

First International Watermelon Conference hosted by Nunhems

From the field to the plate: Tomorrow's trends in watermelon



Nunhems CEO Douwe Zijp during his welcome speech.

Monheim - In early October, leading global vegetable seed specialist Nunhems brought together watermelon experts from all over the world at its First International Watermelon Conference in Valencia, Spain. The symposium served to exchange experience, establish contacts along the supply chain, and learn about new trends and developments in the watermelon industry.

Nunhems' CEO Douwe Zijp welcomed some 200 guests from twelve countries to the event at Valencia's City of Arts and Sciences. He emphasized the importance of sharing know-how across the disciplines. "Nunhems is proud to offer this information exchange platform. The days when

farmers, processors, exporters, importers and food service providers worked independently and focused exclusively on their own specific needs are over.

The future of the watermelon business lies with the global integration of the supply chain. In this respect, our conference is an important step towards connecting the different parts of the chain - to explore joint business opportunities, and to deliver high-quality products to our customers and to consumers," he commented.

Close cooperation with all partners across the supply chain

The presentations addressed a variety of influences on the present and future watermelon business, including research and development, cultivation, international trade and marketing. Vicente Navarro, Nunhems' Global Head of Marketing, commented on the company's position on the European watermelon market and stressed the added value Nunhems derives from global business integration, modern research techniques, a strong customer focus and close cooperation with partners and customers across the supply chain.

Hans-Christoph Behr, from the German ZMP (Zentrale Markt- und Preisberichtsstelle), commented on global trade flows and factors such as season, temperature and country-specific habits on consumption. Rosa Melero from ETEA University presented the "Fashion" watermelon brand and its corresponding business model as an example for successful supply chain cooperation. In a round table discussion, she analyzed the project with other business experts from an academic, retail and grower association's point of view, and highlighted the many advantages of creating demand at consumer level by introducing a recognizable produce brand.



Great taste combined with spectacular looks: food artist Judit Comes from Fruit Art turned watermelons into unique sculptures, including floral designs, animal themes and the Nunhems logo.



L'Hemisfèric, the planetarium of Valencia's City of Arts and Sciences, was illuminated in red to resemble the flesh color in watermelons.

During the second part of the conference, the focus was on consumer-oriented product forms and marketing models. Jack Wilder, from the international food manufacturer Bakkavor, offered an insight into the most recent fresh-cut developments in watermelon, while Olivier Hausheer from XTC explored innovative ways of increasing watermelon consumption.

Watermelons offer additional health benefits

The additional health benefits of watermelons were explained by Gordon Hunt from the National Watermelon Promotion Board, an Orlando-based non-profit organization that aims at promoting the public image of watermelon through research and education. He pointed out that the active substance citrulline found in the rind and flesh of watermelons has a positive effect on the heart and circulation. When consumed in large quantities, melons can cause natural dilatation of the blood vessels. In addition, watermelons have few calories and are an excellent source of the carotenoid lycopene that protects the body against the effects of free radicals and strengthens the immune system.

Nunhems

Nunhems, Bayer CropScience's vegetable seed business, is the global specialist in vegetable seeds and in sharing products, concepts and expertise with the professional horticultural production industry and supply chain. Its portfolio includes leading varieties and brands in crops such as leek, onion, carrot, melon, cucumber, tomato, watermelon, lettuce, pepper and chicory witloof. With annual sales of EUR 208 million in 2007, Nunhems is amongst the world's leading vegetable seed companies, with an extensive range of 28 species and some 2,500 varieties. With more than 1,300 people, Nunhems is present in all major vegetable production areas in the world.