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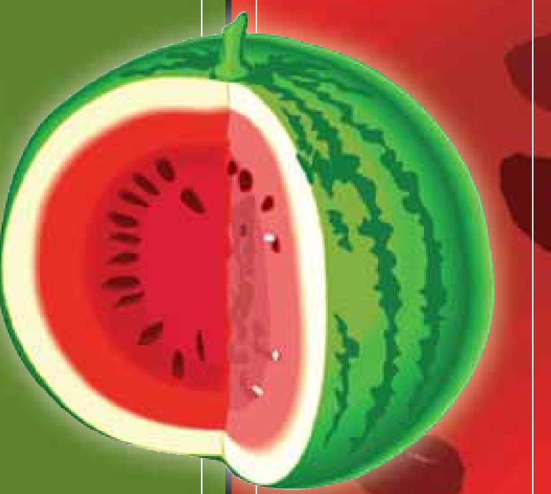

United Fresh Honors Fresh Produce Champions at WPPC

United Fresh Chairman Reggie Griffin, far left, and President Tom Stenzel, far right, present United's Fresh Produce Advocate of the Year Award to, from left, Brent Harrison and Bob Morrissey of the National Watermelon Association, and Dick Minor and Charles Hall of the Georgia Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association.

At the annual Washington Public Policy Conference in October, United Fresh honored two outstanding member organizations for their work in advocating for fresh fruits and vegetables on the national stage.

United Fresh presented the Fresh Produce Advocate of the Year Award to a national trade association and a state trade association as joint winners. They are the National Watermelon Association and the Georgia Fruit & Vegetable Growers Association. "Both the National Watermelon Association and the Georgia Fruit & Vegetable Growers Association are shining examples of how the produce industry can look at the issues in specific regions of the country and see how those issues play out on a national level," said United Fresh President and CEO Tom Stenzel. "Congratulations to the leadership and members of both of these outstanding organizations for their continued dedication to the important issues that affect our industry."

The NWA was recognized for our lobbying efforts for fruits & vegetables in numerous areas of interest including AG policies (Farm Bill, immigration reform and nutrition), support of the national school salad bar program, participation on the Government Relations Council and Food Safety Council, and partnership with United Fresh at the annual Public Policy conference with one of the largest groups each year. "This was a wonderful surprise, and quite unexpected", said Bob Morrissey, NWA Executive Director. "We do what we can and what we need to do in Washington; more than some groups do, but in the end it is our desire to influence Congress and agencies to help us rather than over-regulate us and hurt our efforts to profitably farm, pack, sell and ship. I was very glad to have Brent Harrison, current NWA Chairman, with me to accept the award. I was somewhat over-whelmed by the announcement, and left the comments to him. Thanks, pal."

Tom Stenzel presented the award along with United Fresh Chairman Reggie Griffin at the Washington Public Policy Conference Closing Luncheon Session on Wednesday, October 5th.

WTO ruling may spark a repeal of COOL

Sparking calls from U.S. retailers to repeal the law, a World Trade Organization dispute panel has ruled that the U.S. country-of-origin labeling law is inconsistent with U.S. trade obligations.

WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

The WTO dispute panel — which did not speak to the law's application to fresh produce — found the U.S. labeling law gives less favorable treatment to Canadian cattle and hogs in comparison with U.S. with domestic livestock and thus violates trade agreements. What's more, the WTO dispute panel said that mandatory country-of-origin labeling does not fulfill its objective of providing consumers with information on origin. The Food Marketing Institute issued a statement by the group's regulatory counsel Erik Lieberman that called for an end to the law.

"The World Trade Organization (WTO) recognized what the supermarket industry has known all along — that COOL is a protectionist law designed to make it more costly and difficult for retailers to sell imported foods," Lieberman said. "COOL has forced the industry to spend tens millions of dollars each year on unnecessary regulatory burdens all for little or no benefit to consumers."

Despite high rates of compliance with the law, Lieberman said that the COOL law has become more of a burden than ever, and makes it challenging for retailers to carry imported produce, meats and seafood. "The COOL law will need to be repealed or rewritten in order for the U.S. to meet its obligations to global trading partners," Lieberman said in the FMI statement. "We look forward to working with Congress and the U.S. Department of Agriculture to develop an alternative system, one that will provide useful information to consumers and put our nation in compliance with international trade agreements."

Country of origin labeling became law as part of the 2008 Farm Bill. Officials at the Newark, Del.-based Produce Marketing Association and the Washington, D.C.-based United Fresh Produce Association could not immediately be reached for comment. Although the panel disagreed with the how the U.S. implemented the law, the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative said the WTO dispute panel affirmed the right to require country-of-origin labeling on meat products.

"We remain committed to providing consumers with accurate and relevant information with respect to the origin of meat products that they buy at the retail level," Andrea Mead, press secretary for the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative said in a statement. "In that regard we are considering all options, including appealing the panel's decision."

The USTR said the next step in the process is for the reports to be adopted by the WTO Dispute Settlement Body or appealed to the WTO Appellate Body.

Watermelon Treasury Note Sold for $175,000

An 1890 $100 "Watermelon" Treasury Note topped all other lots in Lyn Knight Currency Auctions' PCDA Auction between November 10-15 in Rosemont, Illinois, selling for a hammer price of $175,000.

The rarity, which last sold at auction as part of the Levitan Collection, was part of Knight's auction of world and U.S. currency in conjunction with the Professional Currency Dealers Association's show at the Crowne Plaza O'Hare.

The price does not include the 15-18 percent buyer's premium.

Final Hours of Service Rule Announced

New work restrictions on commercial truck drivers will be enforced starting July 1 2013. The final rule retains the standard of 11 hours for the maximum workload for truckers in a day. However, the final rule cuts 12 hours from the maximum amount of hours a truck driver can work per week to 70 hours.

Drivers are required to take a break of at least 30 minutes after driving for 8 hours. The rule said drivers can take the 30-minute break whenever they need rest. The rule also requires drivers who maximize their weekly workload to take at least 2 nights rest from the 1 a.m. to 5 a.m. time period. That rest requirement is part of the rule's 34-hour restart, a provision that allows drivers to use the restart provision only once during the seven-day period.

The rule can be seen at the Department of Transportation web site.

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