



President's Message *Don Hiller - JLW Produce*

I hope everybody is doing well because it has been a tough year for watermelon growers. On the wholesale end, we have had a hard time keeping up with our commitments because the demand for watermelons has not been at the same time that the fruit is ready in the field. The toughest part of selling is when you have orders in hand and you can't get enough product to fill the orders. This has happened more times this year with watermelons that I can ever remember but most of the stores made it through without much trouble. I wish I could believe the farmers who had watermelons in the field that just would not ripen, had fared as well. This is the reason we need to all work together as an Association to make sure we all prosper and continue to promote watermelons.

Since I assumed the President's position two years earlier than originally scheduled, I have not been able to attend all the NC Watermelon Festivals. Next year I hope to make all the Festivals. Fortunately, I did get to make the Murfreesboro Watermelon Festival in August and was impressed with the job they do in promoting watermelons. It takes the effort and teamwork of so many involved to make these Festivals possible. I hope all the hard work that went into the Festivals paid off with record attendance and great promotions.

Executive Director's Report *Bonnie Holloman*

As many of you know, on September 23, 2003, Sens. Larry Craig and Ted Kennedy introduced S. 1645, the Agricultural Job, Opportunity and Benefits Act of 2003 (AgJobs) or H2A Reform. Reps. Chris Cannon and Howard Berman introduced H.R. 3142 the House Comparison bill, on the same day.

As a member of the N.C. Agribusiness Council, I have attended two meetings along with other Ag Commodity Association Representatives hearing both the pros and cons of this proposed legislation. Included in this newsletter is the Agricultural Job Opportunity, Benefits, and Security Act of 2003 (S. 1645 and H.R. 3142), Summary of Significant Provisions (September 2003). The NCWA has not taken a favorable or unfavorable position on this legislation. The NCWA Board will discuss this proposed legislation at their October 25, 2003

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Board of Directors Meeting. Please contact President Hiller or myself to voice your opinion concerning this legislation. The National Watermelon Association and the National Council of Agricultural Employers have endorsed this legislation.

Promotions Coordinator Report *Anne Meares*

As we continued our busy season we were off to the syndicated John Boy and Billy Show the morning of July 10th. Queen Tracy was a featured guest. She helped to spread the watermelon message to 192 stations in 24 states. Queen Tracy shared the spotlight with North Carolina Turkey. Thanks to Jackson Framing Company for once again sponsoring this valuable event.

On July 11th, we headed west to Watermelon Day at Asheville Farmers Market. Mike Ferguson who was recently named Market Manager greeted us. Tracy and I were joined by NCDA&CS Marketing Specialist Michael Smith for the days festivities. Queen Tracy and Michael enjoyed judging the watermelon seed-spitting and watermelon eating contests.

On July 18th, Queen Tracy was a featured guest on Greenville's WNCT Oldies 107.9. She provided nutritional information and lots of humor for the listeners. Donna Kelly, John Moore, Steve Brumfield and Jerry Wayne made us feel welcome during our visit. We even enjoyed a seed-spitting contest. A final showdown seed-spit contest between Queen Tracy and Donna Kelly ended with Donna winning a wager and wearing the Queen's crown.

Next, we headed to Watermelon Day at the Southeastern Farmers Market on July 19th. We received a warm welcome from Market Manager Rickey Oxendine. Tracy enjoyed meeting the visitors and sharing the watermelon message by handing out informational pamphlets and stickers. Tracy and Rickey even had several seed-spitting contests. Of course, Tracy was the final winner.

Tracy and I continued on to the Charlotte Farmer's Market on July 25th. Market Manager Frank Suddreth always plans fun-filled activities for everyone. We had many visitors who sampled the melons we were serving. Tracy enjoyed sharing information about the many ways that one can enjoy a watermelon, in addition to a simple slice.

Our next adventure was the Watermelon Festi-

val in Fair Bluff, NC. This was a very special festival for Tracy because she was their Festival Queen the previous year. We enjoyed attending the Watermelon Delight on the riverfront and being greeted by so many members of the Watermelon Association. Queen Tracy participated in the parade and festivities, including the auction luncheon and largest watermelon contest. Finally, Queen Tracy was a featured entertainer at the Watermelon Festival Queen Pageant. We were excited to welcome Courtney Herring, the new Watermelon Festival Queen, into the Watermelon Family. We have enjoyed her company on several occasions since that evening.

Special thanks to Michael Smith for assisting Queen Tracy and myself on most of our promotions.

As we begin to unwind from the busy season, we wish you a beautiful and happy Fall season.

NCDA&CS Marketing Specialist Michael Smith

I hope you all are doing well and have had a good season this year. Last year was dry and this year has been wet, so next year should be just great. This has been a great "first year" with you and I have enjoyed it very much. I would like to thank each of you for giving me the chance to help you market N.C. watermelons.

I have been to all five Farmer's Markets and the three Festivals with our NCWA Queen, Tracy Lynn Register and Anne Meares, NCWA Promotion Coordinator. I have enjoyed working with them to help market N.C. watermelons. We have sliced lots of melons, given out promotional items and answered questions about N.C. watermelons at quiet a few events. There were nine billboard signs across the state, two TV stations, and four radio stations advertising N.C. watermelons.

I was very impressed with the three Watermelon Festivals and as President Hiller stated, it takes a lot of team work and all involved should be proud of their final results. At each Festival, I was made to feel at home, and I thank you for that.

I hope to see you all at the NC State Fair where North Carolina agriculture will be shown at it's finest!

Connect with NC Watermelon Growers at:
www.ncfreshconnection.com - www.ncwatermelon.org
Michael Smith, NCDA&CS Marketing Specialist
Phone: 910-618-5699
email: michael.f.smith@ncmail.net

Have you been to the PMA?

The Produce Marketing Association, founded in 1949, is a not-for-profit global trade association serving more than 2,400 members who market fresh fruits, vegetables, and related products worldwide. Its members are involved in the production, distribution, retail, and foodservice sectors of the industry.

What is Fresh Summit? The world's largest fresh fruit and vegetable event!

- 600 Exhibitors
- 15,000 Attendees from over 70 countries
- 511,000 square feet/47,473 square meters of exhibit space

Every segment of the produce industry is represented at Fresh Summit. Supermarket retailers, importers, exporters, growers, packers, shippers, brokers, transporters, wholesalers, suppliers, distributors, and foodservice operators attend this annual event.

Fresh Summit 2003, International Convention
& Exposition - **October 17-21, 2003**
Exposition Dates - **October 19-21, 2003**
Orlando, Florida USA

Visit North Carolina Watermelon Queen Tracy Lynn Register and Queen Coordinator, Anne Meares at the NCDA&CS Booths 2553-2655 at the Fresh Summit.

NCWA President Don Hiller will be in Booth 2385 with Class Produce Group.

In the News

New Arrival: Rodney & Melissa Jackson are the proud parents of a beautiful baby girl. Jordan Grace Jackson was born in September weighing 8lbs. 2 oz. Baby Jordan is the granddaughter of "very proud" grandparents Brent and Debbie Jackson.

Friend of the College Award: Bonnie Holloman, Co-Executive Director, NCWA, is a 2003 recipient of the NCSU College of Agriculture and Life Sciences "Friends of the College Award." Bonnie was nominated for the Award by Susan Rollins, Past President, NC Commercial Flower Growers Association and will receive the award during CALS Alumni & Friends Weekend October 10-11, 2003.

Out & About with our former NCWA Queens:

1996 NCWA Queen Kristy Meares has returned to Wake Forest University to begin her 3rd year of law school after a busy Summer doing an internship in several prestigious Raleigh law firms.

1997 NCWA Queen Crystal Miller Giles will appear in the ever popular "Christmas Carol" at Raleigh's Memorial Auditorium, December 10-17, 2003. On the job front, Crystal is now a Mortgage Officer with Maverick Funding, Research Triangle Park, NC.

Congratulations to Former NCWA Queen Contestants, Clare Winslow who was 2nd runner up at the Miss North Carolina Pageant in June.

**2004 NC Watermelon Convention
March 5-6, 2004 - Wilmington, NC**

Red Flesh Triploid Watermelon

Evaluations – 2003

Jonathan Schultheis, Dennis Adams and Brad Thompson

Department of Horticultural Science, North Carolina State University

Raleigh, NC 27695-7609

Each year since the mid-1990s potential or new red flesh triploid (seedless) cultivars are evaluated for yield potential and various interior qualities. The market for triploid watermelon has grown steadily since SunWorld first began marketing this specialty item in the late 1980s. Today triploid watermelons are commonly available and comprise over 50% of the market in the United States. Some markets demand seedless fruits exclusively. There has been a flurry of activity over the past 5 to 10 years by commercial seed companies to develop new, improved seedless watermelons. Some of the improvements include dark/unique rind patterns, firm flesh, deep red flesh color, small seed traces, and a variety of fruit shapes and sizes (large for the fresh cut industry and small (personal size melon)), and improved disease resistance.

In 2003, 30 red-flesh triploid watermelons were seeded April 2 and transplanted on May 2 at the Central Crops Research Station, Clayton, NC. Plants were grown on black polyethylene mulch with drip fertigation. Spacing was 10 feet between rows and 2 feet in-row between plants (20 sq. ft/ plant). Two harvests were made on July 22 and August 5. Below a table contains the cumulative (harvests 1 and 2 combined) yield (fruit number) per acre for each watermelon trial entry. A more complete report which includes early harvests, and exterior descriptions and interior evaluations will be available upon request when the report is finished.

Some of the yield highlights that should be noted include the following. Yields obtained from these test plots were very good. On a per plant basis, yields ranged from 1.9 fruit per plant to 2.6 fruits per plant. Yields of 1.5 fruit per plant or more are considered to result in a minimum harvest. Marketable tonnage per acre ranged from 58,100 (Imagination) to 93,900 pounds (HA 5015). Fruit numbers per acre ranged from 4247 (CS 4810) to 5608 (CS 4830, Sagi, Vertigo) (see table). The smaller size melon entries in this test were Imagination (12.5 lb), Millenium ((13.2 lb) and Rambla (13.7 lb), while the largest size melon entries were SVR 8282 (20.8 lb) and WX 28 (18.7 lb).

Millionaire is a commonly grown cultivar or a standard seedless cultivar grown in North Carolina. It is interesting to note that this cultivar produced the highest percentage fruit in the 14 to 18 pound category at 52%. This is the size category that most growers and markets are aiming for in the traditionally marketed seedless watermelon fruit. Millionaire also ranked high as far as overall yields. There are several other cultivars with comparable yields and unique quality characteristics that make them attractive alternatives or options to Millionaire. (*See Triploid Chart in Newsletter*)

AGRICULTURAL JOB OPPORTUNITY, BENEFITS, AND SECURITY ACT OF 2003 (S. 1645 and H.R. 3142)

Summary of Significant Provisions September 2003

Title I – Adjustment of Agricultural Workers to Temporary and Permanent Resident Status

Title I establishes a program whereby agricultural workers in the United States who lack authorized immigration status but who can demonstrate that they have worked 100 or more days in a 12 consecutive month period during the 18-month period ending on August 31, 2003 can apply for adjustment of status. Eligible applicants would be granted temporary resident status. If the farmworker performs at least 360 work days of agricultural employment during the six-year period ending on August 31, 2009, including at least 240 work days during the first 3 years following adjustment, and at least 75 days of agricultural work during each of three 12-month periods in the six years following adjustment to temporary resident status, the farmworker may apply for permanent resident status.

During the period of temporary resident status the farmworker is employment authorized, and can travel abroad and reenter the United States. Workers adjusting to temporary resident status may work in non-agricultural occupations, as long as their agricultural work requirements are met. While in temporary resident status, workers may select their employers and may switch employers. During the period of temporary resident status, the farmworker's spouse and minor children who are residing in the United States may remain in the U.S., but are not employment authorized. The spouse and minor children may adjust to permanent resident status once the farmworker adjusts to permanent resident status. Unauthorized workers who do not apply or are not qualified for adjustment to temporary resident status are subject to removal. Temporary residents under this

program who do not fulfill the agricultural work requirement or are inadmissible under immigration law or commit a felony or 3 or more misdemeanors as temporary residents are denied adjustment to permanent resident status and are subject to removal. The adjustment program is funded through application fees.

Titles II and III—Reform of the H-2A Temporary and Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program

This section modifies the existing H-2A temporary and seasonal foreign agricultural worker program. Employers desiring to employ H-2A foreign workers in seasonal jobs (10 months or less) will file an application and a job offer with the Secretary of Labor. If the application and job offer meets the requirements of the program and there are no obvious deficiencies the Secretary must approve the application. Employers must seek to employ qualified U.S. workers prior to the arrival of H-2A foreign workers by filing a job order with a local job service office at least 28 days prior to date of need and also authorizing the posting of the job on an electronic job registry.

All workers in job opportunities covered by an H-2A application must be provided with workers' compensation insurance, and no job may be filled by an H-2A worker that is vacant because the previous occupant is on strike or involved in a labor dispute. If the job is covered by a collective bargaining agreement, the employer must also notify the bargaining agent of the filing of the application. If the job opportunity is not covered by a collective bargaining agreement, the employer is required to provide additional benefits, as follows. The employer must provide housing at no cost, or a monetary housing allowance where the Governor of a State has determined that there is sufficient migrant housing available, to workers whose place of residence is beyond normal commuting distance. The employer must also reimburse inbound and return transportation costs to workers who meet employment requirements and who travel more than 100 miles to come to work for the employer. The employer must also guarantee employment for at least three quarters of the period of employment, and assure at least the highest of the applicable statutory minimum wage, the prevailing wage in the occupation and area of intended employment, or a reformed Adverse Effect Wage Rate (AEWR). If the AEWR applies, it will not be higher than that existing on 1/01/03 and if Congress fails to enact a new wage rate within 3 years, the AEWR will be indexed to the change in the consumer price index, capped at 4% per year beginning December 1, 2006. Employers must meet specific motor vehicle safety standards.

H-2A foreign workers are admitted for the duration of the initial job, not to exceed 10 months, and may extend their stay if recruited for additional seasonal jobs, to a maximum continuous stay of 3 years, after which

the H-2A foreign worker must depart the United States. H-2A foreign workers are authorized to be employed only in the job opportunity and by the employer for which they were admitted. Workers who abandon their employment or are terminated for cause must be reported by the employer, and are subject to removal. H-2A foreign workers are provided with a counterfeit resistant identity and employment authorization document.

The Secretary of Labor is required to provide a process for filing, investigating and disposing of complaints, and may order back wages and civil money penalties for program violators. The Secretary of Homeland Security may order debarment of violators for up to 2 years. H2A workers are provided with a limited federal private right of action to enforce the requirements of housing, transportation, wages, the employment guarantee, motor vehicle safety, retaliation and any other written promises in the employer's job offer. Either party may request mediation after the filing of the complaint. State contract claims seeking to enforce terms of the H-2A program are preempted by the limited federal right of action. No other state law rights are preempted or restricted.

The administration of the H-2A program is funded through a user fee paid by agricultural employers.

For more information, please contact:

Member: Sen. Larry Craig
Staff: Erick Simmons
Phone: 202-224-2752
email: erick_simmons@craig.senate.gov

Member: Sen. Ted Kennedy
Staff: Esther Olavarria
Phone: 202-224-7878
email: esther_olavarria@judiciary.senate.gov

Member: Rep. Chris Cannon
Staff: Todd Thorpe
Phone: 202-225-7751
email: todd.thorpe@mail.house.gov

Member: Rep. Howard Berman
Staff: Bari Schwartz
Phone: 202-225-7751
email: bari.schwartz@mail.house.gov

Red Triploid watermelon hybrid cultivar trial. Marketable number fruit per acre (X 100) of fruit harvested over two harvest by various weight classes plus average fruit size¹. **Clayton, N.C. 2003.**

Cultivar	Seed Company	Rank ²	Fruit size category (lb)					Mkt No./ Acre	Avg lb./ fruit
			<8	8-13.9	14-17.9	18-21.9	22+		
Afternoon Delight	D. Palmer	6	109	1960	2069	1089	272	5391	16.0
CS 4810	Southwestern	26	109	980	2124	926	218	4247	16.6
CS 4830	Southwestern	1	0	2015	1851	1252	490	5608	15.8
HA 5015	Hazera	5	0	1470	1797	980	1198	5445	17.2
HA 5026	Hazera	12	109	2232	1797	817	109	4955	14.7
Imagination	Syngenta	21	726	3194	1307	145	0	4646	12.5
Millenium	Harris Moran	4	218	3376	1851	272	54	5554	13.2
Millionaire	Harris Moran	11	0	1525	2613	762	109	5009	15.4
Olympia	Seminis	10	55	1089	1579	1742	653	5064	17.4
Omega	Seminis	22	55	1198	1144	1525	762	4628	17.7
Revolution	Sunseeds	25	0	1144	1525	708	926	4302	17.4
Rambla	United Genetics	7	0	2886	2015	381	0	5282	13.7
Sagi	Hazera	1	163	1307	1960	1906	436	5608	16.9
Sugar Heart	Zeriam Gedera	29	163	980	1416	980	708	4084	17.3
Sweet Delight	Syngenta	23	55	1416	1470	926	762	4574	16.9
Sweet Eat 'N	D. Palmer	14	109	1579	1252	1416	545	4792	16.6
Sweet Slice	Willhite	14	0	1416	1960	1035	381	4792	16.1
SR 8020	Sunseeds	18	109	1470	2287	871	109	4737	15.4
SR 8021	Sunseeds	24	0	1307	1525	1470	272	4573	16.6
Super Sweet 7167	Abbott & Cobb	14	0	1470	1906	1198	218	4792	16.0
Super Sweet 7177	Abbott & Cobb	13	55	1797	1851	653	545	4846	15.6
Super Sweet 7187	Abbott & Cobb	9	0	1797	1742	1252	381	5173	15.9
SVR 8282	Seminis	28	0	327	980	926	1906	4138	20.8
SWT 8706	Sakata	14	163	926	2124	1307	436	4792	17.1
Talledega	Sakata	18	109	2341	1470	599	327	4737	14.7
Tri-X 313	Syngenta	27	163	871	1525	1252	545	4193	17.3
Tri-X Palomar	Syngenta	18	163	1579	2015	926	218	4737	15.6
Trillion	Abbott & Cobb	8	109	1851	2015	1144	218	5227	15.3
Vertigo	Hazera	1	0	2233	2396	762	218	5608	15.1
WX 28	Willhite	30	348	1045	871	784	1350	4051	18.7
Average		--	103	1626	1748	1000	479	4853	16.2
LSD(0.05)		--	23	80	99	118	66	177	2.0

¹ Yields are calculated assuming 100 percent seedless watermelon population. Actual seedless watermelon yields should be reduced by the percentage of pollinizers. Fruit weights for each size category are rounded to the nearest whole number.

² Ranked according to total marketable weight.

³ Includes fruit 8 lb or greater.