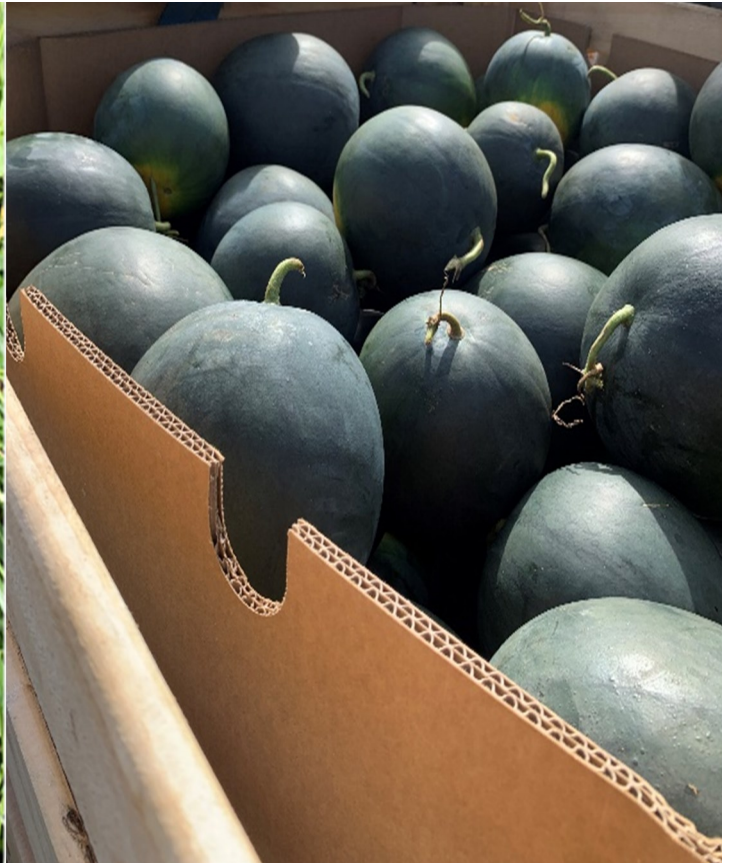


Watermelon — #3



Botanical name: **Citrullus vulgaris**

Common name: **Watermelon**

Tongan name: **Meleni**

Other names:

DESCRIPTION & USES

Scientific name - *Citrullus vulgaris*, Tongan name - *Meleni*

Watermelon is grown in Tonga for domestic use, particularly as a feast food, and for export, mainly for the New Zealand market.



Watermelon

PRODUCTION NOTES

Climate: Watermelons require an annual rainfall of at least 2000mm. Fruit production is severely reduced if plants are exposed to shading. Highest production occurs in areas, which are sheltered from wind.

Soil: Plants require well-drained, deep, fertile, sandy loam soils; a high content of humus is optimum. Fertilisers may be necessary, especially on land, which has been previously cropped.



Cropping Pattern: It is not advisable to grow watermelons after a crop of peanuts, tomatoes, capsicum, taro, yams or sweet potatoes because pathogens which affects these crops and also affect watermelon can build up in the soil.

Propagation: Hills with a diameter of about 50cm should be prepared. Seeds are planted on these hills in the field.

Planting density: Spacing of about 2m x 2m is commonly used, or 1000 plants per acre.

Planting time: Seeds can be planted all year round, but the best yields are obtained when seeds are planted from July to December.

Growth period: Fruits are usually harvested after 4 months, but can be harvested from 3 to 5 months.

Water requirements: Watermelon plants require a considerable amount of moisture. If rainfall is not sufficient, irrigation or watering will be required to obtain maximum yields.

Disease and pest control: Gummy stem blight, powdery mildew, anthracnose and a virus disease affect watermelon plants. Pests include leaf miner, aphids, cucumber beetle and 28-spotted ladybird beetle.

Storage: Fruits should be marketed soon after harvest, and stored no longer than 2 to 3 weeks. It is important to handle carefully to avoid bruising and scratching.

Marketing notes:

Talamahu Market report showed in 2019-2025, an average supply of 5,419.93 tonnes of watermelons per year was sold at Talamahu market with an average price of T\$1.64/kg. About 1,858.99 tonnes of watermelons were exported annually during the last 7 years.

For more information

Address: Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forests (MAFF)