



National Watermelon Association Public Affairs Priorities - 2013

Beginning with the Public Affairs Committee, we would like to begin a new process for the NWA by developing a set of annual priorities for the committee, to ultimately be presented to the NWA Executive Committee for their approval. This process will uncover and set the body of work which the NWA will pursue for the upcoming year, along with resulting objectives and goals.

We are asking you to review the set of priorities that we have developed for 2013 below, and respond via email of any changes (additions or deletions) that you deem important to the association, and even potentially to the industry. If you would, please reply by the end of March with your comments.

We are hopeful that we can make this an annual and customary step that will tie right into the budget process each fall. Thank you ahead of time for your input and support of our federal priorities.

Shaping Implementation of New Food Safety Law and Proposed Regulations

On December 21, 2010 Congress passed S. 510, the FDA Food Safety Modernization Act of 2010 and the president signed this legislation into law on January 4, 2011. This law represents the most sweeping changes to U.S. food safety policy in over 70 years. On the second anniversary of the signing of this new law, the Food and Drug Administration proposed two new food safety rules to implement the law. Additionally, three accompanying rules are due to be released at any time as a suite of rules. With this announcement comes a focused effort on analyzing the impact these proposed rules will have on the fresh produce industry.

1. Ensure that regulations implementing the law are based on sound science, consistent with Congressional intent, and appropriate for the watermelon industry throughout the entire supply chain

NWA, working with our D.C. partners, must shape regulations to implement all aspects of the new law, including produce production standards, preventive controls and food safety plans for facilities' owners, traceability, imported foods, and more regardless of size of operation. In addition, as the review these new proposed rules move forward, we must ensure that the intent of the new law is maintained. NWA will work with congressional allies to utilize their oversight responsibility to address policy issues and congressional intent with this legislation.

Shaping Agricultural Policy through a new Farm Bill

The 113th Congress is slated to develop and pass a new Farm Bill, which is due to expire in September, 2013. However, this is likely to be a very difficult environment to write a Farm Bill in the current budgetary environment. NWA must work diligently with our partners to preserve the previous hard-won historic investment in funding to strengthen the produce industry's infrastructure and business competitiveness.

1. Lobby aggressively to support the fresh produce policy agenda for the 2013 Farm Bill

The Specialty Crop Farm Bill Alliance is the core venue that will drive new and innovative policy solutions to help the fresh fruit and vegetable industry. The Alliance finalized its set of policy recommendations for the next farm bill in early 2011 and presented this document to the House and Senate Agriculture committees. We were able to forge a sound Specialty Crop Title and Nutrition Title under the proposed Farm Bill that was passed by the U.S. Senate and the House Agriculture Committee in 2012. Unfortunately, neither of the proposals became law and therefore a new Farm Bill will have to be developed in 2013. We believe the 2012 versions of the congressional efforts of the farm bill should be starting points for SCFBA's work this year.

Shaping a Workable and Achievable Immigration Policy

Since the November Congressional and Presidential elections, there has been a tremendous amount of attention paid to reforming our nation's immigration laws. The Administration, Congress, and immigration stakeholders are now engaged in a series of discussions and debates on the best way to move forward with plan that attempts to address the many issues around a dysfunctional immigration system that has been cast aside because of polarized extremes have undercut a rational debate. It's critical that both Republicans and Democrats start a meaningful dialogue toward real immigration. Most importantly, 2013 is the time for the industry to put our heads together on reform that works.

1. Drive comprehensive immigration reform in Congress; build consensus in the Agriculture industry

The industry must take a step back and develop an immigration reform package that incorporates sound agriculture provisions, pragmatic temporary worker programs, realistic approaches to the current undocumented workforce in the U.S., and reasonable requirements for the business sector dealing with employment verification processes. It is time to consider new solutions for immigration reform if we are ever to see real progress toward a solution.

Both sides of Capitol Hill are working toward that end, as Agriculture has come together under one umbrella group called the Agriculture Workforce Coalition, the first ever all unified effort representing all of agriculture.

2. Reduce the unnecessary regulatory burdens for labor and employment related programs

With the impasse of any significant legislative solutions related to immigration reform, NWA will continue to work with industry allies to evaluate the impact of regulatory changes affecting the industry's ability to address the current shortage of a viable workforce. This includes opposition to rules and processes that strangle the H-2A program and dramatically reduce its usefulness. These efforts are intended to ensure that NWA members are afforded the best possible regulatory framework related to hiring practices, even in the absence of immigration reform.

Shaping Sound Environmental Regulatory and Legislative Policy

We believe that economic growth and environmental progress go hand in hand and that responsible business and environmental leaders can work together to grow our economy and preserve the planet. The produce industry is committed to technological innovations and efficiency gains that will continue to improve our environment.

1. Ensure USDA Pesticide Data Program provides accurate interpretation

USDA's Pesticide Data Program (PDP), begun in May 1991, publishes an annual summary of pesticide residues from testing agricultural commodities in the U.S. food supply, with an emphasis on those commodities highly consumed by infants and children. While always finding very low incidence of residues above EPA determined safe levels, this data has been presented without sufficient interpretation and to put its findings in context. Unfortunately, one group has misled consumers and seeks to erode public confidence in the safety of fresh produce. NWA will work our partners, USDA, EPA and other federal officials to ensure that future reports include more accurate interpretation and conclusions.

2. Prevent government regulation of sustainability

The 2005 Farm Bill included a definition of "sustainable agriculture" but the federal government has not established specific guidelines as to how sustainability should be measured, verified or reported. Several multi-stakeholder groups are addressing ways to measure sustainability in the produce supply chain. Because production conditions vary among states, grower sustainability programs should be voluntary, and any programs developed should be based on sound science, compatible with conventional agriculture, cost-effective and not generate competitive advantage for any production region or commodity.

3. Continue support for sound regulation of crop protection chemicals

NWA and our partners have long been committed to sound, scientific regulation of crop protection chemicals. Given the current political and public climate, it is anticipated that legal and regulatory pressures may increase on these important tools. NWA will continue to work with our partners to advocate for access to agricultural chemicals at scientifically, sound maximum residue limits (MRLs).

4. Continue to provide leadership to the IR-4 Program

NWA will continue to provide leadership to the IR-4 program with the volunteer assignment of Berry Tanner from Abbott & Cobb Seed Company as our representative to IR-4. The program is important to gain federal approval of chemical applications that are vital to our watermelon crop.

Shaping a Positive Business Environment for the Industry

Ensuring the economic health of the fresh watermelon industry is a top priority for the NWA. Public policy decisions can put undue restrictions and burdens on our business, or create an environment of opportunity for businesses to grow. We will continue to advocate for legislation and regulations that stimulate growth and opportunity for our association members while avoiding unnecessary or counterproductive measures.

1. Provide Information and Pursue needed regulatory policies regarding the Health Care Reform Act

The healthcare legislation signed into law in 2010 greatly expanded federal control of healthcare rules and practices. With implementation of the law underway, concerns and questions are rising about higher costs, more mandates, and

regulatory burdens on business. The healthcare reform law will be implemented over much of the next decade. From 2010 to 2013, changes largely involve new taxes, fees and mandates on individuals and small business. Most healthcare system changes begin in 2014 and later years. NWA will work to help its members understand the impact on their businesses, as well as their obligations under the Act.

2. Monitor the fiscal atmosphere of the federal government

We have all heard about the fiscal cliff, debt ceiling, sequestration, federal deficit, and the ongoing debate in Washington about spending cuts and new taxes. The NWA will endeavor to keep you informed of any changes that may occur that will effect your business, or the industry along the way.

Building NWA Member Relationships with Congressional Members

Lobbying at the federal level is an all-hands-on-deck need that typically is viewed as a spectator sport. Those members that do not participate or support the process can simply complain about a regulation or bill that is proposed or passed that has or could cause changes and/or harm to their business. Everyone has a responsibility to communicate with their legislators, to express to them who they are/what their business needs are/what government can do (or should not do) that can help or harm their livelihood, and what their association needs from them.

1. Build a member communications program with their Congressional leaders

Unveil a program to encourage members to write a letter, send an email, make a phone call, invite their legislators to their place of business, or meet with them within the district. As Buddy Leger says so well, 'It is not as important for you to know your legislator, as it is for your legislator to know you'.

2. Encourage members to attend and participate at the Washington Public Policy Conference

Every available NWA member should be involved in the federal political process at a minimum level. The NWA will encourage our members to attend WPPC, the premiere produce industry event in Washington, D.C., in an expanded partnership with United Fresh Produce Association. Meeting with our federal leaders, and their own legislators, is a key to expanding the voice of the NWA to include their district representatives and Senators.

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Representing the watermelon interests in the United States and our neighbors