




# Watermelon Update

NATIONAL WATERMELON PROMOTION BOARD



## Spring 2025 Watermelon Board Meeting Kicks off a Strong Year

The spring 2025 Watermelon Board meeting took place on February 22, 2025 in conjunction with the National Watermelon Association (NWA) Annual Convention in Austin, TX. [The new Directors were sworn in by USDA](#) . NWA gave a brief update on new initiatives and partnerships. The Research, Marketing, Communications and Foodservice programs were then presented to the full Board culminating with budget approval for the 2025/2026 fiscal year.

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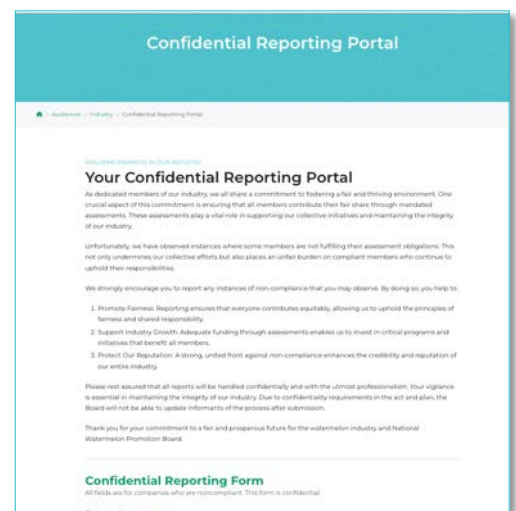
## Board Meeting Continued

More details on the elevated programs will be shared in the April Watermelon Update. Lee Wroten was elected to serve as President for his second term. Chad Chastain was elected First Vice President. Camille Lombardo is the Secretary/Treasurer and Tony Moore, Renee Goodwin, Matt Tanner and Ex-Officio, Christian Murillo complete the Executive Committee. The **next meeting is scheduled for September 25, 2025**, in Orlando, FL.



## NWPB Confidential Reporting Portal

Throughout 2024, in relation to the assessment increase, there was dialogue around how much the Board is collecting in assessments. Based on the USDA Vegetable Report the Board collects 86% of assessments and based on the NASS report the Board collects 94% of assessments. Taking the average, the Board collects 90% of the projected assessment available. As the industry is aware, there are states that are not reported and states with less than 10 acres that are reported between these sources. **The new Confidential Reporting Portal is in response to this conversation.** If you know of someone out of compliance, this is the confidential portal to help make it an even playing field for the industry. Please visit [watermelon.org/industry](http://watermelon.org/industry) to access the [portal](#). Thank you for your commitment to a fair and prosperous future for the watermelon industry and National Watermelon Promotion Board.



## Juliemar Rosado Completes the Thriving Leaders Circle Program

Congratulations to NWPB's Juliemar Rosado on her successful completion of the Thriving Leaders Circle, a year-long leadership development program presented by Connect 2 Potential. The Thriving Leaders Circle, designed for professionals seeking to elevate their leadership abilities, provides a unique blend of mentorship, peer collaboration, and hands-on learning. Throughout the program, Juliemar engaged in thought-provoking discussions, gained insights from experienced mentors, and applied practical strategies to enhance her leadership presence. **Congratulations once again to Juliemar Rosado on this significant milestone!**





## Industry Spotlight – Get to Know Chris Elsie

**Company:** Stella Farms LLC

**Time in the Industry:** 35 years in the industry and founded Stella Farms in 2008

**Time on the Board:** 4 years

**What’s your favorite thing about the Watermelon Industry?** The camaraderie of the watermelon industry.

**What’s your favorite item on your bucket list?** To visit New Zealand

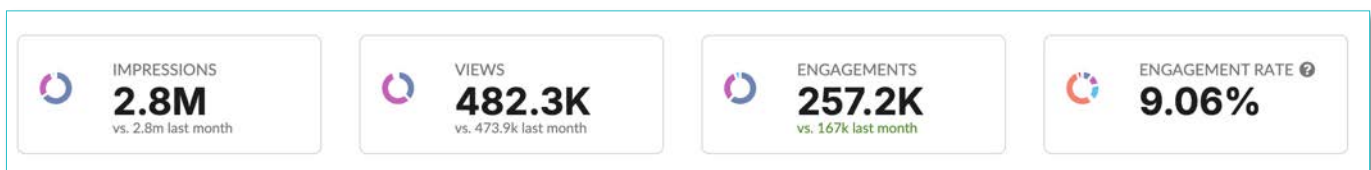
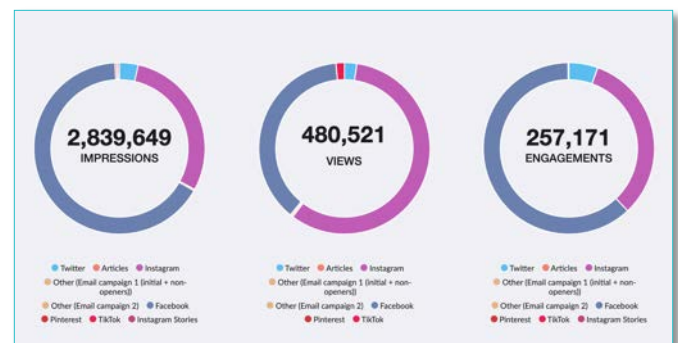


## A Record-Breaking Year for Influencer Partnerships

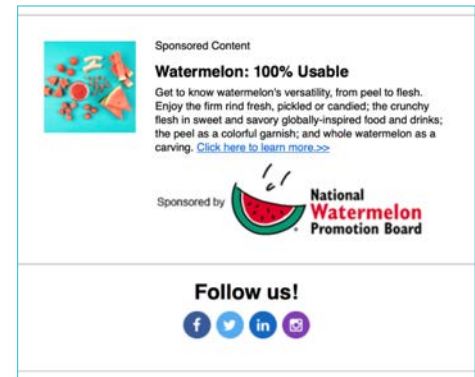
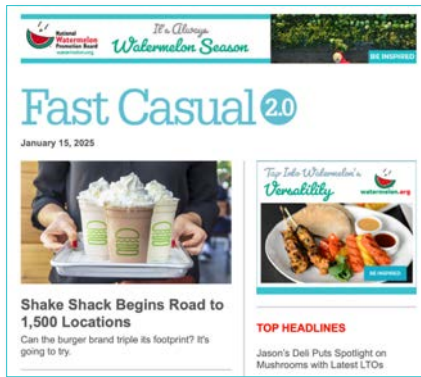
This year, NWPB collaborated with an impressive 19 influencer partners—our highest number yet! These content creators spanned a variety of niches, including registered dietitians, nutrition, lifestyle, fitness, and, of course, racing. Each brought their unique style and voice to platforms like TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, and more.

One of our biggest wins? An outstanding engagement rate of just over 9%! To put that into perspective, industry benchmarks suggest that engagement rates between 1% and 3.5% are considered average, 3-6% is good, and anything above 6% is excellent.

On top of that, our content views saw a **significant year-over-year increase**, jumping from 350,000 in 2023/2024 to an impressive 483,000 in 2024/2025. We’re thrilled to see such strong engagement and reach, reinforcing the impact of our influencer partnerships. Stay tuned for even more exciting collaborations ahead!



# Foodservice Media Keeps Watermelon Top of Mind Year-Round

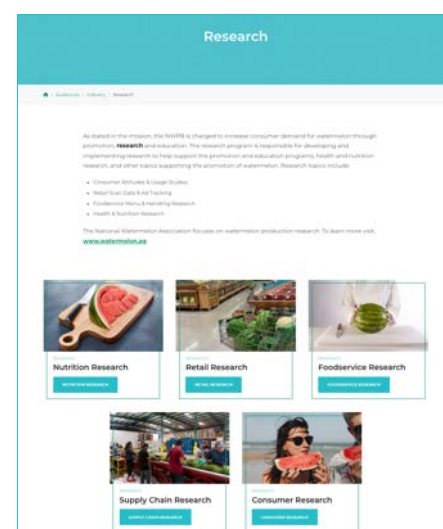


Foodservice media highlights inspiring watermelon menu items throughout the spring and summer but those menu placements dwindle in the fall and winter. The Watermelon Board works with media to keep watermelon in publications and in front of chefs and operators in the fall and winter through paid media opportunities. Messaging includes the year-round availability of watermelon, ways to use the whole watermelon, and showcases its versatility by featuring innovative watermelon recipes from outside chefs. The campaign is **projected to reach more than a million foodservice decision makers**.



## Learn More About the Watermelon Consumer at [watermelon.org/research](http://watermelon.org/research)

The Research section of [watermelon.org](http://watermelon.org) offers **insights on the watermelon consumer at retail and foodservice**. The 2024 Watermelon Shopper Segmentation Study is available under **Retail Research**. The 2024 Foodservice Consumer Behavior & Operator Insights is available under **Foodservice Research**. Ongoing reports can also help better understand what is happening in the market. The monthly Retail Scan Data Report featuring Circana Data and weekly Ad Tracking Report featuring USDA Data are also available in the **Retail section**. The weekly Watermelon Market Report featuring USDA Data is available in the **Supply Chain section**. To learn more about custom reports available to the industry, email [info@watermelon.org](mailto:info@watermelon.org).



## International Marketing Updates

### **U.S. Watermelon in Japan: 2024 Promotion Results**

U.S. watermelons experienced a highly successful season in Japan, with strong sales growth and increased consumer demand. Retail promotions at FarmDo generated increased sales, with cut watermelon sales rising by approximately 20%. Foodservice collaborations drove impressive results, with 2,682 servings sold and total sales increasing by 30% from last season. The extended warm weather boosted demand into September, while media coverage and strategic in-store promotions further heightened awareness. Although sales of large whole watermelons at Costco faced challenges, opportunities for growth remain by introducing more cut options. All in all, watermelon is seeing a rising consumer interest and a shifting demand for watermelon beyond the traditional summer months, a potential opportunity for growth in the future!



### **The Canadian Watermelon Retail Program: A Sweet Success**

The Canadian Watermelon Retail Program is driving U.S. watermelon sales across Canada, covering all provinces and territories while targeting major retailers. U.S. ad placements increased by 5.5% year-over-year in July and August, boosting consumer demand. The Freson Bros Watermelon Fest on July 20-21, featuring the National Watermelon Queen, led to a 25% sales increase and a 36% rise in social media reach. With strong retail partnerships and engaging promotions, the program continues to expand its success!



### **Reminder: International Market Opportunities: Mexico**

A [virtual webinar](#) highlighting the results of an in-depth market assessment designed to expand U.S. watermelon exports to Mexico is now available! This valuable report provides actionable insights for producers, shippers, and traders, addressing challenges, regulatory requirements, and market preferences. Discover how this roadmap can enhance the U.S. watermelon export strategy and help track performance metrics for sustainable growth.



Updates to the International Marketing program can [always be found here](#). If you have any questions, please reach out to Juliemar Rosado at [jrosado@watermelon.org](mailto:jrosado@watermelon.org).

*The National Watermelon Promotion Board does not endorse any companies listed across any research study results; it is provided for your information. The Board is not responsible for any transaction between parties. NWPB is an equal opportunity employer.*



## NWA Nook: Key Highlights from the 2025 National Watermelon Association Convention

The 2025 National Watermelon Association Convention in Austin, Texas, was a **celebration of industry leadership, exciting announcements, and new initiatives**. Thank you to all who joined us and continue to support the watermelon industry—we are grateful for your dedication! Here are a few of the biggest takeaways:



### ◆ Elanie Mason Crowned 2025 National Watermelon Queen

Elanie Mason, Florida Watermelon Queen, was crowned the 2025 National Watermelon Queen after a competitive contest among state queens. She will serve as the industry's official promotional ambassador, advocating for watermelon growers and shippers over the next year. NWA Promotions Coordinator Kerri Lee Wiggins expressed her excitement for Elanie and praised outgoing Queen Jules Singley for her dedicated service.



### ◆ New NWA & JPH Law Firm Partnership Announced

The National Watermelon Association has partnered with JPH Law Firm to provide NWA members with expert legal guidance on H-2A labor policies, laws, and regulations. This new hotline-style resource will help members navigate complex labor issues with trusted legal support.

### ◆ Industry Leaders Honored

The NWA recognized three outstanding individuals for their contributions:

- Raymon Land was inducted into the Watermelon Hall of Fame for his decades of service.
- Jesse James Wiggins received the Outstanding Service Award for his commitment to NWA programs and volunteer efforts.
- Chad Chastain was named Future Watermelon Farm Leader, carrying on eight generations of family farming.

Stay connected with NWA at [www.watermelon.ag](http://www.watermelon.ag) for more industry updates!



## South Florida Academy of Nutrition & Dietetics Conference

The South Florida Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics is an organization composed of dietetic and nutrition professionals who are in the forefront of health and nutrition information and education of Miami-Dade, Broward, Palm Beach, and Monroe counties. SFAND seeks to connect professionals and students, provide learning opportunities for everyone, and advance the dietetic profession through advocacy, connection, and education.

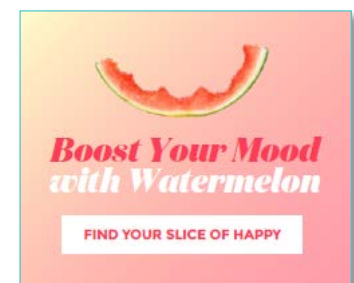
At the in-person symposium held on March 1st, the Watermelon Board sponsored and had an interactive mixer opportunity to **share watermelon tastes and flavor pairings**, spotlighting the new **Health Professionals** section of Watermelon.org and the nutrition professional resources such as information sheets, the Registered Dietitian Toolkit and more. Watermelon's key benefits of nutrition, value, versatility and sustainability were highlighted, providing awareness and insight into a well-known product but on a deeper nutrition education level.

The SFAND president is Diana Mesa, RDN, LDN, CDCES and is part of the watermelon friends community, having created a Salvadorean-inspired **Watermelon Rind Curtido** recipe in 2024 showcasing rind use to minimize food waste while balancing blood sugars with the fiber in the recipe.



## Winter Programmatic Ad Results

In the Winter, the Board repurposed creative content from Spring 2024 for our Winter banner ad (digital website ad) campaign. The target audiences for this campaign included **Health and Fitness – Nutrition** and **Food and Beverage**. The results were exceptional for this time of year, and way above industry standard (note the Click Through Rate vs. the industry benchmark!)



### Prospecting

- 159,375 impressions
- 675 clicks
- 0.42% Click Through Rate (0.10% benchmark)

### Remarketing

- 51,008 impressions
- 256 clicks
- 0.50% Click Through Rate (0.10% benchmark)

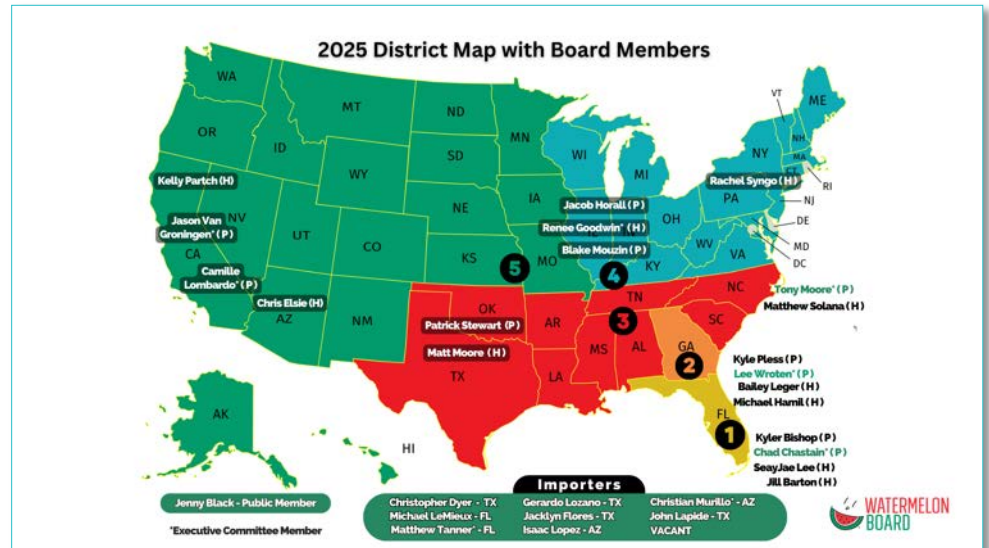
We will continue with banner ads going into 2025, with new creative that highlights watermelon's simplicity and value.

## Industry Nomination Meetings

On February 12 the Board held nomination meetings to nominate producers and handlers to serve as district four and five directors for the 2026 - 2028 term.

During the District four nomination meeting, the following eight industry members were nominated.

Producer Position 1: Caitlin Givens and Jeff Givens  
 Producer Position 2: Whitney Nicholas and Dennis Mouzin  
 Handler Position 1: Rachel Syngo and Gareth Smith  
 Handler Position 2: Renee Goodwin and Trey Miller



During the District five nomination meeting, the following eight industry members were nominated.

Producer Position 1: Jason Van Groningen and Axton Franzoy  
 Producer Position 2: Camille Lombardo and John Morrow  
 Handler Position 1: Meagan Morgan and Michael Brazeel  
 Handler Position 2: Patrick Colin and Yvette Marquez

These names will be forwarded to USDA and the Secretary of Agriculture shall appoint the members of the Board from those nominations (one person per position).



## Watermelon on the Menu

The Limestone at Cambria Hotel in Austin, Texas is #UsingTheWholeWatermelon by serving a **Watermelon & Mint Feta Salad** with red onion, cucumber, mint, basil and z'atar as well as **Achiote Pulled Pork Tacos with pastor style slow cooked pork, pickled watermelon rind slaw** and cilantro.

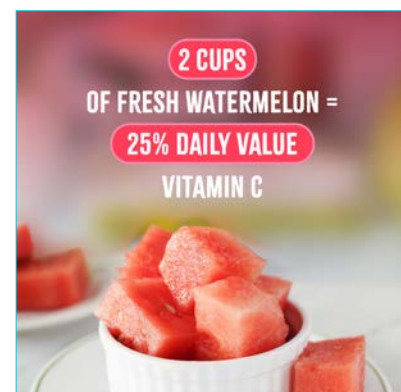
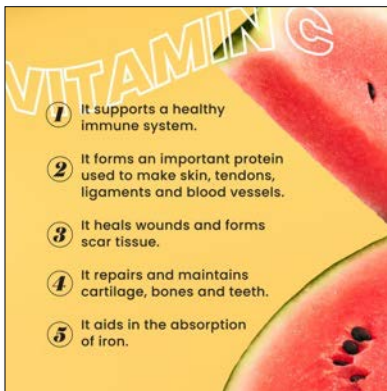


## March is National Nutrition Month – Share the Power of Watermelon!

March is National Nutrition Month, making it the perfect time to highlight watermelon’s nutritional benefits! We’ve **created a variety of graphics and content that can also be used for free by industry members to use in your own marketing efforts.**

From vibrant graphics and ready-to-use social media captions, our assets showcase how watermelon supports hydration, heart health, and an overall balanced diet. Whether you’re promoting watermelon on social to retailers, foodservice partners, or consumers, we have materials to make it easy.

A few images and sample captions are shown below. Let’s celebrate National Nutrition Month together—because watermelon is more than delicious, it’s nutritious!



*Caption: Watermelon contains vitamins A, B6 and C. Watermelon is an excellent source of vitamin C (25% DV per serving) and supports healthy IMMUNITY.*

*Caption: At 92% water, watermelon is an excellent hydrator, which is important for your body to perform at its highest level.*



## NWPB Connections

**Southeast Produce Council Southern Exposure** – Orlando, FL  
– March 6 – 8

**Watermelon Queen/Ambassador Training** – Charleston, SC –  
April 3

