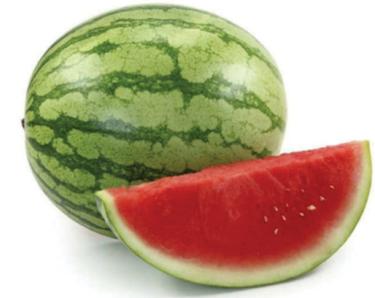


Three Generations of Watermelons



Q: What is the history of your farm?

A: My grandpa started the business after his father went bankrupt in the 1940s by raising watermelon just to make a living during a tough time. Eventually, he began selling his produce door to door in neighborhoods around Great Bend. After my parents got married, my dad and his brother created a partnership for the farm and began selling cantaloupe and watermelon. They'd pull their trucks up to grocery stores and shops in the area and unload the produce out of the back of the truck. During the mid-1980s we expanded to larger stores, including Dillons. Over time, we increased the size of our farm to meet a growing demand. Today, we grow melons on 200 acres and haul seven to ten semitruck loads of watermelon and cantaloupe to the Dillons warehouse in Hutchinson every week.

Q: How are melons grown and harvested?

A: We plant seeds in a greenhouse in the middle of April and transplant the seedlings to the ground around the first of May. As the plants grow, we care for them by weeding, hoeing and spraying pesticides when necessary. The earliest melons start to ripen is the middle of July, but we plant several varieties with different maturity dates to ensure we have melons ready steadily from July through September. We have a harvest crew that hand picks the melons and sorts them into bins on trailers. From there, they are taken out of the field, washed and checked and unloaded into our warehouse or onto semitrucks to be taken to stores.

Q: Where can consumers find your products?

A: Most of our melons are sold through Dillons. However, we also sell products to Stutzmans Greenhouse, especially during the fall.

Q: What do you want consumers to know about your product or business?

A: This job takes a lot of work and is labor intensive. We don't sell anything to co-ops, so we must find a market for every piece of produce. It's much different than other commodities that can be grown, stored and sold through a global market over time.