

## **NATIONAL LEAFY GREENS MARKETING AGREEMENT**

My name is: Drew McDonald

My testimony is in support of the National Leafy Greens Marketing Agreement.

The intent of this Agreement is the national standardization of requirements and best practices for all phases of the Leafy Greens industry.

I support the National Leafy Greens Marketing Agreement.

**Testimony for Drew McDonald of Taylor Farms**

My name is Drew McDonald and I am Vice President of National Quality Systems for Taylor Farms in Salinas California. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify today. I have held my present position for the past 6 years and have been in the industry for the last 15 years. Taylor Farms is the world's largest salad and fresh cut vegetable processor with 10 processing plants operating in 7 states and Mexico. We source approximately 800 acres per week of leafy green vegetables through our valued network of local, independent, family-run farms who supply conventionally and organically-grown produce to us. Our source of leafy green vegetables extends across more than 13 states including California, Arizona, Oregon, Washington, Colorado, New Mexico, Michigan, New Jersey, and Florida as well as from outside the country in Canada and Mexico. We provide fresh, healthy products to 100 million Americans each week to provide enjoyment and promote healthy lifestyles. I oversee all aspects of our quality activities which include the food safety programs for our suppliers (growers) and our processing operations.

As a participant in California's Leafy Greens Marketing Agreement for the last three years, I have seen this program in action. The California LGMA

has resulted in a new focus on food safety in which we as growers/handlers abide by best practices that are consistent, specific, measurable and verifiable in the field. Historically, without uniform safety requirements, we are dependent on the safety practices of all other growers and shippers in the county, state and beyond. Outbreaks such as the *E. coli* outbreak in September 2006, affect the entire industry. That particular outbreak shut the industry down. We destroyed crops and experienced financial loss when consumers lost confidence in our industry to put forward the safest products possible. To this day there are still customers who have permanently removed spinach from their menu offering.

Customers lost confidence in the safety of spinach and leafy greens across the entire system. We were all looking for something that could provide confidence in our supply once again. The leafy green marketing agreements, governing fresh leafy greens in Arizona and California respectively assisted us in doing just that. While they are voluntary programs; the requirements of those agreements are mandatory for all signatory handlers/shippers. Signatories undergo regular and random audits conducted by their state's department of agriculture based on specific good agricultural practices that are both protective and practical. Participation is renewed on an annual

basis. Those enrolled handlers agree to purchase only leaf greens grown according to the accepted good agricultural practices.

As a signatory to the California Leafy Green Agreement, we believe we are less likely to be detrimentally impacted by the safety performance of another grower or shipper. We also believe we are effectively minimizing the potential for contamination and that the state LGMA positions the industry to engage directly with FDA and state public health agencies to facilitate the rapid identification and mitigation of any contamination as well as to refine the program with an eye towards continual improvement. These refinement activities and efforts towards continual improvement have established an unprecedented collaborative effort between industry, academia, and ~~industry~~ <sup>regulatory agencies</sup>. Moreover, the marketing agreement represents the culmination of over a decade of industry effort to improve food safety. The fresh produce industry has been at the forefront of developing comprehensive food safety programs for many years. Based on some of the testimonies this week it is probably important to note and maybe surprising to some that for almost all segments of the food industry most regulatory guidelines and eventual mandated regulation is based on, derived, or otherwise developed from industry best practices. In fact, with produce the first Food Safety