



Annual Report



A Year of Challenges and Achievements

From tornadoes to hurricanes to floods to wildfires, Mother Nature threw a lot at us in 2017; yet, we picked ourselves up, dusted off, made repairs, and got back to work. We are blessed to represent the most diligent people in all of Agriculture - - our Watermelon Family.

We watched as politics in Washington became more divisive, and yet we persevere and pursue solutions. Along the way, your essential partner remained at your side and led the way – the National Watermelon Association. No matter the issue or challenge facing us, our approach is to advance the issues that are most important to you, while remaining diligent of what is most important.



How do you hear from us?

The NWA keeps our members informed throughout the year on the news, issues and events that affect them. In 2017 we began a new communications vehicle called 'On The Vine', a weekly e-newsletter that provides on-time communications and insights of the day and week.

Additionally, we rolled out our digitized version of *The Vineline*, our quarterly member magazine. Our social media platforms on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Pinterest expanded beyond our expectations.

Food Safety – The Law of the Land

We communicated FSMA rules that took effect in 2017, while working with the Food & Drug Administration to redefine what a 'FARM' is, which will clarify if a farm has the responsibility to implement the Preventive Controls rule. All of FSMA was incorporated into our Watermelon Food Safety Guidance in our third edition.

Got Leadership? You bet we do!



Seeing the 'NEW' meet the 'OLD' is becoming a common theme for us, and one that delights us. We inducted four (4) young leaders into the Future Watermelon Farm Leader program, while we honored the contributions of our eighteen (18) forefathers of the National Watermelon Association as they were inducted into the NWA Hall of Fame. Welcoming the leaders of the future while honoring our forefathers - - it doesn't get much better than that!

Our Queen Can Sell

The National Watermelon Queen program held 163 promotions across 123 days in 18 U.S. states, Canada, 6 chapter conventions, 7 Agriculture industry conventions, numerous festivals, fairs, schools, retail stores, military commissaries, and more. Additionally, media coverage on radio and television helped to promote the consumption of watermelon to consumers everywhere.



Government takes a different path

We watch as a NEW DAY in Washington politics arrived, with President Donald Trump, a non-politician, pursuing his promised agenda. We also see support of his initiatives (in a number of cases) changing with the latest morning tweet. The rules of the political game seemingly have changed, yet we are in there, and engaged on your behalf.

Former Georgia Governor (and friend to watermelon) Sonny Perdue was sworn in as the USDA Secretary, much to our excitement. The Secretary is moving forward with AG in a positive light (and watermelon in his past).



Public Policy remains Job 1

Legislation, policy, rules and new laws remain as key focal points for us. In 2017 the highlights included the Renegotiation of NAFTA, the impact of cheap imports on our members, the 2018 Farm Bill's policy statements for specialty crops, Healthcare reform & revisions, and the new Tax Reform law. If it affects your livelihoods, the NWA is on top of it, and involved, on your behalf.

Research seeks solutions

Production research is critical to the future of watermelon farming. As a result, the NWA continues to guide research through our grants program that will seek solutions to farm-related pest & disease pressures. We continue to call for projects that are relevant to your problems and focus on applied research solutions.



We must have Labor to do our jobs

Labor is everything to us - Without it, we have no crop. It starts and ends with labor. And 2017 was an active year to debate the issues related to immigration, migrant labor and undocumented workers.

Once again, the U.S. House (in committee) voted to bring a E-Verify Bill to the floor for a vote. And once again, the NWA joined with other AG groups to block that from happening – unless it has an accompanied plan to provide AG with a viable and legal workforce.

We saw the introduction of three different immigration bills: AG Act – RAISE Act – STARS Act, as well as an established end-date to the DACA program. On top of them all, none of them have made it to the floor for a vote.

Executive orders (that will apply to the employers of foreign workers) were released, and are putting pressure on those employers (and labor contractors). Additionally, the H2-A Program experienced new issues and delays as a result of the EOs and a usage expansion that the government is not



prepared to handle.

The fact is We must have foreign workers to get the job done, and we need a government that will help us, rather than regulate, audit, raid, fine and even imprison employers of those workers. We're in this fight, together!

A Convention like no other

In the fall of 2017 we unveiled a new convention website and mobile APP for the upcoming national convention in Nashville - two signs of progress and communication



advancement for our members.

At our last convention we rolled out a new social media vehicle called Snapchat, while we expanded our educational offerings of critical issues, and our popular IMPACT Hour

Our Future is Challenging, and Bright

The future is unknown to us all, yet we are working hard each and every day to secure a sustainable and growing future for you, our members and stakeholders.

We are anticipating numerous bumps in the roads related to immigration, foreign workers and our government agencies in 2018. Keeping you informed of the issues before, during and after is what we are here for. Be informed, for your own sake.

In Nashville, we will unveil our new Membership Model that will begin in 2019, offering all chapter members the choice to join the NWA. And, this is just the beginning. With an ever-changing world that we live in, the NWA is evolving to shape its future for the future generations, while adapting to current day and posturing to take advantage of future opportunities.

We are building a positive and Bigger Future for the NWA, and for our Chapters. Join us, as we embark on a great ride in 2018, and beyond.

