

Hello,

My name is Michael Davis, and I am the owner of Tex-Mex Sales, LLC, and TM Farms, LLC. For over 30 years I have worked in the onion and produce industry. My family has been in the industry for over 50 years. Tex-Mex Sales is a family business located in Westlaco, TX. We are a mid-size company that grows, packs, and ships onions. We employ over 60 people during our peak season at the shed and over 100 people on the farm during harvest.

My family has been involved in the onion industry since 1960's. My grandfather and uncle started on my mothers side started growing onions both in Texas and Mexico. They helped pioneer the farming of onions in Tampico, Mexico. My father himself started in the produce industry in the late 50's working in Arizona and California as a quality inspector for Pacific Fruit co. For all types of commodities. In the late 60's he moved to Texas and eventually started his own company selling all types of commodities from Texas, Mexico and all over the US. I personally started out in the industry when I was 9 years old, working at my father's packing shed. Where we grew, packed and shipped onions, cabbage, melons, cantaloupes, and many different commodities.

My first job at 9 years old was starting at the bottom of the company where I cleaned the warehouse and worked my way up the company to pack onions, cabbage, melons, cantaloupes and all the other commodities while I was in high school. In the 1991 while I was in college studying Agricultural Economics at New Mexico State I worked my way up to handling the logistics of the company and after I graduated, I started to work in sales. After graduation I worked in sales for Davis Distributing in Texas and in 1998 I started selling onions year round. After working for several years with my father, we decided to open a company together and solely focus on growing, packing and shipping onions. In 2001 was when Tex-Mex Sales was created and we started to focus solely on growing, packing and shipping onions. For the past 30 years I have worked in selling onions from Texas and all other growing areas in the US. I have served on the South Texas Onion Committee as both a Producer and Handler member. I currently sit on the STOC Committee as a Handler member.

With my extensive experience of working in the fresh produce industry and focusing on onions as a grower, packer and shipper I am here to express my support for the four proposed amendments to the marketing order:

- Add a Public Member to the Committee
- Allow acceptance of outside monies (grants/partner funds)
- Permit assessment fund for paid advertising
- Establish continuation referendums at 51%

I believe these changes matter since the industry and the marketplace of the Texas 1015 onions have changed. As times change with the introduction of new technologies it has shown that retailers, wholesalers and consumers have changed their way of shopping for commodities. These amendments will help our marketing orders create the opportunity to become credible and flexible with today's type of consumers, aligning us with the new reality of how everyday consumers are now purchasing their produce and market our Texas 1015 Onions to consumers.

1. Add a Public Member to the Committee

The addition of a public member to the committee will overall strengthen the committee by having transparency, diversification, and an outside perspective that not only reflects growers and shippers but our community. We as an industry feed our neighbors and communities this will reinforce public confidence, and this public member seat will encourage more communication about how we manage and promote our state vegetable for the Texas 1015 onion.

2. Permit of the use of outside monies such as grants/ partner funds

With outside monies it will help create more opportunities for new technology to help improve the Texas onion industry with research for mechanical harvesting, creation of new onion varieties for our region, and push for innovation. Grants will facilitate our ability to match outside sources such as Federal and State grants, being able to get more for our dollar. In the past, it has been difficult to be able to match such grants with the limitation of funds to diversify our resources. As creative development, media and research become more expensive, it has been challenging to be able to improve the Texas onions in the produce marketplace without a suitable budget.

3. Use of assessment funds for paid advertising

As mentioned previously; by allowing paid advertising it will support the expansion of more outreach to promote the Texas 1015 onion, which is the first domestic onion. With the limitation of our paid advertisement it has become difficult to promote, educate and research to aid in our efforts to show the consumers the difference in not only what makes the Texas 1015 onion so important to the onion industry for how it was develop and that research has been used to improve so many other varieties, but inform consumers the distinction in our short day onion. This will boost the STOC ability to be able share our message through numerous methods to educate a multitude of different consumers on our onions and promote our precise Texas 1015 onion season.

4. Continuation referendums at 51%

The current referendum having the super majority at 68% has created difficulty for us onion growers and shippers to be accurately represented. As the number of producers and growers in our region has gone down in the previous year's I believe changing this to reflect the simple majority at 51% will still accurately represent us onion producers and growers to make it easier to pass or reject issues that are presented while still representing the majority. At 51% it allows us to continue to make decisions that still represent all the producers and growers without the overcomplication of needing the super majority. The simplification to 51% will create a far more efficient and practical portrayal while still depicting the majority.

In closing, as both a producer and a handler in the onion industry I have seen the difficulties our current Federal Marketing Order#959 has provided for our South Texas Onion Committee with the constraints for allowing us the opportunity for growth, innovation, and accurate representation in the marketplace. As we continue to evolve as a community with the way we receive information by adding a public member, allowing outside funds, authorizing paid advertisement, and amending the voting threshold to 51%, we can ensure the future of our commodity. Our historical agricultural legacy within the onion industry not only reflects the importance of the Texas 1015 onion but with these changes it will benefit to keep our industry relevant, active and broaden both our industry and community. I believe these adjustments will help the South Texas Onion Committee, Texas Producers and Texas Handlers strengthen the Texas 1015 onion in the produce marketplace. I appreciate your time and consideration and thank you for your thoughtful review.