



By Fruitnet.com Staff

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US watermelons to hit Japan

Following market access, US watermelons are set for a promotion in Japanese stores this August



Access to Japan for US watermelons was negotiated in April in a delegation led by Gordon Hunt, director of marketing for the National Watermelon Promotion Board.

He was joined by Brent Harrison, president of Al Harrison Produce Co Distributors, and Dan Van Groningen, vice president of Van Groningen & Sons, reported The Produce News.

Van Groningen & Sons will be the first to export US watermelons to Japan.

Exploiting the company's role as a supplier to Wal-Mart in the US, Van Groningen & Sons will supply Wal-Mart's Japanese retail subsidiary Seiyu.

US watermelons will initially be promoted in 20 Seiyu stores in the Tokyo-Osaka area, with the first shipment leaving in late July or early August.

"We approached this in a systematic way, working with Wal-Mart and Seiyu," Mr Hunt told Produce News.

"We went over in March, toured the market, saw stores and met with the people who do buying for Seiyu."

Japanese requirements focus on consistent Brix levels and uniform fruit, he said, adding that the first shipment will be given special care and packed by hand.