Thrifty store in Vancouver



Promoting Watermelon in Tokyo!



US Embassies, USDA's Foreign Agriculture Service in Tokyo



Maggie has a gift for Kahori Ochi, she welcomed us to her home!



making Smiles has no language problem



Maggie & State Queen attend the Fresh Festival Reception in DC



NWA President John Lapide poses with the girls during the Capital tour



Ready for the Capital Hill visits



Ready for the High Heel Hike



we did it!



the Glam Ball



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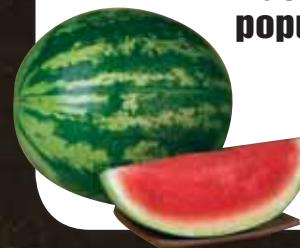
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Alabama Report

Hello Everyone from the Alabama Watermelon Association and Queen Melinda!

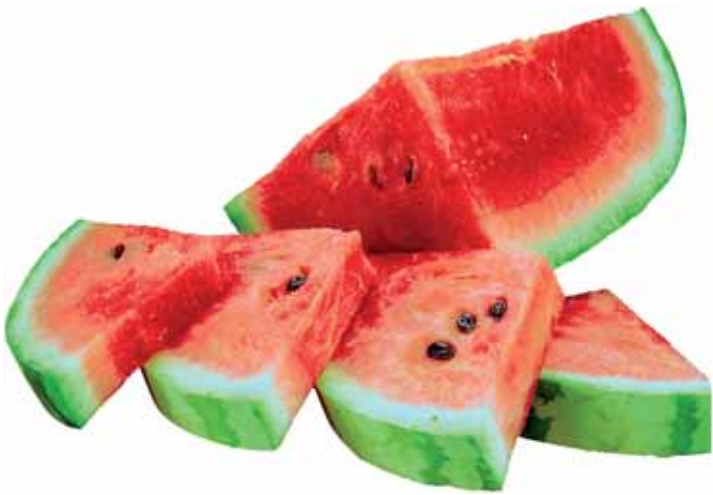
Queen Melinda has traveled from West Coast to East Coast these past few months. With an invitation to attend the Produce Marketing Association's Fresh Summit Convention, Melinda set sail for Anaheim, California for the weekend of October 2nd-5th. While it sounds like a short trip, the convention days were long and exciting. Melinda was excited for the chance to represent the Alabama Watermelon Association during the convention, and the opportunity to visit the hundreds of booths and sample the food from all around the world was definitely a bonus.

With her trip on the West Coast complete, it was time to head back to the East Coast for the University of Florida Homecoming festivities with FWA Queen Jessica October 16-18th. Queen Melinda's weekend began with riding in the homecoming parade, attending Gator Growl and the Florida-Arkansas football game. It was Melinda's first (and last) time wearing gator blue. I would like to give a special thanks to two people. First, I would like to thank Josh Moore of Timco Worldwide for sponsoring Melinda to attend this great weekend of football and fun in Gainesville. Second, I want to give a very special thank you to Debra Harrison, FWA Coordinator, for securing a spot for our queens in the UF homecoming parade. Our queens had a blast. I am sure Melinda and Jessica will have lifelong memories from this weekend.

Melinda you have been an outstanding queen for our Alabama Watermelon Association. There are not enough words for the lasting impression you have made on each and every one of us. Stay true to yourself, and we all wish you continued success in your long-term goals. Best of luck at Nationals and have fun in Dallas!!!

Joining Melinda in Dallas will be our incoming AWA Promotion Coordinator Ali Vice Rauch, the 2006 Illiana Watermelon Queen who moved down south and began working at Auburn University in recent years. Ali will be coordinating for our 2010 AWA Queen. She'd like to let everyone know how excited she is to become an active part of the watermelon family again and would like to let everyone know to feel free to contact her at abvice3@gmail.com. I am certain she will do a fantastic job. Welcome to our AWA family Ali!

Cindy Vaughn
AWA Promotions Coordinator
Ncv57@earthlink.net



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A queen and her crown, what a sight! Congratulations on a fantastic reign, Queen Melinda.



We hope everyone had a happy holiday. Our AWA Queen Melinda lit up her holiday season in true watermelon style!



Melinda is always smiling bright and ready for work as our AWA Queen.



Good luck at Nationals Queen Melinda! Your AWA family wishes you success on all your future journeys.



AWA Queen Melinda attended the University of Florida Homecoming Parade, sponsored by Josh Moore of Timco Worldwide.



Thank you FWA Queen Jessica and Florida Coordinator Debra for inviting us to attend the UF Homecoming. (From Left: Cindy Vaughn, Melinda Gooch, Jessica Southard, Debra Harrison.)



Thank you Josh for sponsoring Queen Melinda to attend all of the UF Homecoming festivities.



What a pleasant surprise for Melinda to find a fellow Chi Omega sister in Amanda Moore.



Harry Vaughn and Queen Melinda can't wait for the 2010 football season when Florida plays at Alabama. Doubt they will be as friendly then!



Alabama 32, Florida 13. The Gators didn't take a bit out of this Alabama girl. Roll Tide!



Queen Melinda with author of the cookbook, Hungry Girl, Lisa Lillien, after swapping autographs at the PMA Fresh Summit.



Queen Melinda with future AWA coordinator, Ali.

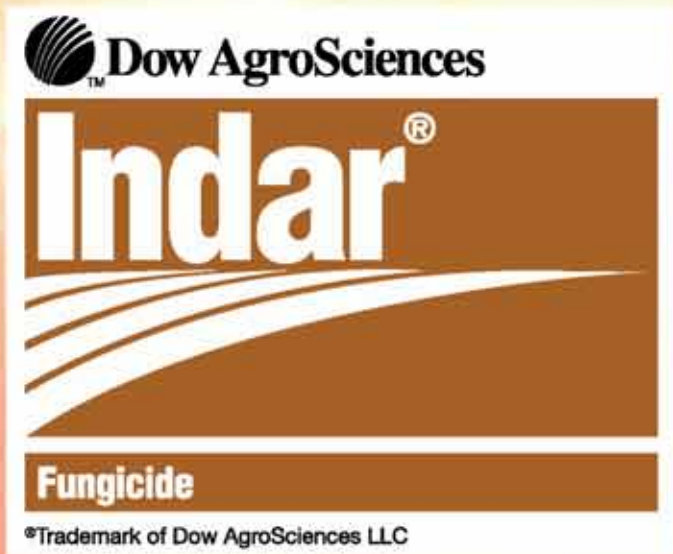
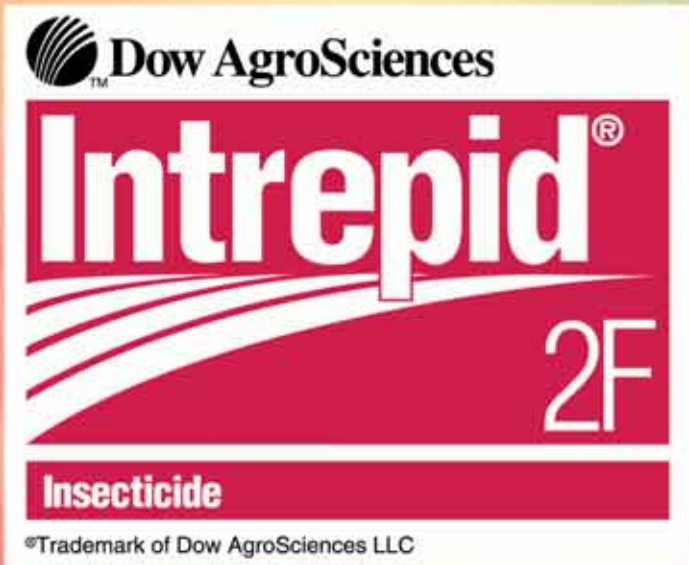


Queen Melinda with Myron Harrison of Temple Inland at PMA Fresh Summit.



Queen Melinda with Shrek and Adam Lytch of L & M Companies at PMA Fresh Summit.

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FEDS continued from page 1

Administration officials and allies in Congress say stronger enforcement of existing immigration laws goes hand-in-hand with efforts to legalize the undocumented.

Business groups say the Obama administration’s increased focus on employer audits rather than workplace raids, which mostly target employees, is triggering higher costs.

“As reports of more and more workplace audits roll in, the typical story is of employers who have hired workers whose documents appear legitimate, on the books, paying federal and state taxes and Medicare and Social Security,” said Craig J. Regelbrugge, of the American Nursery & Landscape Association.

“When companies undergo audits, there is disruption of normal business and a necessity to involve lawyers and consultants,” he added. “The direct cost to a business can easily surpass tens of thousands of dollars.”

GRANTS continued from page 1

Specialty crops are defined as “fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture, and nursery crops (including floriculture).”

The minimum base grant each State is eligible to receive is equal to the higher of \$100,000 or 1/3 of 1 percent of the total amount of funding made available for that fiscal year. In addition, AMS will allocate the remainder of the grant funds based on the value of specialty crop production in each state in relation to the national value of specialty crop production using the latest available cash receipt data.

In 2009, \$49 Million was awarded with hundreds of different projects. To review a complete list of awarded projects, log on to <http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/getfile?dDocName=STELPRDC5080060>.

This web site may give your chapter or company some ideas of how you can work with your State’s Ag Department. Some of the more popular awards are related to promotions, public relations, food safety audits, education, scholarships, sustainability, market research, trade shows, scientific research and many other opportunities.

Some of our chapters received awards in fiscal year 2009, and we congratulate them for their work, as well as wish them success with their projects. Please continue to submit proposals in future years.

To those chapters that have not begun this process, please consider this funding opportunity for fiscal year 2010, which begins in September 2009. It is anticipated that in fiscal years 2010, 2011 and 2012, the USDA will award \$50 Million each year to this farm bill program.

Good luck to us all, and hopefully we will hear even more good news as more chapters and companies participate in this Specialty Crop Block Grant program.

BEES continued from page 7

conservation. “Pollinators are essential for both plants and animals in agricultural and natural ecosystems.” Grozinger explains.

“Unfortunately, there has been a dramatic decline in both managed and native pollinator populations due to a variety of stressors, which have been highlighted by the recent reports of Colony Collapse Disorder. This conference will bring together a diverse group of experts, so we can better address these complex issues.”

The conference will include symposia on behavioral ecology, disease ecology, impacts of environmental toxins, policy and public outreach, conservation, updates on international honey bee population declines and poster sessions. To register and obtain more information about the conference or the Center, please log on to their website <http://ento.psu.edu/news/2009/pollinator-conference>, or contact Grozinger at (814)-865-1895 or cmg25@psu.edu, or Diana Cox-Foster at (814) 865-1022 or dxc12@psu.edu.

Produce industry stands firm on traceability enforcement

Fresh produce industry representatives urged the FDA to strictly enforce its guidelines for maintaining one up and one down traceback records but not to impose new traceability requirements Dec. 9-10 in meetings with government agencies at the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Trying to find ways to improve traceability and speed responses in outbreaks, parties agreed on the need to form a better working relationship to close communication and information gaps. “The agencies have some real needs for traceability that the industry has to be able to fill,” said David Gombas, senior vice president of food safety and technology at United Fresh Produce Association, Washington, D.C.

“There needs to be a standardized process for every company so that they know what those records are, they know where they are, and they can put their hands on them very, very quickly.” In his public comments, Gombas told the agencies that traceability is an industry standard, and the Food and Drug Administration should leave it to the marketplace instead of imposing rigid restrictions.

Dave Elder, director of the office of regional operations for the FDA agreed, saying, “The industry knows their customers.” Elder urged the produce industry to improve recordkeeping so that data is more useful during federal investigations. He suggested standardized digital distribution systems and records, better use of retail purchasing information such as shopper cards and clearer and more meaningful product coding. “Paper-based systems ... present the greatest challenges for accuracy, completeness and timeliness,” he said. He also praised the effective use of shopper cards to inform purchasers of recalled foods.

A panel representing the consumer later highlighted the public support for traceability initiatives and noted that consumers desire more information about imported foods. David Plunkett, senior staff attorney for the Center for Science in the Public Interest, Washington, D.C., said studies show consumers would pay a premium for traceability if it were associated with quality assurance. “The market does not have what you need to drive traceability,” he said, adding that food was up to one-third more costly because “we elected not to do safety to the extent that we perhaps should.”

In a 90-minute comment period, traceability company leaders summarized their traceability solutions while encouraging the FDA to support item-level traceback.

Meanwhile, some industry representatives called into question the heavy cost of item-level traceability technology for small growers. The PTI is case level, but some traceability products companies are pushing item-level traceback because of consumer demand.

Gregory Fritz, president of Produce Packaging Inc., Cleveland, called the Produce Traceability Initiative a “boondoggle” that creates an excessive cost burden for small businesses. Fritz described new costs to adopt a traceability program to meet customer requirements including \$8,500 to purchase a GS1 number; \$800 to renew it yearly; \$10,000 for new computers, printers and software; \$18,000 a year to print the labels and a full-time staffer salary of at least \$40,000.

“The last few years, my customers have been demanding to pay less. They are not going to agree to pay more for traceability,” Fritz said. “I can see the writing on the wall, and if PTI must move forward, its cost burden must be lessened.”

Dr. David Gombas with United Fresh Produce Association



Why Watermelons Just Grow and Grow

It takes around 5 weeks for a tiny watermelon flower to grow into a ready-to-eat watermelon. Though ripe watermelons typically weigh anywhere from 5 to 40 pounds, record-breakers have tipped the scales at 250 pounds or more.

“Watermelon is a fruit that grows so fast, and it can get so big,” says ARS plant geneticist Amnon Levi. “We know there must be some very interesting genes at work.” Levi works at the ARS U.S. Vegetable Laboratory in Charleston, South Carolina. He teamed up with plant pathologist Pat Wechter and plant geneticist Karen Harris on the first-ever study that identified and characterized key genes regulating watermelon growth and development.

Over a 3-year period, plant geneticist Angela Davis, who works at the ARS South Central Agricultural Research Laboratory in Lane, Oklahoma, grew watermelons in the field for the research to ensure that the genes would be responding to actual field conditions, such as pathogens and weather extremes. “One year it was so dry that we had to stop watering because water restrictions had been im-



GROW continued on page 27

ACRES continued from page 1

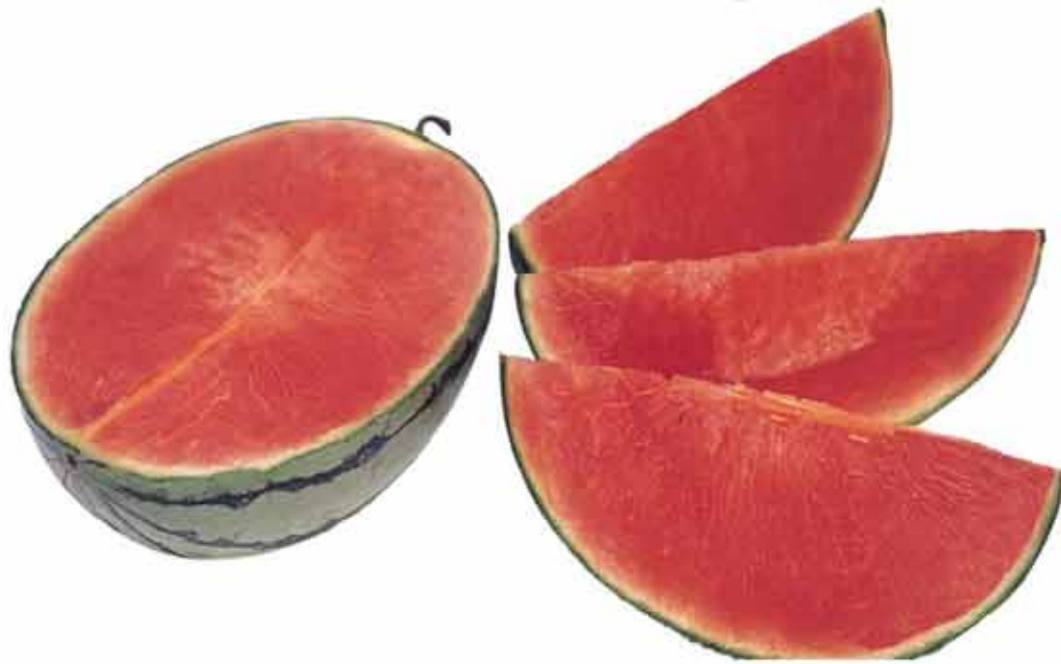
“Water is the most critical, limited resource for our nation’s farmers and ranchers,” said Molly Jahn, USDA Deputy Under Secretary for Research, Education, and Economics. “For farmers and ranchers who are looking for more efficient ways to irrigate their land and ways to reduce their expenses, the results of the Farm and Ranch Irrigation Survey provide a valuable tool to help them make informed decisions about the future of their operations.”

The Irrigation Survey provides the most comprehensive source of up-to-date information regarding the U.S. agriculture industry’s use and stewardship of our nation’s water resources. The survey results show a continuing trend towards more efficient irrigation methods as farmers reported irrigating more acres with sprinkler systems and less with gravity irrigation. During the five-year period since the last Irrigation Survey, the area irrigated by sprinkler systems increased 15 percent while the area with gravity irrigation decreased 5 percent.

Despite the changes in application methods, equipment in general continues to be one of the leading expenses of irrigation. In 2008, farmers and ranchers spent \$2.1 billion on expenses related to irrigation equipment, facilities, land improvements and computer technology. In addition to looking at irrigated acres, application methods and expenses, the irrigation report provides insight into farmers’ energy and water conservation practices. Between 2003 and 2008, a total of 74,846 farms implemented changes in equipment or management practices that reduced energy use and/or conserved water. Nearly 46 percent of these farms reported reduced energy cost and 59 percent reported a reduction in the amount of water applied.

For the first time NASS also gathered information on the use of recycled and reclaimed water. A total of 9,843 farms reported using recycled water and 3,205 used reclaimed water.

General results of the 2008 Irrigation Survey are available online at www.agcensus.usda.gov



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Florida Report

Watermelon Greetings from the Sunshine State!

Hope everyone had a safe and wonderful holiday season. Since the last issue, Jessica and I have been from Washington DC to California promoting Florida watermelons. In September we traveled to Washington DC for the Washington Public Policy Conference. A three day event of traveling throughout the Capitol Hill lobbying agriculture bills such as food safety and child nutrition. Then in October, we headed to California for PMA Fresh Summit Convention. What an amazing trip Jessica and I had, to be able to see the other side of the United States. Thanks to our President Paul Sawyer for a wonderful dinner at Newport Beach where Jessica got to taste lobster for the very first time.

Our month ended with a trip to Gainesville to participate in the University of Florida Homecoming Parade. Thanks to Josh Moore for sponsoring us for this “Gator” event. A special thanks to Harry and Cindy Vaughn for your hospitality. The next event was in Punta Gorda at the Charlotte County Speedway where first runner-up Maddie Kelly served Florida watermelons to all the race fans. Thanks to Melon 1.

Our year ended covering over 28 Wal-mart stores throughout the State of Florida. A big Thank You goes to our 2007 FWQ Tara Mashburn, Shelly Allen, Leslie Torres, 2008 FWQ Kaley Harper, Maddie Kelly and 2009 FWQ Jessica Southard as these girls traveled all over the state promoting Florida watermelons. Thanks to Steven Brown and Orlando Carde of Wal-mart for setting up and making this event a huge success for the Florida Watermelon Association.

This year Queen Jessica has traveled all over the world promoting Florida watermelons. We have been blessed through our wonderful sponsors to travel not only in the state of Florida but all the way to California promoting watermelons. Queen Jessica has done over 130 plus promotions throughout her reign and has represented our association with great pride, dignity, and dedication, always willing to go and promote that watermelon product. I am personally proud of Jessica this year for all that she has done for the watermelon association. FWA wishes you the best of luck as you compete in February for the national title. We are very proud of what you have done for FWA. Debra Harrison - Florida Watermelon Promotion Coordinator

These past few months I have done several grocery store promotions, educating consumers about the versatility of watermelon. “Watermelon in the December?” This was a question that I continuously heard during my December visits. Many consumers were not aware that Florida even had a fall crop, giving them the option to buy local produce. Therefore, they were all surprised to see me handing out slices in their local grocery stores. Christmas time is the perfect occasion for watermelon. It’s a nutritious substitute from calorie-filled pies and desserts, still giving you that sweet satisfaction that we all need this time of year. Watermelon is also the perfect colors for the holiday, showcasing a beautiful red flesh and green rind. And finally, watermelon is simple and easy; a stress-free snack during this stressful time of year. By the time I informed shoppers about these wonderful benefits and placed a slice of melon in their hands, they were jumping at the opportunity to purchase a watermelon! These holiday shoppers walked into the grocery stores with a long checklist. But they walked out with a warm heart, a smile on their face, and most importantly, a watermelon in their buggy. Merry Christmas! 2009 Florida Watermelon Queen Jessica Southard

If you are planning on traveling in the next few months, don’t forget to take a tour of our website www.fwatravel.com and get travel discounts for all of your travel needs.

Mark your calendar for the 42nd Annual Florida Watermelon Convention, March 26-28, 2010 at The Renaissance Resort at World Golf Village in St. Augustine, Florida. Check out the details on the Florida Watermelon Association new website at www.flfwa.com. Hope to see you there!

Debra Harrison
Email: debrathreel@earthlink.net
Home Phone: 863-494-1163
Cell Phone 863-633-8306



At Safeway in Maryland is where Queen Jessica is with the National Queen Maggie, and Mar-Del Queen Jessica.



Queen Jessica visiting with Chef Justin and Debra May with the Florida Department of Agriculture in Washington, DC.

Second Vice-President, Chandler Mack, Queen Jessica and I heading to the Subway in Washington D.C.



FWQ Jessica at the “Capitol”!!!



Thanks to Michael King for designing our new website for FWA.



Queen Jessica at the “Hike for Heels” in Tampa. Thanks Sunnyfresh for sponsoring us.



President Paul Sawyer and Queen Jessica at our PMA booth in California.



President Paul Sawyer and “Shrek” at PMA.



Thanks to Jim Barfield and his wife Linda for chaperoning our trip to “Hollywood” a night of fun memories for all of us to cherish.



Josh Moore with Timco and Queen Jessica in Gainesville at the University of Florida Homecoming game.



Our first runner up Maddie Kelly and the “Chastain Family” at the Charlotte County Speedway in Punta Gorda, Florida.



Maddie along with Steven Brown and Orlando Carde at Wal-mart in Orlando



Ronald McDonald and Queen Jessica at the “Share a Night, Light a Light” in Orlando, Florida.



Mr. and Mrs. Santa Claus visiting with Queen Jessica.



2008 FWQ Kaley Harper at our Wal-mart Blitz in Tampa, Florida

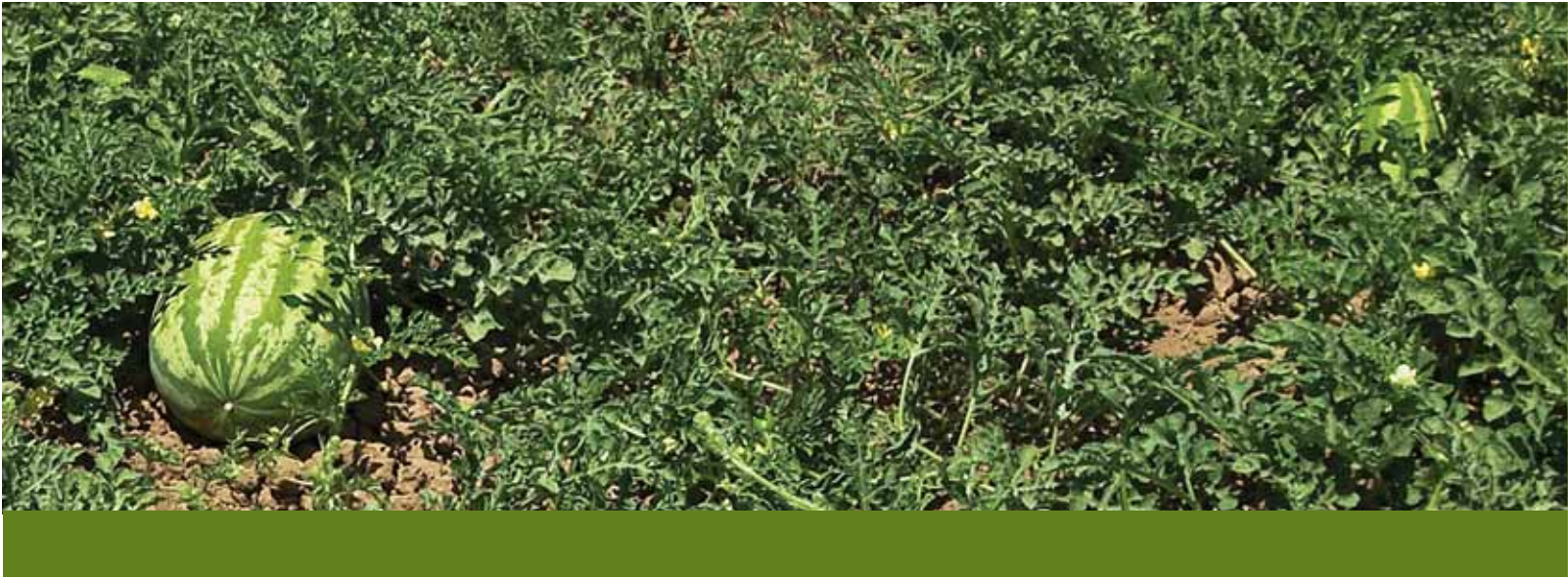


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Georgia Report

Happy New Year to you all from Georgia!

The end of the year is quickly approaching and what a fantastic 2009 Queen Tour the Georgia Watermelon Association has had. Our Queen Lindsey Mann has successfully completed each promotion we've attended and given us 110% of her time and energy to help make our promotions the success they've been throughout the year. Not only has Miss Lindsey traveled across the country as well as Canada promoting watermelons in over 40 promotions this year, she has maintained a 3.98 gpa at the University of Georgia as a senior, majoring in Accounting. The Georgia Watermelon Association is very proud of Lindsey's dedication and determination. We would like to sincerely thank the Georgia Watermelon Association and all our sponsors that help make our promotions possible year after year.

Lindsey has most recently attended the Produce Marketing Association's Trade Show in Anaheim, California with the Georgia Watermelon Association and the Georgia Department of Agriculture. Lindsey also visited Loganville Elementary School's second graders to educate them on the nutritional benefits of watermelons as well as the fun creative things you can do with a melon! From Loganville, Lindsey attended our annual Georgia Farm Bureau Convention held in Jekyll Island. This particular trade show is an annual treat for our queens year after year. The show is small but filled with visitors that have a true passion for Georgia Agriculture. Everyone that attends this show always enjoys meeting our Georgia Queens every year! Lindsey interviewed with Phil Streetman with WSST in Cordele after the Farm Bureau Convention. Lindsey gave Phil an overview of her year and invited everyone to our annual convention that is quickly approaching. Miss Lindsey is looking forward to our annual Georgia Convention and also thrilled to represent Georgia in Dallas, Texas at the upcoming National Watermelon Convention.

On that note, everyone please mark your calendars to the Georgia Watermelon Association's Annual Convention held January 29th- 31st in Cordele at The Lake Blackshear Resort. We are excited to offer you extensive educational programs along with plenty of Georgia fellowship!

For more information on the Convention, please contact our GWA office at 706.845.8575. We invite you all to join us in January and look forward to seeing you in Georgia!

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



Lindsey and Jane Hussey in Anaheim, California enjoying the exhibitors at the trade show.



Fun times at PMA!



Breakfast in DC along with Brent Harrison and Bob Morrissey.



Our very own Gail and Bob Rawlins always take time out for our Georgia Queens.



Chandler Mack and Lindsey catch up over morning session in DC.



Lindsey enjoying every minute of our Farm Bureau Exhibit.



John Lapide and Anita Fields with Lindsey enjoying a nice dinner by Temple Inland in Anaheim.



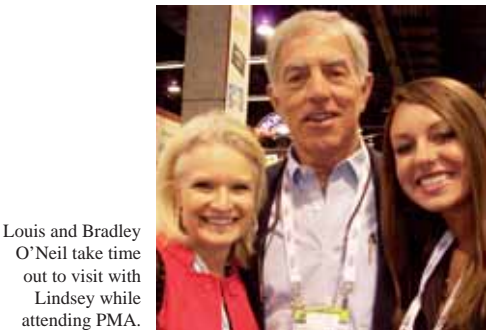
Greg Peacock with GA Dept of Ag along with Brandon Ashley with GA Farm Bureau.



A fun time is always had with Stephanie Simik and NWPB!



A nice surprise from Mrs. Jeannie Tucker while in Jekyll Island.



Louis and Bradley O'Neil take time out to visit with Lindsey while attending PMA.



Mrs. Jeannie and Mr. Ricky spending time with Lindsey at the Farm Bureau Convention.



It's always good to see Denise Mouzin and all our friends from Illiana.



Lindsey enjoys talking watermelon with all ages!



A group shot of our great 2009 watermelon queens! What a great group of girls our industry has.



Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to you all.



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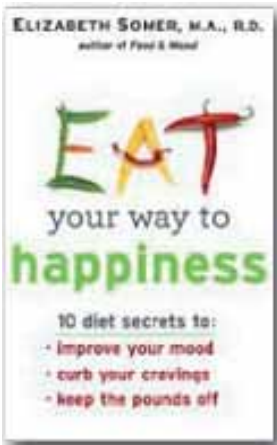
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Mark Arney
Executive Director



Introducing Elizabeth Somer



Elizabeth Somer, M.A., is a registered dietitian who has carved a unique professional niche as one of the few, if not only, dietitians who is well-versed in nutrition research.

For 25 years, she has kept abreast of the current research, packaging that information into easy-to-read books, magazine articles, lectures, continuing education seminars, and practical news for the media. The National Watermelon Promotion Board (NWPB) is excited to announce that we will be working with Elizabeth on our nutrition, communication and other health and wellness projects.

Elizabeth is author of several books, including Age-Proof Your Body, Food & Mood, The Food & Mood Cookbook, Nutrition For Women as well as the newly published Eat Your Way to Happiness.

She is an Advisory Board member to Shape Magazine and Editor in Chief of Nutrition Alert, a newsletter that summarizes the current research from more than 6,000 journals.

CBS Super Screen in Times Square

At NWPB we’re always looking for great opportunities to promote watermelon all year long. Sometimes there’s a tactic that works well for watermelon no matter what the time of year.

Since we received an overwhelmingly positive response from consumers, retailers and industry members to the watermelon ads that on the New York City jumbotron in the spring, we decided to do it again. Millions of people—locals and tourists alike—saw the spots that focused on health, versatility, active lifestyle and the great value of watermelon.



Skin Research: US and Greece

The NWPB has funded a skin research project to look at the skin protection characteristics of the antioxidant and amino acid components found in watermelon for UV and skin cancer prevention.

Dr. Penelope Perkins-Veazie is the principle investigator. She touched on the status of the research while presenting at the NWPB board meeting in Anaheim.

Executive Director Mark Arney visited Korres SA, in Athens, Greece at the company’s invitation. Korres currently has a line of skin care and sun protection products that utilize a watermelon base.



Established out of Greece’s oldest homeopathic pharmacy, Korres’s natural extracts used in their formulas ensure enhanced product performance, bringing clinically proven, advanced skincare benefits, while also avoiding harmful synthetic compounds, to ensure maximum skin compatibility and environmentally- conscious products.



Korres is interested in helping to fund NWPB’s skin research.

Beverage Release in the UK

While abroad, Mark also traveled to the United Kingdom to meet with representatives of Rubicon. Earlier this year, the beverage company released a new watermelon juice product to the UK.

Rubicon Watermelon Exotic juice drink is available in a 1 litre sharing carton and a handy 288ml pack for drinking on the go.

The Rubicon juice drink is made with USA watermelon concentrate from Milne Fruit Company. Rubicon is spending \$7.5 million promoting the product in the UK. The company is promoting the lycopene content and health benefit on the product, as a result of information that the NWPB provided.

The NWPB sent Rubicon’s CEO the latest research and information on the amino acid citrulline. As Rubicon also has a sports drink product, it has been suggested to add watermelon juice, or citrulline extracted from watermelon, for added benefit to the consumer.



Bakkavor—Europe’s largest fresh-cut produce company—has shown interest in U.S. watermelon varieties that can hold up better in fresh-cut processing than their current supply. Mark and UK Retail Representative Neil Gordon delivered samples to Bakkavor’s procurement facility north of London.

USDA-ARS Facility in Lane, Oklahoma

Executive Director Mark Arney recently attended a meeting at the Agricultural Research Service (ARS) Lane, Oklahoma facility. The staff at Lane did a great job in hosting the meeting and it was very evident that everyone was proud to be able to showcase their work.

Dr. Dan Upchurch, Area Director for the Southern Plains, was at the facility for a program review and input from the stakeholders. Mark told Dr. Upchurch how important the work at Lane is to the watermelon industry, and that the NWPB board and

During the holiday season when New York City was full of shoppers and tourists, even more people saw our watermelon images and messages.

The economy has been especially tough on the advertising business, and that put NWPB in a great negotiating position to get the ads run again at a greatly reduced rate! Watermelon ads ran again on the jumbotron in October with Halloween watermelon ideas, in November featuring watermelon for football and tailgating parties, and in December showing the watermelon snowman carving. The December ads also featured a special promotion with the Chevy’s restaurant near Times Square. A watermelon margarita promotion in New York at Christmastime – now that’s keeping watermelon on the menu all year long!



staff will continue to wholeheartedly support the staff and facility there.

A tour of the facility was given the scientists were available for a meet and greet.

It is about a two hour drive to Lane from Dallas. If you are interested in visiting the facility while in Dallas for the NWPB board meeting or NWA convention, please let us know. We are happy to help arrange a visit.



Flavor, Quality and American Menus

The continuing education program at the Culinary Institute of America (CIA) recently offered the Flavor, Quality & American Menus retreat, where more than 50 executive chefs and menu development professionals attended. NWPB was a sponsor once again, gaining watermelon as an ingredient access to some very influential people.

These culinary pros are responsible for millions of meals served each day. Watermelon menu items were prepared by CIA chefs and showcased during receptions, breakfasts and lunches served during the event.

The items varied from a “Crazy Watermelon and Feta Cheese Salad” to a “Watermelon Bellini Float” cocktail. The variety of items gave the chefs a first-hand experience of the versatility of watermelon.

NWPB also presented to the group focusing on the many product benefits of watermelon, including its powerful ability to make people feel good – some-



thing every food service professional or restaurateur wants for their operation.

The reaction was outstanding! Many chefs mentioned they didn’t know that watermelon could be grilled or paired with salty or savory flavors, or used for meals at so many different times of the day.

Renowned west-coast chef Duskie Estes even included a watermelon salad in her presentation that was themed “Creating High Flavor Dishes While Controlling Food Costs.” Estes did a great job of presenting watermelon as a high-flavor, yet low-cost ingredient – perfect!

We are reaching more and more chefs with each event we attend at CIA.

Fall Board Meeting Overview

NWPB moved its fall board meeting to the end of the PMA tradeshow this year. With many of our board members already traveling to the show, we had a terrific turnout. For those who normally do not attend, they were able to see Your Board in Action, helped work the booth, and met with key industry members, retailers and consumers.

The board meeting kicked off with the crisis training session for new board members, and then continued with special presentations that included the following:

- Chevy’s Real Mex Award for top selling restaurant location during summer watermelon menu promotion
- Market Data presentation by Industry Affairs Associate Jason Hanselman featuring analytics, updates and tools
- Citrulline Research by Dr. Arturo Figueroa
- Skin Research by Dr. Penny Perkins-Veazie
- Produce News watermelon coverage

PMA Fresh Summit Expo a Success!

At the recent PMA Fresh Summit, the entire produce industry came together in record numbers. The convention drew attendees from every link in the produce supply chain with an all-time record 19,070 attendees from 58 countries at the Anaheim Convention Center.

“These extraordinary numbers are indicative of the perseverance and strength of our industry,” said PMA President & CEO Bryan Silberman. “Our industry has always come together to learn, to grow and to share new ideas, so it is no surprise that in today’s tough economic times our community comes together in record numbers. It is that courage, character and community that characterize the produce industry worldwide.”

NWPB Wins “Best Booth” Award



At the Fresh Summit tradeshow, the staff and guests at the NWPB booth were delighted to hear the results of the Best Booth award when the National Watermelon Promotion Board was announced!

Of over 800 exhibitors, NWPB won 2nd place in the “Inline” booth category.

- Booths were judged by a team of industry professionals on the following criteria.
- Booth presentation: Integration of company identity in booth design, design and graphic elements, clearly communicates message to attendee, and adherence to show rules/exhibitor guidelines.
 - Product presentation: Product displays and benefit messaging.
 - Exhibit personnel: Professional appearance/etiquette, engagement with visitors, and adequate staffing.

According to the judges, “[Our] inline exhibit did a masterful job of weaving clear and distinct product identity into a fun exhibit design and overall presentation.”

Our new tradeshow booth has really paid off!

Retail Display Contest Winners

Its official! The votes have been tallied and the winners of this summer’s National Display Contest have been notified. Combining resources with the NWA, we ran the first-ever display contest for produce managers across the US and Canada for the entire month of July.

All entries included pictures of the displays and promotional activities. Produce managers were asked to identify the source of the watermelon being displayed.



The NWPB received entries and then sent out to the state associations for the initial judging. Once the local winners were determined, the first place winners were judged to select the Grand Prize winner.

All the first place regional winners are given an all-expense paid trip to that state’s convention. The Grand Prize winner receives an all-expense paid trip for two to the National Watermelon Association convention in Dallas in February. As you will notice in the list of winners, Canadian produce managers practically swept the field.... Oh, Canada !





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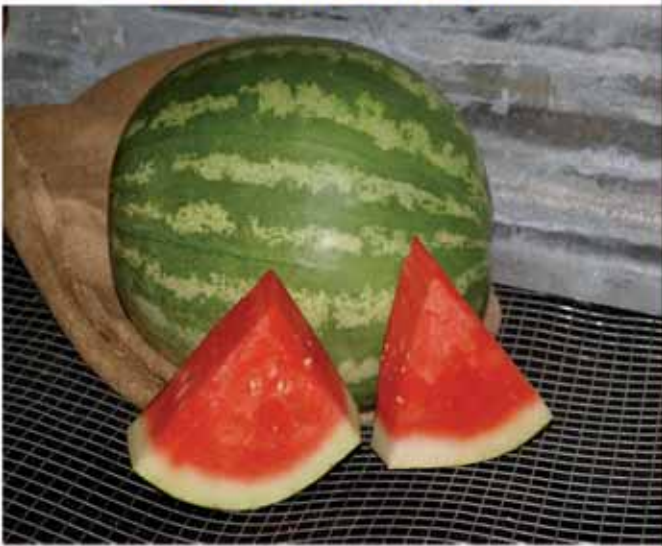
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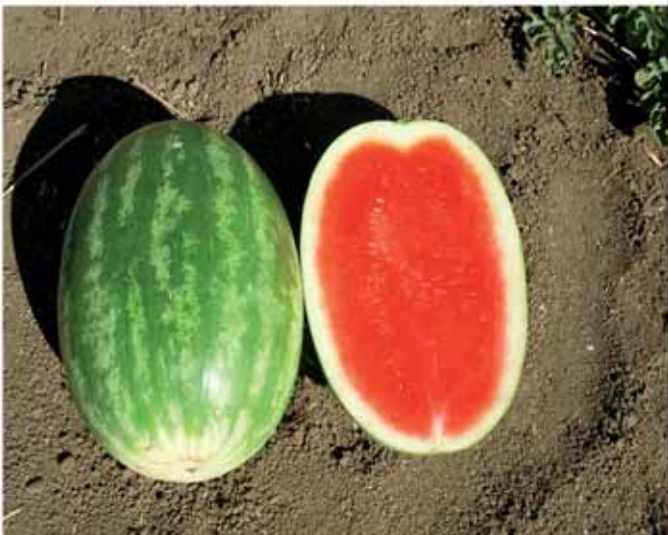
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Illiana Report

Hello and Happy New Year to one and all!

Queen Johnna wound up 2009 with a flurry of promotions. August started with the Knox County Watermelon Festival and the Think Pink Day on the Links where Johnna passed out watermelon to the golfers. Thanks to Double T Trucking for sponsoring her. Next up we attended the Indiana State Fair Taste of Indiana Farms on August 18-20. Watermelons were donated by Hall Farms. On August 22 Johnna passed out watermelon at the Vincennes Farmer’s Market Kid’s Day. Those melons were also provided by Hall Farms of Oaktown.

On September 7 Johnna represented Illiana in the Labor Day Parade in Palestine Illinois, before heading out to Washington D.C. to attend the United Fresh Public Policy Conference. Johnna met with several Illinois representatives and spoke with them about the agricultural issues that face our farmers. Chef Joe Poon joined all of the queens at the Fresh Festival on Capitol Hill where they served watermelon samples. All of the queens and their coordinators took a D.C. city open air bus tour on Thursday night. It was a wonderful opportunity for all of us to catch up. We also took a tour of the Capitol Building on Friday morning and then visited one of the Smithsonians before heading back to the Midwest.

PMA was next up for Queen Johnna. She headed to Anaheim California to represent the Illiana Watermelon Association at their booth. Johnna also enjoyed spending time in the Sun World booth. Thank you so much to Sun World for helping sponsor her. Special thanks to Tim and Colleen Dunn for chauffeuring us around. We want to also thank Paul Sawyer from FWA for setting up the limo tour for the queens and Jim Barfield from Florida for escorting them. The ladies loved seeing Hollywood Blvd. and Rodeo Drive in Beverly Hills. They truly felt like queens.

Johnna promoted IWA and the Watermelon Drop in the Festival of Lights Parade in November. It was chilly but fun. Thanks to the Knox County Chamber of Commerce for providing the beautifully decorated and lit float.

December went out with a bang or should I say splat! Johnna spent the last two weeks of December promoting the second annual New Year’s Eve Watermelon Drop held in downtown Vincennes. There was music, refreshments, heaters (this is important!), and many, many people. 2009 culminated with the raising of the huge lit watermelon and the dropping of the real melons. Johnna counted it down to 2010 and fireworks brought the event to a close.

The Illiana Watermelon Association would also like to take this chance to wish Johnna the best of luck at Nationals. She has represented our association with pride and elegance. Thank you so much for your time and effort Johnna, we are so proud of you!

Mark your calendars and join us at Casino Aztar in Evansville Indiana on March12-13 for the Illiana Watermelon Association 21st annual convention. Reservations can be made at 1-800-544-0120. Come enjoy the Hoosier hospitality! Sweet Watermelon Wishes for 2010!

Beth Frey
Illiana Watermelon Promotions Coordinator
1707 McDowell Rd
Vincennes IN 47591-5059
812-886-5409
loveshallmark@hotmail.com



Thanks Double T Trucking for sponsoring Johnna at Think Pink a Day at the Links.



Queens Johnna, Maggie, and Jessica at the SunWorld exhibit. Thanks SunWorld for helping sponsor Johnna.



Yummy Watermelon at the Indiana State Fair. Thanks Hall Farms at Oaktown.



Jim Barfield and the queens stopped at Whataburger before heading off to Hollywood.



Kid's Day at the Farmer's Market---- Have a slice of watermelon!



Labor Day Parade



Johnna poses with a future watermelon princess.



Johnna, you have been a wonderful spokesperson for IWA. Thanks for all your hard work!



Washington D.C.—Great job on the Hill ladies!



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Manager - Thomas Wright

Mar-Del Report

Season’s Greetings,

I am proud to say that by the time this article comes out we will have completed another great year! It’s almost time for state chapter associations to hold their annual conventions to crown a new queen. I would like to take this opportunity to extend an open invitation to join us at the Hyatt Regency Resort and Spa in Cambridge Maryland the first weekend of February. I hope to see all of you there.

I know that in our case the new representative is going to have some big shoes to fill! Queen Jessica has been extremely dedicated to every aspect of the queen program. There is never enough space for pictures or words to describe the amount of support or effort that has been put into the promotions this year.

We wrapped up our year by flying to Anaheim California for PMA. There were lots of people to meet and things to see. It was an excellent trip and all of the queens had a blast at work and play. I have added a few pictures that I couldn’t squeeze into our page on the last issue but feel should be shared. Both Jessica and I appreciate everyone that we have had a chance to work with this year. I would like to point out that everyone Queen Jessica has had the privilege of meeting or getting to know on a more personal level has influenced who she will become in her later years. Your examples of hard work ethic, kindness, intelligence, patience and generosity will set a foundation that can’t be bought.

On behalf of the Mar-Del Watermelon Association, we wish you all a wonderful 2010! I would like to say, best of luck to my fellow coordinators with all of your upcoming conventions and choosing a new representative, not to replace but to join former queens in the watermelon family. Jessica it has been great to travel and get to know you! You’re a sweet person all the way around and your association is very proud of your year as Mar-Del Watermelon Queen. Thanks for a job well done and we wish you all the best at the National competition!

Warmest Watermelon Wishes,
Candice Hales
Promotions Coordinator
Mar-Del Watermelon Association



Everyone loves to visit the Evan’s Fruit Stand.



The Queens pause for a shot at the NWPB booth!



Kevin and Queen Jessica pose for a watermelon memory.



Queen Jessica and Famous Amos!



The Queens gather at United Fresh meeting.



Time to relax at the promotion board party.



Getting ready to take a tour of D.C.



Another busy day at PMA!



Queens had a great view from the upper deck bus tour!



The best burgers in Anaheim, Ca!



Queen Jessica strikes a pose in Hollywood.



Don’t worry its Sparkling Cider!



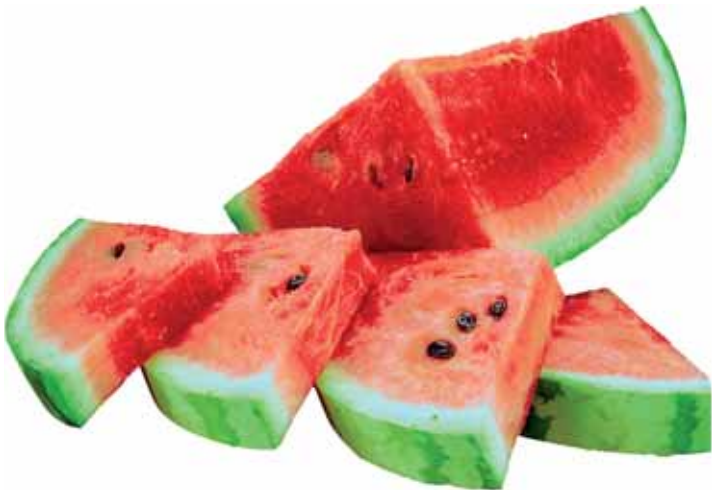
Jessica saw some familiar faces in Santa Monica.



The Queen, The Shrek, and The Seed Man, make a lovely combination!



Hats off to you for a great year!



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Improved Grafting Method for Watermelons Transplants

A Research Report by Dr. Richard Hassell
Department of Horticulture, Clemson University

INTRODUCTION

Watermelon grafting is an important part of watermelon production to avoid soil-borne diseases and/or chemical fumigation in areas where land rotation is not feasible. Current commercial grafting practices depend on maintaining at least one rootstock cotyledon during the healing period following grafting for high survival.

Rootstock re-growth originating from meristematic tissue next to the remaining cotyledon is one main contributing barrier preventing affordable costs which prevent its introduction into the U.S. agricultural system. With the phase-out of methyl bromide fumigant, new interests are being reviewed for potential alternatives.

For many years grafting in watermelons has been viewed as an option solely in areas where labor costs are minimal. This benefit has great potential to have a very positive effect for commercial production in the U.S. by improving the plants overall environmental efficiency and overcoming soil-borne pathogens. An alternative grafting method which eliminates potential re-growth is needed in order for grafting technology and benefits to progress into the U.S.

Removal of both cotyledons in a one step fashion at time of grafting eliminates all potential re-growth and greatly reduces overall grafting costs. Observations indicate however that the rootstock hypocotyl begins to yellow and declines until death when grafted at the 1st leaf stage or younger which is customary for current commercial grafting techniques. The yellowing and steady decline of the hypocotyl, which results in rootstock death, simulates leaf senescence and

suggests that insufficient nutrient reserves were available to the hypocotyl prior to grafting. Without sufficiently stored carbohydrates, the hypocotyl cannot sustain itself long enough before receiving photosynthates from the newly grafted vegetative tissue. When plants are allowed to mature to the appearance of the 2nd or 3rd leaf, hypocotyl deterioration is not observed, which suggest that more reserves are available with maturity to maintain the rootstock until graft healing is complete.

MATERIAL FOR GROWING SEEDINGS

For this experiment four rootstocks were tested: Lagenaria siceraria ‘Emphasis’ (bottle gourd) Citrulus lanatus var. citroides ‘Ojakkyo’ (wild watermelon) Cucurbita moschata x Cucurbita maxima ‘Strongtosa’ (inter-specific squash hybrid) Citrullus lanatus var. lanatus ‘Tri-X 313’ (triploid seedless watermelon).

Scion material was Citrullus lanatus var. lanatus ‘Tri-X 313’. All seeds were obtained through Syngenta Seeds, Inc. The soilless mix used for this research has the following composition: 75% NB nursery peat, 25% coarse perlite, 198 grams/square meter of dolomitic limestone, and 454 grams/square meter of gypsum. No premix (nutrient charge) was added to the soilless mix.

Rootstocks were grown in 72 square vented plug trays with cell depths of 5.71 cm and top and bottom cell diameters of 3.96 cm and 2.54 cm respectively. Scion was seeded in 288 square plug trays with cell depths of 3.81 cm inches and top and bottom cell diameters of 2.05 cm and 1.14 cm respectively. All fertilizer applications consisted of 100 ppm of 15-5-15 Peters Excel water soluble fertilizer using the Anderson Injector Series S.

MATERIAL FOR GRAFTING

Rootstocks species were seeded in 72 cell flats and divided into ten plant subsamples replicated five times for grafting and tissue analysis. Rootstocks were grafted at separate times starting with inter-specific squash hybrid, followed by the bottle gourd, wild watermelon, and the seedless hybrid watermelon.

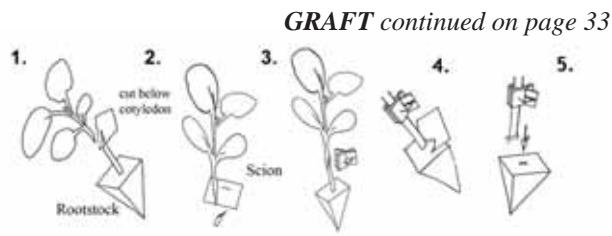
The 1st leaf stage in this study is defined as visibly seeing the first unexpanded true leaf. The 2nd leaf stage is



defined as seeing the fully expanded 1st true leaf and the unexpanded 2nd true leaf. The 3rd leaf stage is defined as seeing the 1st and 2nd expanded true leaves and the unexpanded 3rd true leaf.

Prior to grafting separate plants samples were then severed from the roots at the cell line and divided into cotyledons, leaves, and hypocotyls for area measurements of the vegetative tissue which was calculated using the LI-3100 area meter. At each leaf stage all the rootstock plants were grafted using the cotyledon devoid grafting method (Figure 1). The “cotyledon devoid” grafting technique is a new method aimed at eliminating rootstock re-growth and is the method under investigation.

The cotyledon devoid graft is described as follows: using sterile single edge kobalt blade, rootstocks were first cut just below both the cotyledons at a 90° angle. This was performed to increase accessibility and precision for the grafting slant cut. An approximate 65° slant cut was then made at the tip of the hypocotyl. The scion was cut at the base from the roots in large quantities and set on sterile paper towels. It was then individually cut at approximately 1.9 cm below the cotyledons with an opposing but complimentary 65 o angle to the rootstock slice and preserved in a 3.8 liter size zip-lock bag to help prevent wilting until it was used.



GROW continued from page 15

posed,” Davis notes. “The other 2 years it rained so much that the plants became stressed from too much water.”

Davis extracted RNA from watermelon fruit at three stages of growth and ripening: at 12 days after pollination (DAP), when the flesh was white; at 24 DAP, when the flesh was pink; and at 36 DAP, when the flesh was red. Then she sent RNA from the tissue samples to Charleston for analysis.

Plant geneticist Karen Harris removes watermelon flesh for RNA extraction.

Levi used this collection of RNA to develop a library of 832 expressed sequence tags (ESTs), which are unique gene segments that direct different aspects of development and metabolism. Then he worked with Wechter and Harris to decipher how the ESTs regulated plant growth and development.

The team found that these ESTs were active in metabolism, cell growth, cell development, and transporting nutrients and other substances across cell walls. They also came into play in cell division, cellular communication, DNA copying, plant defense, and stress response.

The Charleston researchers then identified significantly different levels of EST expression during the early, middle, and late stages of fruit growth and ripening. They found 335 ESTs that had at least a twofold increase or decrease in copy number in at least one of the three stages. Of these 335 ESTs, 239 were very similar to ESTs found in other plants, while the remaining 96 had not been previously identified in any sequenced plant species.

“Most of these genes regulate targeted activities,” Wechter says. “They are very specific genes that do certain things at a certain time during growth and ripening. Many of them are involved in the development of the watermelon vascular system, which is a crucial component for growth and ripening.”

“The vascular system in a watermelon forms very fast because it is building the infrastructure for fruit, like building a highway before building a city,” Levi says. “This system is how fluids transport sugars from the leaves into the fruit.”

But some of the results were unexpected—and may someday give breeders and producers an edge in moving watermelons to market.

In some types of fruit, ethylene gas is produced, and it is responsible for many ripening processes. These fruits are referred to as “climacteric fruits.” In fact, producers often harvest climacteric fruits—such as tomatoes—before they are ripe, and then promote ripening by exposing the harvested fruit to ethylene.

But ethylene has not been linked to ripening of non-climacteric fruits. Scientists consider watermelons and other cucurbits to be non-climacteric fruits. So Wechter and the others were very surprised to see differences in expression levels of genes involved in ethylene production in watermelon fruit. They then measured the amount of ethylene produced by developing and ripening fruit. They found a burst of ethylene production during the white-fruit stage and lesser amounts produced during the later stages.



“We just didn’t think ethylene had any role in the ripening of watermelon,” Wechter says. “Now we know it could be a central component of the ripening process. And if it’s important in watermelon, it could be important in other non-climacteric fruit as well.”

Jim Giovannoni is a molecular biologist who works at the ARS Robert W. Holley Center for Agriculture and Health in Ithaca, New York. He maintains the Cucurbit Genomics Database (www.icugi.org), a gene bank for the Cucurbitaceae family that is used by researchers around the world. He helped the Charleston team sort through the watermelon ESTs.

“Finding ethylene activity in watermelon is significant because it shows the existence of the same type of genes that are also found in tomato and Arabidopsis—our model plant,” Giovannoni says. “This shows that genes involved in model systems are also seen in crop systems, which validates the models we use. In addition, we have identified ESTs that could be used to develop molecular markers for ethylene response in watermelon.”

Enigmatic ESTs Remain

Though the ESTs linked to ethylene activity were a surprise, the team was able to pinpoint their function. But the team also found 96 ESTs that remain somewhat of a mystery. “They appear to be active all the time, which suggests they regulate more generalized, basic functions for plant survival,” Wechter says. “But we can’t match them up with any other known plant ESTs. We’re trying to confirm they are unique to watermelon.”

Pathogens continue to threaten production. Finding sources of genetic resistance to these threats is essential to the success of watermelon crops across the southern United States.

“Cultivated watermelons are not genetically diverse at all, which makes them much more vulnerable to pathogens and environmental stresses,” Harris notes. “It’s difficult to find genetic differences in such a narrow selection of cultivars.”

This research is part of Plant Genetic Resources, Genomics, and Genetic Improvement (#301) and Plant Diseases (#303), two ARS national programs described on the World Wide Web at www.nps.ars.usda.gov.

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North Carolina Report

Hello and Happy Holidays from North Carolina!

It has been a busy semester, but one I will most certainly never forget. Having the opportunity to travel the country, I have stayed on the go and enjoyed every moment of it.

In September, Mrs. Susan and I traveled to Washington D.C. with the seven other state queens and Maggie, the national queen, to promote melons on Capital Hill. I had the opportunity to meet with several North Carolina representatives, as well as personally speak with North Carolina senator Richard Burr on agricultural issues that face our great state. I was grateful for his listening ear and willingness to consider a variety of solutions in order to better the state and its people. All queens participated in the Fresh Festival on Capital Hill where we served watermelon samples alongside Chef Joe Poon. Coincidentally, I stumbled across my mother's high school classmate and current North Carolina representative, Mike McIntyre. It was such a pleasure to meet him and share with him the exciting experiences I have had as the North Carolina Watermelon Queen. Also during our trip to Washington, all nine queens and their coordinators took a city tour on Saturday night. It made for a great time...especially when it started to rain! It was a wonderful opportunity for each of us to catch up, as well as see pieces of our nations history. We also took a tour of the Capital Building on Sunday morning before departing, which was interesting and informative.

In October, Mrs. Susan and I packed our bags again and departed for the West Coast. Destination: Anaheim, California. Having never been to the West Coast, I was extremely excited to experience life across the country (which is very different than life here in North Carolina). Having heard stories from past queens, I was also anxious to be a part of PMA's, our reason for traveling so far from home. Being told the entire year that PMA's would be something I would "just have to experience on my own," I now see why everyone tells me to enjoy my own experience and take in my own perspective. I have never seen anything like what I saw at the Anaheim Convention Center. Buyers, sellers, shippers and producers flooded the building, all with an array of goods and products. It was definitely something worth experiencing on my own. Thank you to Nick Augostini and members of the North Carolina Department of Agriculture for traveling all the way to California with us! Mrs. Susan and I also spent our last night in Anaheim at Disneyland, where we rode our favorite rides all night, acting like two little girls. It was so much fun!!

Also in October, NC State celebrated its homecoming weekend against the University of Maryland. On Friday night, I rode in the homecoming parade, representing the North Carolina Watermelon Association. Because NC State is an agricultural school, it was only appropriate that I promote the best product in the state of North Carolina! Winning the homecoming game on Saturday afternoon wasn't too bad, either. Go Pack!!!

Next on the list: the South Carolina and Mar-Del Watermelon Conventions, as well as preparing for nationals in Dallas, Texas! I have less than two months until I begin to pack my bags and join the National Watermelon Association in Dallas for their annual convention. I am so excited and am anxiously waiting the day of departure! It will be wonderful to see all the girls and their coordinators, as well as compete for the title of the National Watermelon Queen. I also look forward to traveling to South Carolina and Mar-Del: they will be my first conventions as a visiting queen and it will be so wonderful to see Summers and Jessica! I can't wait to see how the other associations present their conventions!

In all my travels and preparations, I would like to extend a thank you to a few special people. First, Maggie for being such a wonderful example and National Representative, as well as Mrs. Eleanor for standing along side her every step of the way. You both have given so much of your time and energy to this association and your hard work truly shines through! Susan and Brent Harrison, thank you for your unending advice and support. Susan, it was so nice speaking to you about your travels as the North Carolina queen and then, the National Queen. I value your advice and it was such a pleasure to meet both you and Brent. John Lapide, Gordon Hunt, Jean Marinaro, and all officers of the National Watermelon Association and National Watermelon Promotion Board, thank you for your time and talents in promoting such a wonderful and versatile product and your support of the queen program! Your work does not go unnoticed. Thank you to Jackson Farms, to Murfreesboro Farms, to Etheridge Produce, and to Joe Jones for your unending love and support the entire year thus far. You all have made me feel like a queen at all times, and I am grateful for all you have done for me. Joe, I will never forget how you made sure I had a ride fit for a queen- my very own horse drawn carriage. Each of you have ensured that I have only the best opportunities while serving as your North Carolina representative and I consider myself blessed to have you all "along for the ride!"

Please don't forget to look at our website: www.ncmelons.org, if you have questions or comments about our association! Our 2010 convention will be held at the Holiday Inn Sunspree Resort in Wrightsville Beach, North Carolina the weekend of March 12 and we hope to see you there. Until next time...eat more melons!

Gratefully,
Kensley Leonard
2009 North Carolina Watermelon Queen



After the Reception on Capital Hill



Queen Kensley with Nick from the NCDA



All of the queens



Serving watermelon on Capital Hill



At the Promotion Board booth



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Weight (Lbs)	Shape	Count	Rind
16-20		Mostly 45	Medium green
Days to Harvest		Planting Season	
85		SP, SUM, FL	

SUGAR COAT > Vigorous plant / High yield / High brix / Excellent uniformity / Very firm flesh / Good crispy texture / Red flesh color / Large fruits / Hollow heart tolerance



Weight (Lbs)	Shape	Count	Rind
16-20		45's and 36's	Medium green
Days to Harvest		Planting Season	
90		SP, SUM, FL	

SUGAR BITE > Jubilee rind pattern / Personal size / Firm Fresh / High yield / Red flesh / Good brix



Weight (Lbs)	Shape	Count	Rind
5-7		Mostly 8's few 6's	Tiger Stripe
Days to Harvest		Planting Season	
80		SP, FL	

A SENSE OF TASTE

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South Carolina Report

Greetings from SC,
Our busy queen tour moved forward with a visit to the Pageland Watermelon Festival on Saturday July 18th. Summers had a wonderful time at the festival and enjoyed riding in the parade. She was glad to have several members of her family their to support her. On Sunday, July 19th we were back on the road, this time heading to Clemson, SC where Summers spoke to a group of students at the Commissioners School. She talked about her job and the importance of watermelons in our state. The students loved our queen and learned a lot about the watermelon industry.

The following weekend former queen Misty James Tripp escorted Summers to Indianapolis, Indiana for numerous Kroger Promotions. I stayed behind in South Carolina and was thrilled to welcome my new niece Emerson Sara Vaughn into the world on July 24th. After arriving in Indianapolis, Summers met up with the other queens at a racing event held at a local Kroger store. The following day she attended a promotion at Riley’s Children’s Hospital and worked an in-store promotion with the Mar-Del Watermelon Queen. The next day the girls were off to the Kroger 200 Race where they cut and served watermelon until it was all gone! The girls had the opportunity to meet the drivers and go onto the racetrack. Thank you Beth Frey and the Illiana Watermelon Association for organizing this promotion and including us in it!

Our next stop was to Sumter, SC where Summers appeared on the television show “Making it Grow” with Rowland Alston. She and Ansley Rast from the SCDA did a great job promoting the watermelon industry and making several yummy treats. Thanks Ansley for arranging this promotion! The next morning Summers and I headed to downtown Greenville where she talked with Jack Roper and Megan Heidelberg on the morning television show “Your Carolina”. Once again Summers did an excellent job describing her role as the SC Watermelon Queen and promoting the watermelon industry.

On August 4th Peggy Denny welcomed Summers onto her cooking show. Summers’ segment was a huge hit with numerous people contacting Peggy for the five recipes done by Summers. Everyone loved the new exciting ways to use watermelon.

Next up on our busy schedule was a trip to Death Valley to serve watermelon to the Clemson Football team. The watermelon was a huge hit with the Tigers that had just completed a long grueling football practice. Summers enjoyed visiting with SCWA Member Billy Jenkins who came along to help serve watermelon at this event. To keep things fair our next stop was to Columbia, SC where Summers served watermelon to the South Carolina Gamecocks. The temperature was soaring so the team was happy to have the good cold watermelon that was provided by Brad Boozer. Summers was all smiles when she had the opportunity to meet award-winning football coach Steve Spurrier.

Immediately following the Gamecock Football practice we headed to Ehrhardt, SC for the Schutzenfest Festival. This is always a special event since the town rolls out the red carpet and extends every hospitality to our queen who enjoyed riding in the parade on Saturday.

Next up was a visit to the Furman Paladins in Greenville, SC. After the practice was over Coach Bobby Lamb encouraged one of his players (who just happened to be a watermelon eating champion in his home state) to show everyone just how fast he could eat a huge slice of melon. We all agreed that we had never seen a slice disappear quite so quickly.

The United Fresh Public Policy Conference in Washington, DC was a huge success! After arriving we attended a reception on the hill where we enjoyed watching Chef Joe Poon demonstrate his exceptional carving skills. The next day we attended several meetings and set out to lobby on the hill. As usual we were paired with the group from Walter P. Rawl and Sons who are always so helpful to our queen. During numerous visits to different offices Summers was thrilled to actually meet with SC Senator Lindsay Graham, SC Congressmen Henry Brown and SC Congressman Joe Wilson. Thanks to Bob Morrissey for setting up this event!

In October, Summers attended PMA in Anaheim, California with my mother, Ann Bryant. She was totally amazed at the size of the show and enjoyed visiting the different state booths along with the National Promotions Board exhibit. Summers along with several other state queens enjoyed touring LA and the surrounding area while in California. All of the girls enjoyed the reception that was held at The Embers in Anaheim and organized by Stephanie Simek of the National Watermelon Promotion Board.

The State Fair brings in a huge crowd every year and our watermelon queen was there. She discussed her job as the queen and the health benefits of watermelon. She also talked about the versatility of watermelon by showing the audience a carved watermelon for Halloween. After Summers finished speaking the crowd enjoyed a sample of the breakfast a go-go she whipped up during her presentation. This was a great promotion!

The South Carolina Watermelon Association would like to thank Summers for the excellent job she did this year! We appreciate all of your hard work and wish you the best of luck in Dallas at the National Convention! Wherever life may take you, we know you have a very bright future ahead.

Until next time,
Julie Murdock
SCWA Promotions Coordinator
Jewels412@charter.net

I just wanted to give a big thank you to the South Carolina Watermelon Association. This year has flown by so quickly but not without leaving me with memories that will last a lifetime. I have thoroughly enjoyed working with the National Watermelon Association, the National Watermelon Promotion Board and all of the other state queens and coordinators. I will always cherish the memories and friendships I have made throughout this past year. I feel honored to have had the privilege of representing my state as the 2009 South Carolina Watermelon Queen. I look forward to seeing everyone in Dallas!

Sincerely,
Summers Slaton
2009 SC Watermelon Queen



Everyone wanted a picture with Summers during the Pageland Parade.



Steve Spurrier looks forward to those home grown watermelons.



Summers had a blast at the Commissioners School.



Riding in style at the Schutzenfest Festival.



The girls had a wonderful time at the Indy Race.



The Furman Paladins enjoyed their watermelons and meeting Queen Summers.



Summers and Stephanie Simek enjoyed promoting watermelon in Indianapolis.



Queen Summers and SC Congressman Joe Wilson at the United Fresh Reception.



Summers and Ansley did a great job on “Making it Grow.”



SC Congressman Henry Brown thanks Queen Summers for his watermelon.



Peggy Denny enjoyed learning how to make all of Summers’ tasty treats.



Summers enjoyed spending time with Sony Dickerson of the SCDA at the South Carolina Booth in Anaheim.



Billy Jenkins joined Brad Boozer and Summers at the Clemson cutting.



What a beautiful group of young ladies at PMA.



Can you guess how many melons these fellows finally consumed?



Brad Boozer and I take a minute at the State Fair to thank our queen for all of her hard work this year!



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Gov’t auditors say food-tracing program flawed

A crucial part of the nation’s rapid-response plan, the ability to trace food through the supply chain during an illness outbreak or bioterrorism attack, is seriously flawed, an independent watchdog agency has found.

Federal auditors found that nearly half the food manufacturers they surveyed that are supposed to register with the Food and Drug Administration failed to give the agency accurate contact information, according to a report to be re-

leased Friday by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services inspector general’s office.

Congress set up the program after the Sept. 11 attacks to keep food safe from bioterrorism and to allow quick trace-backs when contaminated food reaches consumers.

The report follows a series of high-profile food safety problems in the U.S. involving everything from disease-ridden ground beef to the largest peanut butter recall in history.

“The weaknesses in our food safety system that are highlighted in the report are unacceptable,” said U.S. Rep. Rosa DeLauro, D-Conn., who chairs the House spending panel that oversees the FDA budget. “Congress should pass comprehensive food safety legislation to give FDA the statutory authority it needs.”

Companies that manufacture, process, pack or hold food that is eaten in the U.S. are required by federal law to provide their address and basic contact information to the FDA, so investigators can follow suspect foods through the supply chain.

After interviewing managers at a sample of 130 such companies, however, government investigators found that 48 percent didn’t give the agency accurate information.

More than half were unaware companies had to register, and about a quarter provided no emergency contact information, because current rules don’t require it.

“This lack of information may hamper FDA’s ability to contact food facilities in an emergency,” investigators concluded. They recommended that the FDA improve its record keeping and consider seeking stronger legal powers to fine violators.

FDA officials called the report “helpful” and said it confirmed a known set of problems in the nation’s food tracing system, according to comments submitted by Deputy Commissioner Dr. Joshua Sharfstein.

Problems with the federal government’s ability to trace food drew attention last year after FDA investigators struggled for weeks to identify the cause of a salmonella outbreak initially blamed on tomatoes. No contaminated tomatoes were found, and the outbreak strain eventually was discovered in hot peppers from Mexico.

President Barack Obama’s new FDA commissioner, Margaret Hamburg, has been working to restore the agency’s credibility, and FDA officials repeatedly have said a skimpy budget and toothless regulations keep them from going after companies that break the rules.

GRAFT continued from page 27

Finally the scion was joined together to align the vascular bundles with the rootstock and secured with a spring loaded clip (Figure 1). Grafting treatments consisted of ten plants replicated five times. Following grafting, the newly grafted plants were immediately placed randomly inside a custom made healing chamber for seven days which was located inside the greenhouse. The healing chamber was constructed with a top wire hooped rectangular wooden box with the following dimensions: width of 86 cm, a length of 300 cm, and a depth of 14 cm and covered with clear polyethylene sheet. The humidity was maintained using the 707U-duct mount centrifugal atomizer humidifier.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

There was a significant rootstock by leaf stage interaction suggesting that the four rootstocks responded differently at each of the leaf stages (Table 1). The seedless watermelon type did not significantly increase in hypocotyl

length with each leaf stage but the diameter did increase significant with growing time. This then was reflected on the overall hypocotyl area with a decrease at the third leaf stage.

However, an increase in grafting success was not seen until the rootstock had reaches the third leaf stage. The wild watermelon type did significantly increase at both the hypocotyl length and diameter at each of the leaf stages which resulted in an overall increase in the hypocotyls area.

However, grafting success was fully achieved at the second leaf stage of plant development. Both the inter-specific hybrid and the bottled gourd rootstock significantly increased in both hypocotyl diameter and length with each increase of leaf stage resulting in a significant increase in hypocotyl area and grafting success. There was a strong correlation with grafting success and hypocotyl growth (Table 2). As hypocotyls increased in both length, diameter and area grafting success also increased.

The weakest correlations seemed to be with the wild and seedless watermelon rootstock types in the hypocotyl length. However the strongest correlation came with the inter-specific hybrid rootstock with the hypocotyl length. These results suggest that as the rootstock increases in size and development the greater grafting success can be seen in the absence of the cotyledon leaf.

CONCLUSION

Larger hypocotyls suggest an increase in storage capacity or an overall increased carbohydrate reserves from the 1st leaf stage to the 2nd and 3rd due to larger hypocotyl size. Results indicate that this new method could be used to reduce costs by eliminated rootstock side shoots when performed at the developed of the 2nd or 3rd true leaf stage for these rootstocks. We also found that using scion material at the 3rd leaf stage may be another contributing factor to increase grafting success.



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Texas Report

Happy holidays from Texas! The end of the year remained busy and brought with it lots of successful promotions. On Tuesday, September 9th, just three days after the Plains Watermelon Festival, I left for the United Fresh Produce Association's Congressional Visit. Mrs. Wanda and I were in Washington D.C. with all the other watermelon queens and coordinators and had such a great time. Wednesday night all the queens and Joe Poon, watermelon carver extraordinaire, served Congressmen and women and their staff lots of juicy watermelon slices along with other produce companies who had delicious foods to sample. On Thursday we spent the morning at meetings discussing our main goals to inform our Congressmen and women of, then that afternoon we marched to Capitol Hill for lobbying. We were split up into 27 groups with people from our home state to visit our senators and representatives offices. The Texas group visited four different offices, including John Cornyn's and Joe Barton's, where we presented our goals for the produce industry. Even though there were a lot of issues to cover at these visits, I had such a great time taking part in the lobbying. It was so interesting to see how the process worked and hopefully as whole we were able to make an impression on Congress. On Friday there were a few more meetings to attend as well as a Capitol tour. Although this wasn't my first trip to D.C., I had such a great time getting to visit the city again and this time with lots of good company. I had so much fun seeing all the girls again and meeting new people involved in the produce industry. Another perk was meeting Mr. Paul Begala, CNN analyst and University of Texas alumnus, who told me I should work for CNN one day (fingers crossed). Overall this trip was such a wonderful experience and I learned a lot about how our government works. I would like to give special thanks the National Watermelon Association for allowing me to be a part of it all.

On Friday, September 11th Mrs. Wanda and I flew straight from D.C. to Dallas for in-store promotions that weekend. I spent Saturday at Central Market on Lover's Lane where, despite all the rain, lots of people came in. I was especially excited for this promotion because the demo-lady, Hillary, made Fire and Ice Salsa. With samples of salsa available it was easier to tell customers about the recipe and they all loved it! We couldn't keep enough of it on the table. Then on Sunday we had a promotion at H.E.B in College Station where thankfully it had stopped raining and we passed out slices of watermelon in front of the store. Again, special thanks to NWPB and Marcia Adler for organizing such wonderful in-store promotions for the Texas Watermelon Association.

On September 24th & 25th Mrs. Wanda and I returned to Dallas for the Texas State Fair. Joe Poon and Richard de Los Santos with the Texas Department of Agriculture were both on hand for Texas Monthly's Fair Food & Wine Event on Thursday evening and the opening day of the fair. I met a lot of interesting people on Thursday evening, like the Honey Queens, and also saw Elsie the Borden Cow again. On Friday I had a ton of fun handing out recipe cards and coloring books while culinary students passed out juicy slices and my favorite treat, Fire & Ice Salsa! So many people stopped by our booth on the opening day of the fair but luckily I had enough time to grab a foot-long corn dog for lunch (the best fair food in my opinion). After taking a quick photo with Big Tex, Mrs. Wanda and I were on the road again to San Antonio and Round Rock for in-store promotions.

On Saturday I went to HEB for a different kind of fair- the HEB Watermelon Fun Fair! Gordon with NWPB, Marcia Adler and the wonderful people of HEB organized lots of fun activities for the day, including a watermelon eating contest and coloring contest for kids. However, the biggest crowd pleaser was the seed spitting contest in which Jaime with HEB used an Astroturf mat with white yard lines and miniature footballs to mark the farthest seeds. The next day we all made our way to Round Rock's HEB for more seed-spitting action and sampling of delicious watermelons. Those promotions were a lot of fun and it was great to see how excited the participants got for the contests. Special thanks to Marcia Adler and the NWPB, as well as the awesome people at HEB for allowing me to participate.

The day after my birthday I hopped on a plane and made my way to Cal-I-forn-I-A! I met Mrs. Wanda in Anaheim on October 2nd through the 4th for the Produce Marketing Association Fresh Summit Convention. Along with the beautiful, humidity-free weather, I was especially excited to see all the queens and coordinators once again. Richard de Los Santos was a neighbor to the TWA booth at the convention as well as some familiar faces from Rio Queen Citrus that I met while lobbying in D.C. Ward had plans to broadcast the college football games that day but unfortunately the TV's wouldn't work. However, we didn't need the TV's to attract people because we made really neat luggage tags that said "I love Texas Watermelons," for everyone that stopped by. Although I wished I could have stayed longer in California I had such a great time with everyone at the convention and I'd like to thank the Texas Watermelon Association for making it a wonderful experience.

Just as I thought that sadly my watermelon travels were over for the year, I got a frantic call from Mrs. Wanda asking me if I had a passport. Luckily for me, I had one- which was great because we were soon going to Guadalajara, Mexico for promotions! We were in Guadalajara October 25th through the 28th and had promos in six different Wal-Mart stores around the city. The first day we met Rocio and Marta with Grupo PM who gave us a tour of the city and would be with us the entire trip. The second day I made a TV appearance on TV Azteca's popular morning show, La Revista. I wished I was more fluent in Spanish, but luckily Rocio is a very good translator. Then we were off to Wal-Mart for promotions and we brought a team, too. Each in-store promotion had a lovely booth where culinary students were making carvings out of watermelons. We were also joined by Chef Giuseppe from Mexico City who could really sell a watermelon! Every time someone came by they left with a watermelon. Rocio, Marta and Juan Carlos were also a great help. By the last store we visited I felt a little more comfortable with my Spanish and started talking to more people. I really didn't want to leave though- I was just getting the hang of everything! Despite the language barrier, I had a great time and was so glad to see how enthusiastic the consumers were about watermelons. Really big thanks are due to the National Watermelon Promotion Board, who worked with Grupo PM, and to Rocio and Marta who made me feel so welcome and showed me an amazing time in Mexico.

I'd like to extend an invitation to everyone to attend our Texas Convention January 21st-24th, 2010 at the Embassy Suites Hotel in McAllen, Texas. Call (956) 686-3000 to make your reservation today. I'd love to see you there! And if you'd like to read more about all my travels as TWA Queen and see more photos, check out www.txwatermelonqueen09.wordpress.com.

Mollie Bennett, 2009 Texas Watermelon Queen



At HEB in Rock Round



Rocio & I with Maritza, a host of La Revista.



At Texas monthly's Fair Food & Wine Eent



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In English, National Watermelon Promotion Board. Yay!



The fantastic display in Mexico



Joe is wanted in Texas - \$50,000 reward. He said that was too cheap.



The TV appearance on La Revista



Lobbying on Capitol Hill



The watermelon powerhouse in Wal-Mart



Los ninos en Mexico



Visiting with people on the Fair's first day



My photo with BIG Tex



Ward & Joe working at the conventino



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Western Report



Western Watermelon Association

The Western Watermelon Association is a fairly young chapter, formed in 2007. It has a very interesting history as this association was started with funds raised by 11 loads of watermelon sold at \$0.18 per pound.

Their first meeting was in April of 2007 in Las Vegas, Nevada. At this meeting, the name was decided upon and a steering committee was formed. The steering committee got right to work writing by-laws and working hard to decide a recommended direction for the chapter.

In January 2008, another meeting was held in Nevada and attended by over 75 growers, shippers, distributors and other related service providers. A unanimous vote to approve the bv-laws and thus. the WWA was born.

Current WWA Officers

- President:

Tashi Zouras – tashi@gardikas.com
Dimetri Gardikas Produce Company Santa Fe Springs, CA
(Contact for Membership Information)
- Vice President:

Brent Harrison – bharrison@alharrison.com
Al Harrison Distributors, Inc. Nogales, AZ
- Secretary/Treasurer:

Barbara Murillo – barb_murillo@mchsi.com
Cactus Melon Distributors, Inc. Nogales, AZ
- Officer:

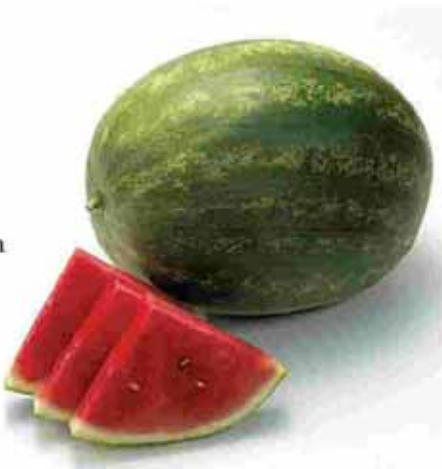
Chuck Botsford – chuck@botsfordgoodfellow.com
Botsford & Goodfellow, Inc. Clackamas, OR
- Officer:

Wayde Kirschenman – wkirschenman@keiproduce.com
Kirschenman Enterprises, Inc. Edison, CA
- Officer:

Ron Perry – ronp@perryandsons.com
George Perry & Sons, Inc. Manteca, CA
- Officer:

Ryan Van Groningen – ryan@vgandsons.com
Van Groningen & Sons, Inc. Manteca, CA
- Officer:

Rick Burkett – rburkett@farmersbest.com.mx
Farmers Best International, Llc. Nogales, AZ



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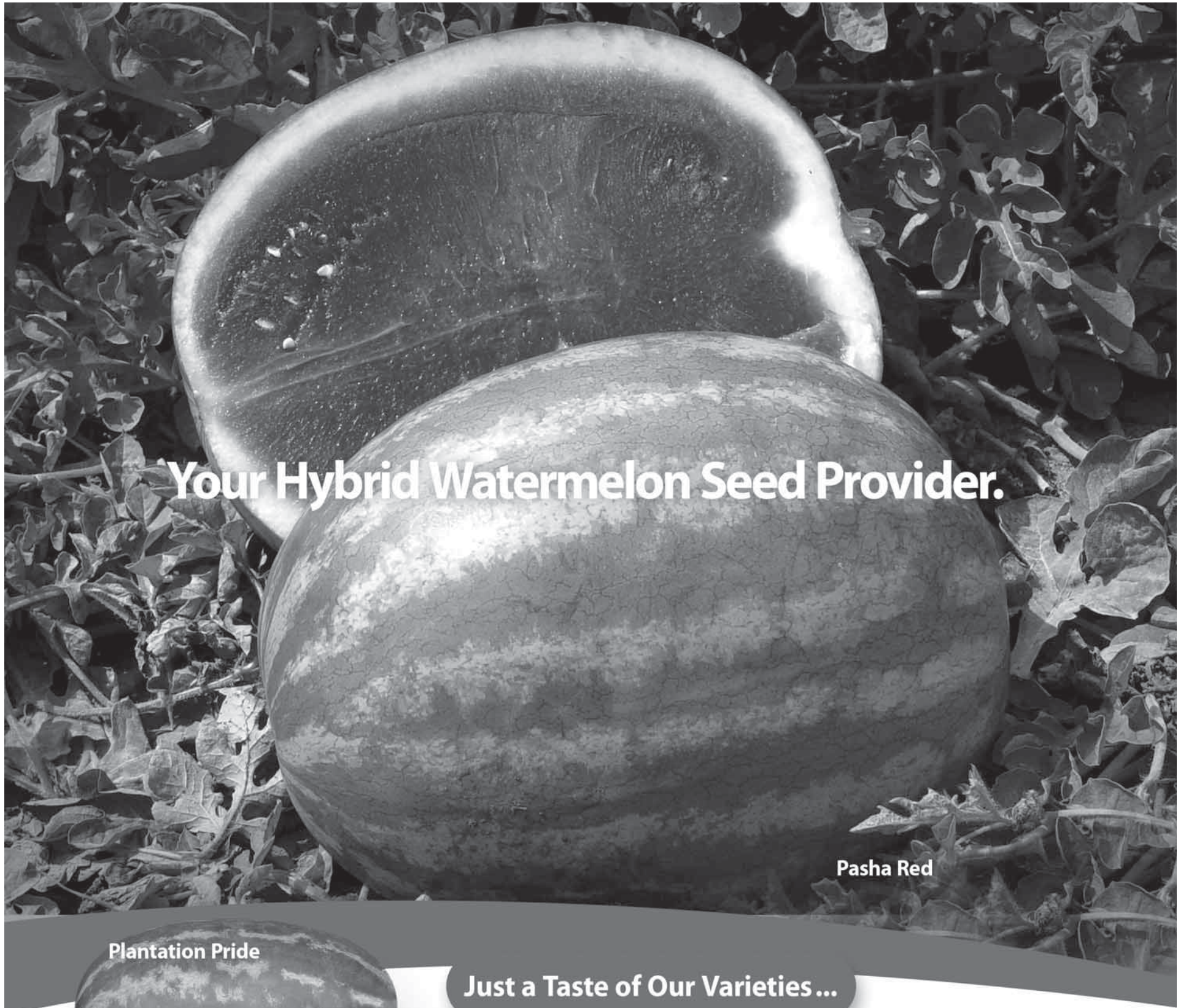


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Orange Krush is a great tasting orange flesh watermelon. Oval shape, 17-20 pounds (8-9 kg). Crimson Sweet rind pattern, light orange to yellow flesh, crisp flesh with good flavor. 75-78 day maturity. Tolerant to Fusarium wilt.

Lemon Krush is a great tasting yellow flesh watermelon. Oval shape, 16-18 pounds (7-8 kg). Dark Crimson Sweet rind pattern, firm yellow flesh with high brix. 85 day maturity. Tolerant to Fusarium wilt, Anthracnose, PM 1 & 2.



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