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the vineline

Fall 2026

Official Newsletter of the NATIONAL WATERMELON ASSOCIATION

National Watermelon Association

More Than a Season . . .




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More Than a Season . . .

For many of our growers, fall marks the end of another watermelon season. Fields are winding down, the pace begins to change, and there is finally an opportunity to look back at the year behind us.
But one of the things I appreciate most about our industry is that the work of growing and strengthening it never really stops.

That is especially true for us at NWA this fall. As this issue reaches you, our committees and Executive Committee will be gathering for our fall meetings—an important opportunity each year to step away from the day-to-day, take stock of where we are, and make plans for where the Association goes next. From research and advocacy to promotions and the programs we provide our members, these meetings help set our priorities for the year ahead.

You can see that work reflected throughout this issue of The Vineline. Our NWA-supported research continues to examine real-world production challenges and look for practical solutions for growers—one example of the longer-term work happening alongside the immediate needs of each growing season.

At the same time, our work in Washington continues. The policy landscape affecting agriculture rarely stands still, and this fall is no exception. Important developments involving H-2A wage rules and the Farm Bill are moving forward, while NWA continues working alongside other agricultural organizations to make sure the interests of growers and the broader industry are represented.

And while much of that work happens behind the scenes, there is another side of our industry that is very visible to the public.

The National Watermelon Promotion Board continues its work to build demand and find new ways to connect watermelon with consumers. Those efforts are an important reminder that strengthening our industry means not only addressing the challenges of today, but continuing to build enthusiasm and opportunity for watermelon in the marketplace.

Our National Watermelon Queen and state and regional queens are an important part of telling that story, too. As you'll see in their updates throughout this issue, they continue to travel, promote watermelon and represent our industry in communities across the country. Their enthusiasm creates connections that no advertisement or social media post can quite replicate.

Research. Advocacy. Promotion. Representation. They may look like very different activities, but they are all pieces of the same effort.

A successful watermelon industry isn't built only during the months when fruit is coming out of the field. It is built year-round—through the research we invest in, the relationships we develop, the policies we work to improve, and the consumers we reach.

As one season winds down and we begin preparing for another, thank you to everyone who contributes to that work. Whether you're growing the crop, conducting the research, advocating for agriculture, promoting watermelon or volunteering your time through NWA and our chapters, you are helping make sure our industry is ready not just for next season, but for the seasons still to come.

Thank you for your membership, your support of the National Watermelon Association, and most importantly, for being part of this community. I look forward to everything we will accomplish together in the year ahead.

George F. Szczepanski
Executive Director
National Watermelon Association

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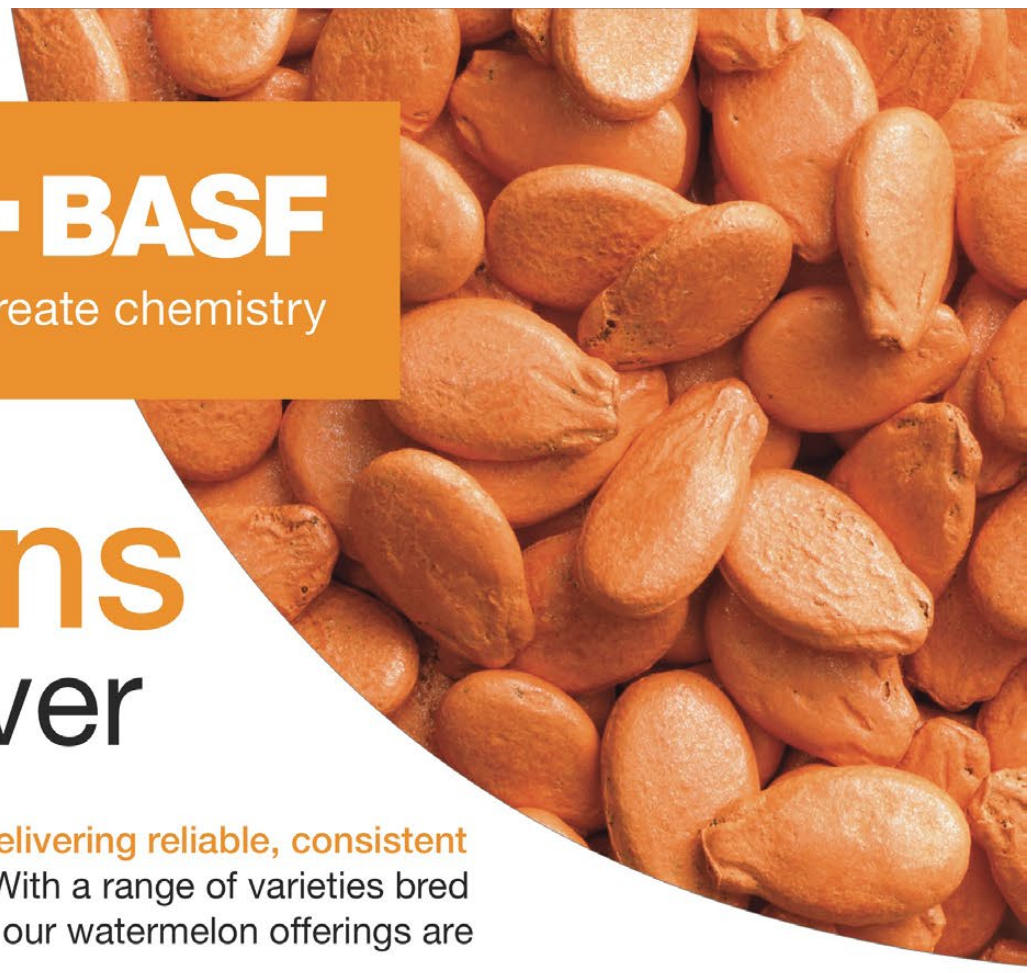

Innovations that really deliver

The team at BASF I Nunhems is commited to delivering reliable, consistent performance across our watermelon portfolio. With a range of varieties bred for uniform quality and strong disease tolerance, our watermelon offerings are sure to please growers and consumers alike.

Get To Know Some Of Our Varieties



Amazo is a crimson sweet seedless variety with a dark rind that offers growers high yield potential and disease resistant traits. This early-maturing watermelon serves both the fresh and whole-cut markets.



Bolita is a mid-maturing mini seedless watermelon variety. It has shown excellent emergence, resulting in high plant uniformity and vigorous vines. It holds and ships well and has a vivid red interior with small pips.



860 is an allsweet seeded watermelon that belongs to our range of diploids, and is known for its nice firm flesh, good interior color, and larger, blocky fruit.



7187 is a crimson sweet seedless watermelon that offers consistent yield potential and high uniformity. Its industry-leading predictability and dependability deliver consistency growers can count on.

Order Soon To Access These Great Rates

Running a successful operation isn't only about getting the most out of every acre. You also have to spend your money wisely. That's why BASF I Nunhems is proud to continue to offer our low-interest grower finance program for the 2026 season.[1]

Participating Brands[2]	Minimum Initial Purchase	Program Period	Financing Rate Incentive[3]	Payment Terms[4]
Nunhems® vegetable seeds	$5,000	October 1, 2025 – March 15, 2026	Fixed 0% APR	November 2026
		March 16, 2026 – September 30, 2026	Fixed 1.99% APR	November 2026, extended terms to January 2027 at Prime +1%

Scan here or visit www.Calculator.MyMultiUseAccount.com/BASF to see how much you can save.

Visit bit.ly/NUN-FIN-2026 or scan here for full program details and terms and conditions.

To learn more, contact your local BASF I Nunhems Sales Rep, or visit one of these authorized seed dealers:

Clifton Seed Company

Gowan® Seed Company

Stokes® Seeds

TS&L Seed Company

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Individual results may vary.

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National Report

A Summer Full of Watermelon Fun!





Summer continues to be filled with excitement, adventure and plenty of watermelon as National Watermelon Queen Katelyn travels across the country—from the East Coast to the West Coast, from North to South, and finally back home again!

From festivals and parades to retail promotions, sporting events and community celebrations, Katelyn and the state queens and ambassadors have been busy sharing their love of watermelon with consumers everywhere. Stops along the way included Georgia, North Carolina, Indiana, Maryland, Delaware and Gulf Coast Farms, with eachdestination bringing new opportunities to promote, educate and celebrate America's favorite summer fruit.

The team joined retailers for special celebrations and promotions, from IGA's 100-year anniversary festivities to events with Kroger, Food Lion, Harris Teeter and Publix. Watermelon also made a splash at NASCAR races, softball games, rodeos, marathons and even an IU football practice, where athletes were refueled with the refreshing taste of watermelon!

The summer fun continued with boardwalk promotions, crab festivals, concerts in the park, watermelon "balls," special dinners and corporate events where the love of watermelon was proudly shared. Out in California, the queens and ambassadors participated in field days with some of the industry's leading seed companies, connecting with growers and celebrating the future of the watermelon industry.

And, of course, the summer included plenty of time in front of the camera! From early- morning television interviews on set to live interviews from locations across the country, Katelyn has been spreading the watermelon message far and wide. With every stop, National Watermelon Queen Katelyn and the state queens and ambassadors have helped drive watermelon sales, educate consumers and share everything there is to love about watermelon.

It has been a summer packed with miles traveled, smiles shared, consumers reached and—most importantly—watermelon celebrated! Here's to keeping the momentum going and making the rest of the season just as sweet!

A HUGE "THANK YOU" to all our sponsors and association member support! This program would never be possible without you and your generosity!

National Pictures





































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National Pictures





































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National Pictures





































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Vineline H-2A LABOR NEWS

What Growers Need to Know About the Changing AEWR

Watermelon growers using the H-2A program have probably seen the recent notices from the Department of Labor warning about the possibility of future back wage payments. For now, however, there has been no change to the wage employers are required to pay, and no employer has been ordered to pay back wages. But a new order from the federal judge overseeing the litigation makes clear that the current AEWR methodology may not remain in place for as long as DOL had proposed.

In August, a federal judge in California ruled against DOL's 2025 Interim Final Rule establishing the current Adverse Effect Wage Rate methodology. The decision is important, however, for what the court did—and did not—say about the substance of the rule.

When DOL issued the IFR, it faced an immediate problem. The prior AEWR methodology relied on USDA's Farm Labor Survey, which was no longer being conducted. DOL therefore needed another source of wage data and chose the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics, or OEWS, data. The court recognized that this situation could justify DOL acting immediately, without first going through the normal notice-and-comment rulemaking process, to establish a replacement wage data source.

The problem, according to the court, was that DOL went further. In addition to moving to OEWS, the IFR established the two-tier wage system, the housing adjustment and the greater-than-50-percent rule for determining the applicable occupational wage. The court concluded that the emergency created by the loss of the Farm Labor Survey did not provide sufficient justification for DOL to bypass the normal notice-and-comment process for those additional changes.

Importantly, the judge initially did not vacate the IFR. Instead, the court left the current AEWR methodology and wage rates in place while ordering DOL to "promptly" develop and publish a new methodology consistent with the court's decision.

That distinction matters for employers. The current AEWRs remain the rates employers should use today. At the same time, however, the court ordered DOL to notify employers that they may ultimately be required to make wage adjustment payments for work performed beginning September 2, 2026, if the new AEWRs ultimately published by DOL are higher than the rates workers were paid under the current rule. The court has not yet decided whether back wages will actually be required or what those payments might look like.

The next disagreement was over what "promptly" meant. In a September 9 Joint Status Report, DOL told the court that it believed it needed approximately nine to twelve months to complete a replacement methodology through a final rule. DOL explained that it had received 887 comments on the IFR and intended to re-evaluate those comments in light of the court's decision, develop a revised methodology and complete the federal regulatory review process.

DOL's approach essentially contemplated using the IFR and its post-publication comment period as the notice-and-comment foundation for a final rule rather than beginning the rulemaking process again from scratch. DOL also argued that issuing another interim rule while the existing IFR remained in effect could create additional litigation.

United Farm Workers disagreed and asked the court to require a much faster interim replacement methodology while DOL worked separately on a permanent final rule.

On September 17, the judge rejected DOL's proposed timeline. The court concluded that waiting another nine to twelve months would not satisfy its direction that DOL act promptly and noted that DOL's proposal could leave the existing IFR in place for approximately two years from its original 2025 issuance.

More importantly, the new order clarifies what the court expected when it originally chose not to immediately vacate the IFR. According to the judge, the court anticipated that DOL would promptly develop a new interim methodology



consistent with the August order while DOL separately worked through the longer process necessary to issue a final rule.

That timeline is now much clearer. Following an October 1 status conference, the judge ordered DOL to issue a new interim final rule no later than December 30, 2026, and ordered that the existing AEWR IFR be vacated effective that same day. The court rejected DOL's request for as much as six additional months, noting that DOL developed the current IFR approximately five and a half weeks after the prior rule was vacated and had not adequately explained why a replacement should take more than three times as long. DOL must also report its progress to the court every three weeks until the new interim rule is issued.

For growers, this provides considerably more certainty about timing, but we still do not know what the replacement AEWR methodology will look like or what wage rates it will ultimately produce. The current AEWR methodology remains in effect for now, but it will be replaced—and the existing IFR vacated—no later than December 30.

The potential for back wages also remains unresolved. There is no back-wage payment obligation today, and DOL has opposed requiring employers to make retroactive adjustments. The court has nevertheless left open the possibility that an adjustment could ultimately be required if the replacement AEWR for a particular worker exceeds what that worker was paid during the potential backpay period beginning September 2.

For watermelon growers, the practical advice therefore remains largely unchanged: continue paying the currently applicable wage rates, but keep good payroll records and maintain current contact information for workers who may no longer be employed when this litigation is finally resolved. That is particularly important because we now know the potential adjustment period has a defined endpoint: assuming DOL complies with the court's order, the replacement methodology must be issued by December 30.

The focus now shifts to DOL. The Department has less than three months to develop the replacement methodology and complete the necessary review process. For growers, the question is no longer how long the current AEWR methodology may remain in place. We now know it ends December 30. The question is what DOL will replace it with—and what that new methodology may mean for wages paid between September 2 and December 30.



Vineline *Political Advocacy*

Washington, D.C. Update

U.S. District Court Rules on Department of Labor's 2025 Interim Final Rule

On August 25, 2026, the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of California issued a ruling determining that the U.S. Department of Labor's (DOL) 2025 Interim Final Rule (IFR), "Adverse Effect Wage Rate Methodology for the Temporary Employment of H-2A Nonimmigrants in Non-Range Occupations in the United States," establishing the current methodology for determining hourly Adverse Effect Wage Rates (AEWRs), is unlawful.



The provisions of the IFR that the court found to be inadequately justified included the previously established two-tier wage structure, the housing adjustment, the transition from using statistics from the Farm Labor Survey to the Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics survey, and the requirement to pay workers based on the wage level associated with the duties they perform for the majority of their working time. The court also determined that DOL improperly bypassed the standard notice-and-comment process for most of these changes.

At this time, the court has not determined that backpay is owed, nor are employers required to take any action. Any potential backpay would not necessarily apply retroactively to the entire period of H-2A employment. Instead, the court is currently addressing wages paid during the period between DOL's notice and the implementation of the new AEWR methodology. Whether backpay will ultimately be required, which workers may qualify, and the amount owed will be determined following the establishment of new AEWRs and through further action by DOL and the federal court.

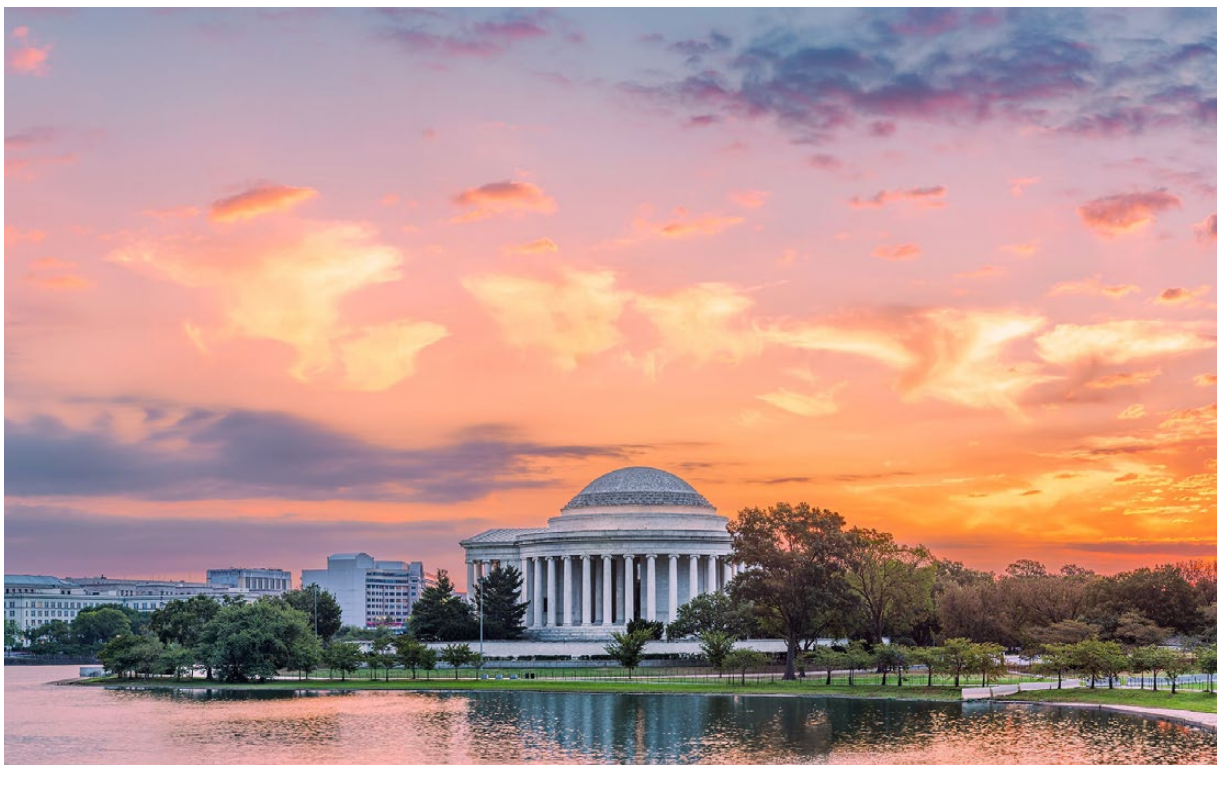
It is expected that DOL will soon provide additional guidance through an official notice.

NWA Signs Checkoff Coalition Letter

On August 5, the National Watermelon Association joined 25 members of the Agriculture Trade Association Checkoff Coalition in sending a letter to U.S. Senate Agriculture Committee leadership to emphasize the importance of agricultural checkoff programs and urging opposition to including checkoff-targeted amendments or legislation during the Senate Farm Bill process.

The letter stated: "Research and promotion boards exist to develop new markets and strengthen existing markets for specific commodities while conducting important research and promotional activities via pooled resources and stakeholder investments. Their sole purpose is to educate consumers and stakeholders on behalf of a particular commodity...For every dollar invested in a commodity checkoff, producers acquire exponential profit from increased marketing capabilities, product promotion, and research-driven regulation."

"The 26 undersigned individual trade associations advocate for individuals significantly impacted by the agricultural commodity research and promotion boards. The coalition is deeply concerned about the potential inclusion of the OFF Act, introduced by Senators Lee and Booker, in the Farm Bill, and urges your vigorous opposition. We believe the proponents of this problematic legislation are misguided and fatally misinterpret the vitality of the Checkoff. If passed, this legislation would have significant consequences for the farmers and ranchers who invest in our organizations and the industries we represent."



U.S. Senate Agriculture Committee Passes Farm Bill 2.0 Legislation

U.S. Senate Agriculture Committee Chairman John Boozman recently introduced the Agricultural Act of 2026, or commonly referred to as "Farm Bill 2.0," building upon the traditional Farm Bill provisions included in last year's final passage of H.R. 1, the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA). Additionally, this legislation includes many of the provisions recently included in the U.S. House-passed H.R. 7567, the Farm, Food, and National Security Act of 2026.

On August 6, the U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry met to mark up the Agricultural Act of 2026. After more than four hours of discussion, Chairman Boozman called for a vote on the legislation, which failed by a vote of 10 ayes to 11 nays.

On September 16, the Committee reconvened to vote again and successfully passed the legislation by a vote of 12 ayes to 11 nays.

This legislation will now need to be considered on the U.S. Senate floor.

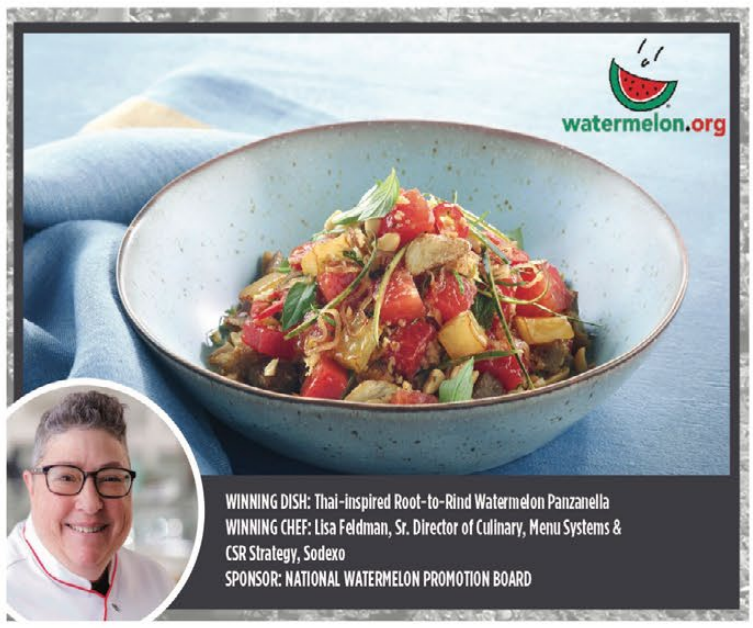
Canada Announces Counter-Tariffs on Imports from the United States

On August 25, Canada announced retaliatory tariffs targeting approximately $20 billion worth of goods imported from the U.S. in response to recently imposed U.S. tariffs on Canadian imports. The affected U.S. agricultural products include dairy products, honey, molasses, dough and baking mixes, which represents more than $780 million in import value in 2025. Canada's countermeasures took effect on September 8, 2026.

Vineline NWPB News

NATIONAL WATERMELON PROMOTION BOARD
WATERMELON FUELS COMPETITION

From the finish line to the produce aisle to the professional kitchen, a little competition can fuel big results. This summer, the Board's programs used contests and challenges to engage consumers, retailers and culinary professionals while showcasing watermelon's hydration, sales potential and versatility. Stay up-to-date with the latest Board programs in the Watermelon Update by scanning the QR code.



CULINARY CREATIVITY TAKES THE CHALLENGE

Foodservice competitions put watermelon into the hands of culinary professionals, challenging them to think beyond familiar applications. Through Kitchen Collaborative, ideation kits reached 100 high-volume foodservice operators and generated more than 100 watermelon concepts. StarChefs' (Water)Melon Mania challenged chefs, pastry chefs and bartenders, generating 422 participation requests, 75 finalists and 53 original recipes. Together, these programs inspire culinary creativity, showcase whole-fruit versatility and encourage new menu applications.





THE POWER OF PRODUCE DISPLAYS

Participation in the National Watermelon Merchandising Contest drives exceptional results for retailers. Now in its 18th year, this summer event encourages creative in-store displays along with print and digital media that foster higher customer engagement. Most importantly, stores that take part experience a remarkable average increase of 36% in sales during the contest period. It is a fantastic opportunity to boost revenue and showcase employee creativity. 2026 winners to be announced soon!











FUELING RUNNERS COAST TO COAST

This summer, watermelon fueled runners from coast to coast through a partnership with Cooldown Run Club. During Watermelon Week, fresh watermelon was sampled at run clubs in 13 cities nationwide, giving runners a refreshing way to rehydrate and refuel after their miles. The activation brought watermelon's hydration and fitness messaging directly to an active consumer audience—showing how watermelon can be part of the finish-line celebration and an active lifestyle.



WANT TO SHARE YOUR STORY OR UTILIZE RESOURCES? EMAIL INFO@WATERMELON.ORG TO LEARN HOW.

Vineline Research & Impact News

Keeping Watermelon Ground Productive: Comparing Intensive and Regenerative Production Systems

Wenjing Guan

Clinical & Engagement Professor, Horticulture & Landscape Architecture Department. Purdue University. Southwest Purdue Agricultural Center, Vincennes, IN, 47591.

As extreme weather events become more frequent, successful watermelon production depends on soil. Productive watermelon soils must have good drainage, balanced fertility, and low populations of soilborne pathogens. Southern Indiana has a well-established watermelon industry, thanks in part to its naturally fertile, well-drained sandy loam soils. However, continuous watermelon production has contributed to the buildup of soilborne pathogens, particularly those that cause Fusarium wilt and root-knot nematode damage. Because these pathogens can persist in the soil for many years, some fields that were once ideal for watermelon production may no longer be suitable for growing the crop. As a result, watermelon production has increasingly moved onto heavier soils. Although successful production is possible on these soils, they may introduce additional disease risks and are more vulnerable to extreme weather conditions. Thus, maintaining and improving the productivity of sandy soils that have historically supported watermelon production is essential to the continued success of the region's watermelon industry. Two broad strategies may help achieve this goal.

A. Improving production efficiency through promising agricultural technologies

Historically, soil fumigation enabled intensive vegetable production. However, environmental concerns have made long-term reliance on fumigation increasingly challenging. Several promising alternatives have emerged. Biofumigation with mustard may help suppress certain soilborne pathogens. Grafting watermelon plants onto resistant rootstocks has also proven highly effective for managing Fusarium wilt and root-knot nematodes. In addition, a growing range of advanced fertilizer technologies and biostimulants is being developed to improve nutrient use efficiency and support plant growth under stressful environmental conditions. Previous studies have often found that integrating multiple management practices produces better results. However, the whole-system effects of these combinations, and their long-term sustainability, are largely unexplored.



Aerial view of the research field on July 27, 2026. The plots with visible watermelon rows represent Treatments 1 and 2. The dark green plots were planted with corn (Treatment 3), and the light green plots were planted with sudangrass (Treatment 4).

B. Regenerating and sustaining the soil's natural functions

The soil's ability to support healthy crops depends partly on organic matter and a diverse community of soil organisms, which contribute to nutrient cycling, pathogen suppression, and overall plant health. These natural soil functions may be restored and maintained through practices such as diverse cover cropping, longer crop rotations, and reduced soil disturbance. Although this ecologically based approach is attractive, the extended rotation period required between watermelon crops may reduce the number of acres available for watermelon production in any given year.

A long-term study at Purdue

With support from the National Watermelon Association, we established a multi-year research project at the Southwest Purdue Agricultural Center in Vincennes, Indiana. The project evaluates how different rotation systems may affect watermelon productivity and soil health over time.

The experiment covers approximately 1.5-acre land divided into 16 plots. Four production systems were assigned to the plots, with each system replicated four times:

1.Continuous watermelon production with biofumigation: Watermelon is grown every year, with mustard incorporated as a biofumigation cover crop. Each plot includes both grafted and nongrafted watermelon plants.

2.Continuous watermelon production without biofumigation: Watermelon is grown every year without a biofumigation cover crop. Each plot includes both grafted and nongrafted watermelon plants.

3.Conventional crop rotation: Watermelon is grown in rotation with corn and soybean.

4.Soil health-focused rotation: Watermelon is followed by two years of diverse summer and fall cover crops before watermelon is planted again.

The project began in 2025 and will continue through 2028. Grafted and nongrafted watermelons were planted in all plots during the first year of the study. We are now completing the second watermelon season in the continuous-production plots in 2026. Fusarium wilt was not observed in 2025, but symptoms appeared on nongrafted plants during the second season. Grafted plants showed a clear advantage in 2026. Differences in soil nitrogen levels among treatments were detected in Spring 2026. A more detailed soil health test will be conducted in the Fall. As the project continues, we expect treatment-related differences in soil properties to become more pronounced. A detailed project report will be presented at the Indiana grower meeting.



Florida Report



Our beautiful Queen Shanie educates the 4th graders at the Farm Bureau office for the Lafayette County "Ag Ventures Day" in Mayo, Florida.



Spending Memorial Day Weekend, handed out Fresh from Florida Watermelons at your Publix Grocery Stores. Thank you, "Publix".



Queen Shanie spending a day with the crew of "Syngenta" learning the hard work and research that goes into these trials. Thank you, Courtney Davis for inviting me.



Learning about Irrigation and fumigation in Watermelons field Queen Shanie spending the afternoon with Mr. Joe Stockenberg and the TriEst Ag Group. Thank you for having us.

Three beautiful ladies traveling around visiting watermelon farmers in Levy County. Thank you, Heather Raulerson, – PCA CorrChoice & Stephanie Barlow – NWPB for amazing day.



Florida Watermelon Queen Shanie practices her trucking skills.



"Congratulations" to all the Queens who won 2026 Chiefland Watermelon Pageant!



At the "International Fresh Produce Association" Conference in Washington, D.C.



a fun evening at the "Joy of Fresh" Reception in Washington D.C.



Queen Shanie lobbying at our State Senator office Rick Scott.



A fun afternoon visiting and laughing with one of our former board member Ms. Cheryl Hicks at The Pointe Independent Living Facility in Stuart, Florida.



Beautiful morning at the "Wild Watermelon 3K Run" at the Brevard Zoo.



Celebrating 250th year on the Fourth of July with NWQ Katelyn and GWA Gracie handed out Fresh from Florida Watermelon at the NAS Jaxx Commissary in Jacksonville, Fla.



Celebrating 250th year on the Fourth of July with NWQ Katelyn and GWA Gracie handed out Fresh from Florida Watermelon at the NAS Jaxx Commissary in Jacksonville, Fla.



A beautiful and exciting day visiting watermelons farmers. Thank you, Chuck & Chris.



Queen Shanie along with Mr. Murray Tillis attending the City of Chiefland Watermelon Trail. Chiefland was name the Watermelon Capital of the Tri-County Area. Hand- painted Watermelon statues have been placed around the town of Chiefland.

Georgia Report



Gracie attended the AgLabor Forum in Tifton, GA to learn more about the issues and challenges facing Georgia agriculture and connect with industry leaders.



Ambassador Gracie had the opportunity to serve fresh watermelon to the UGA Football team after a hot practice in August. Reminding them that watermelon is great for athletes!



Connecting the next generation with agriculture, Gracie spoke with Crisp Academy students about Georgia's watermelon industry.



Helping shoppers find their perfect melon, the GWA Ambassador, alongside the Texas and Florida Watermelon Queens shared tips for selecting a great watermelon at Harris Teeter in Baltimore.



Gracie enjoyed spending time with the watermelon family while sharing the taste of fresh watermelon with beachgoers along the Rehoboth Beach Boardwalk!



At the Savannah Library, Gracie was able to lead the weekly storytime and craft with children of all ages, thank you to NWPB for helping provide the take home resources.



The Atlanta NASCAR race was the perfect setting to share Georgia watermelon with racing fans—thank you to Ross Chastain for having Gracie out!



More than 3,000 runners at the Sunshine Festival 5K on St. Simons Island enjoyed a refreshing boost of Georgia watermelon on the 4th of July!



Gracie enjoyed a fun Independence day weekend at Cordele Motor Speedway, sharing Georgia-grown watermelon with GWA members and race fans while enjoying an exciting night of racing and fireworks!



Gracie enjoyed helping customers get ready for the 4th of July with an in-store watermelon festival at the Jacksonville Commissary. Gracie, Shanie and Katelyn were able to judge a watermelon eating contest and assist with watermelon trivia!



Georgia Watermelon was front and center at Kroger in Athens! Gracie helped shoppers pick out the perfect watermelon while enjoying a fun storewide display and even a visit from the Kroger mascots.



GWA Ambassador explored new watermelon varieties and learned more about the research shaping the future of the crop at the Syngenta Field Day.



Gracie enjoyed spending the day at the Robins Air Force Base Commissary, helping share and sell watermelon as part of their America 250 promotion. Thank you to Military Produce Group for having us out and helping us share Georgia-grown watermelon with our military community!



Washington, D.C., got a taste of watermelon as Gracie helped serve more than 10 bins of watermelon over two days at the Giant Foods BBQ Festival. Thank you to the Mar Del Watermelon Association, Melon 1 and NWPB for making this event possible.



GWA Ambassador Gracie and NWA Queen Katelyn joined in on the fun at the Cordele Watermelon Festival and Parade! GWA was proud to host the annual seed-spitting competition and celebrate all things watermelon with the community.



At Food Lion in Tifton, Gracie helped shoppers choose the perfect watermelon while sharing more about Georgia-grown melons.



Gulf Coast Report



Queen Jennifer with the Alabama Grocers Association staff at a new Food City opening in Athens, Alabama.



The Champion watermelon being displayed at the Commissary on Keesler Air Force Base.



Thanks to our sponsor Visit Enterprise and the Enterprise Chamber of Commerce for having Jenni attend their Watermelon Day at the market.



Jenni sharing samples of watermelon with Food City Grocery guests.



Celebrating 250 years of America with $2.50 watermelon at the Commissary on Maxwell Air Force Base.



GCWA 1st Vice President, Mr Jeremy Sessions, and Queen Jeni at Melons at the Market Day!



Thanks to Seedway, Sweet Mama Produce, International Paper, Highmark Seed Company, Katie Eubanks, and Kendra Kennedy for sponsoring Jenni's trip to the MarDel Queen Tour!



Sharing watermelon with over 70 horses at Auburn University's Equestrian Alumni Weekend. Horses love watermelon too!



The largest watermelon at the Water Valley Watermelon Carnival weighed 233.8 pounds!



Queen Jenni served watermelon samples to guests of the Sweet Grown Alabama Dinner. All meat and produce served at the dinner was grown in Alabama!



Queen Jenni with Ross Burney of Cypress Creek Farms. His farm was featured in a Southern Living article this summer!



Jenni sold watermelons as a GCWA fundraiser at the ALFA Farmers Market Employee Event.



Queen Jeni spent the day at Cassebaum farms with Mrs. Hope Cassebaum promoting watermelons.



Commissioner of Agriculture, Rick Pate, and Jenni at the Birmingham Barron's minor league baseball game. Jenni shared samples of watermelon with over 5,000 spectators.



National Watermelon Queen Katelyn and GCWA Queen Jenni visiting Finch Farms and Sweet Mama Produce along with many other producers

Illiana Report



Passing out Illiana grown watermelon at the Indiana State Fair. Thank you Wonning Farms for donating the delicious watermelon!



Indiana Military Museum WWII memorial. Thank you, NWPB, for sponsoring this meaningful event!



Queens helping customers in Indianapolis, Indiana. Sponsored by NWPB



Hoosiers love Indiana grown watermelon! Thank you, NWPB, for helping us bring healthy hydration to the National Champs!



Illiana farm tours – Mouzin Brothers Farms



Illiana farm tours – Mouzin Brothers Farms



Illiana farm tours – Mouzin Brothers Farms



Illiana farm tours – Jones and Jones Watermelons



Illiana farm tours – Frey Farms



Knox County fairground fun!



In-store promos - thank you, NWPB, for sponsoring



Mar-Del Queen Tour. A week full of grocery store promotions, large-scale public events, and farm tours. Thank you, MDWA!



Queen Alex with Mr. George in Delaware



Nothing sweeter than locally grown watermelon at a county fair



Of course, we had to bring the National Queen in town to celebrate IU's championship! Thank you, Queen Katelyn, for spending time in Illiana!



We Grow 'em, He Throws 'em – Supporting the Melon Man Brickyard 400 weekend

Mar-Del Report



Field tour day would not be complete without an up close and personal visit from Air Ag! Thank you to Mark Greenly for adding a little excitement to our Queen Tour!



Queen Avery attended multiple Giant Grocery stores this Summer. She participated in the ribbon cutting and the watermelon cutting ceremony!



Blessing of the Combines parade is a Summer favorite. Berlin, MD puts on a beautiful tribute to farmers and blesses the combines as they head into harvest season.



Queen Avery is all smiles promoting Mardelicous watermelons at the Baltimore Concert in the park.



Wright's Watermelon Festival is always a memorable event crowning the watermelon princess!



It has been a Mardelicious Summer promoting watermelons.



Queen Tour week would not be complete without the Rotary Crab feast ending our week of promotions!



Watermelons are always the 1st-place choice of the Summer!



Queen Avery has spent her Summer promoting watermelons and showing Dairy cattle! We combined the two for an end-of-season photo shoot!



The Mar-Del Watermelon Association was the presenting sponsor of the USSSA Softball Tournament. Queen Avery kept the softball players hydrated after each game!

North Carolina Report



Queen Lilah enjoyed visiting schools this season and teaching students about watermelon.



Queen Lilah served watermelon to high school students attending the Institute for Future Agriculture Leaders, sponsored by the North Carolina Farm Bureau and hosted by North Carolina State University and the University of Mount Olive.



On Watermelon Day at Food Lion's corporate office in Salisbury, NC, National Queen Katelyn and Ross Chastain joined us in serving watermelon to employees.



Queen Lilah and South Carolina Queen Tori helped Ingles Market celebrate the grand opening of its newest store in Fletcher, NC.



At the Deans Farm Market - Watermelon Camp, Lilah and the campers made watermelon pinwheels and enjoyed fresh watermelon slices.



In-store promotion at Harris Teeter in Charlotte, NC.



In-store promotion at Ingles Market in Black Mountain, NC.



Students tested their seed-spitting skills at the North Carolina State FFA Convention.



Queen Lilah and Queen Katelyn promoted Watermelon Day at the State Farmers Market during a live morning show interview on CBS-17 TV.

During Watermelon Day at the Piedmont Triad Farmers Market, Lilah and Katelyn served watermelon slices and spoke with WXII Channel 12 and FOX 8 about the watermelon industry.



During the National Queen's North Carolina tour, Lilah and Katelyn spent a full day visiting watermelon growers, including Rob and Kaitlin Glover, pictured here.



Harris Teeter store promotions in New Bern, NC, on July 4th.

During MarDel Queen Tour week, Lilah participated in watermelon promotions, farm tours, and events, including an informative look at this crop duster enterprise.



Queen Lilah threw the ceremonial first pitch during the Wilson Warbirds' Ag Night celebration.



Touring Murfreesboro Farms with Mr. Mike Bunch and his family.



Queen Lilah learned about grafted watermelon plants during a tour of TRI-HISHTIL in Mills River, NC, led by Mr. Bert Lemkes.

Texas Report



Queen Lorelai and Queen Katelyn at a Dallas Kroger promotion with friends from Bagley Produce



A Kroger grand opening is so much fun!



Lorelai and Katelyn visited the Dallas Farmers Market.



Meeting a happy watermelon lover at the farmers market



The queens had a wonderful visit at the MarDel queen tour with the folks from Melon One.



An exciting surprise during a farm tour in Delaware



The girls learned about how things are done at D&M farms with the Collins family.



Lorelai and the queens enjoyed a day at Rehoboth Beach passing out watermelon to happy visitors.



An in-store promotion is more fun with friends!



Passing out watermelon to concert goers at the Concert in the Park in Baltimore.



Lorelai enjoyed handing out a refreshing treat to the people that attended the Rotary Crab Fest at the Naval Academy.



Everyone had a great time at the MarDel Watermelon Ball.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