

# NEWS RELEASE

## National Watermelon Promotion Board FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Watermelon Board Assessment Increase Approved

*Industry Supports Expanded Promotion of Watermelon*

Winter Springs, FL – December 20, 2024 – The National Watermelon Promotion Board (NWPB/Board) assessment increase has been approved by USDA after a 20-month process. As of December 20, 2024, the final rule is in Public Inspection status, set to publish in the *Federal Register* on Monday, approving the new assessment rate for the NWPB; the total assessment of 9 cents per hundredweight versus the current 6 cents per hundredweight. This amount is split between producers and handlers and paid in total by importers. The rule will go into effect after a 30-day period, on or around January 22, 2025. The rule in Public Inspection can be viewed here:

<https://www.federalregister.gov/public-inspection/2024-30268/increased-assessment-rate-watermelon-research-and-promotion-plan> (this link could change when it is published in the *Federal Register* on December 23, 2024).

Following the 2017-2021 Econometric Evaluation conducted by Armada Corporate Intelligence, Inc., some board and industry members started a discussion regarding the need for an assessment increase for the Board. Then President Christian Murillo and now President Lee Wroten included the Assessment Rate proposition on the monthly agenda for the Executive Committee in April 2023 and presented “The Case for the Assessment Increase” at the September 2023 board meeting. Between September 2023 and March 2024, Mr. Murillo and Mr. Wroten presented at more than ten watermelon industry organization meetings.

The Board met February 24<sup>th</sup> in Scottsdale, AZ in conjunction with the National Watermelon Association Annual Convention. Following a favorable report on industry support, the Board voted to move forward with a 3 cent per hundredweight increase to the assessment level. The Board staff, overseen by the Executive Committee, then submitted all necessary documentation to the USDA for the Rulemaking Process which included a 30-day comment period. During the comment period which closed at August 8, 2024, industry members were encouraged to share their opinions on the potential assessment increase. There were 33 comments, which can be reviewed here: <https://www.regulations.gov/document/AMS-SC-24-0020-0001/comment>.

“An assessment increase is a critical first step in ensuring the continued growth and success of our industry,” said Board President Lee Wroten. “By investing in enhanced research, marketing, and promotion efforts, we can drive greater demand for watermelon and strengthen our industry’s position, creating more long-term opportunities for everyone involved.”

Moving forward, the Board will prioritize efforts to increase the demand of watermelon through research, promotion, and education. Each part of the program will receive increased funding, with the retail space receiving the largest allocation. On April 1, 2025, the committees and Board will launch a new program aligned with the new assessment level and fiscal year.

Visit [www.watermelon.org/assessment](http://www.watermelon.org/assessment) for comprehensive information on the assessment increase including more on the Board, the history of the assessment rate, inflation’s impact, justification of the increase including the growth of watermelon volume and FOB, proposed assessment levels, and how those funds will be spent to promote watermelon.

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### About National Watermelon Promotion Board

The National Watermelon Promotion Board (NWPB), based in Winter Springs, Florida, was established in 1989 as an agricultural promotion group to promote watermelon in the United States and in various markets abroad. Funded through

a self-mandated industry assessment paid by more than 700 watermelon producers, handlers and importers, NWPB mission is to increase consumer demand for watermelon through promotion, research and education programs.

A serving of nutrient-dense watermelon provides an excellent source of Vitamin C (25% DV), a source of Vitamin B6 (8% DV), and a delicious way to stay hydrated (92% water), with only 80 calories per 2-cup serving. Watermelon consumption per capita in the United States was nearly 16.9 pounds in 2023. Watermelon consumption in the United States was nearly 5.6 billion pounds in 2023. The United States exported an additional 377 million pounds of watermelon. For additional information, visit [www.watermelon.org](http://www.watermelon.org).