

Hello,

My name is Kristen Davis, and I am the Food Safety/HR/Marketing/ Management Coordinator for Tex-Mex Sales, LLC and TM Farms, LLC. I have worked in the onion industry for over 10 years. Tex-Mex Sales is a mid-size family business located in Weslaco, TX. We are growers, packer and shipper of onions for over 50 years. My family history in its involvement in the produce industry runs deep with history with my dad, grandpa and great father all being vastly involved in the onion and produce industry.

I first joined the onion industry when I was in high school working part time after school grading, selecting, and weighing onions as they are packed. This was my first introduction to the industry, experiencing firsthand all the hard work and dedication it takes to pack a good quality onion pack. As this being my exposure to the industry it made me appreciate and recognize all the effort my grandfather, Marvin Davis, and my father, Michael Davis, have taken to become an intricate part of the industry. While I attended college at Texas A&M in College Station and getting my degree in Agricultural Economics and Horticulture, I started working summers at Tex-Mex Sales being mentored by my grandpa, Marvin, I worked my way up into the company as administrative, logistics and sales. After graduation I took on the role as Food Safety Coordinator with the company. Today 6 years later I now overlook Food Safety, Human Resources, Marketing and all Management Roles within the company.

Besides being a part of my family business when I first graduated from Texas A&M I presented the idea of creating a subcommittee with Texas International Produce Association (TIPA) for young individuals working or wanting to join the industry as a way to bridge the age gap with lifetime produce industry individuals with the younger generation to be able to network, educate, collaborate and discuss issues that affect our industry. Fortunately, with the support of Dante Galeazzi and the members of the Texas International Produce Association we have been able to create an organization Young Texas International Produce Association (Y-TIPA) that allows a space for the younger generation see the benefits and opportunities within the produce industry. Any TIPA member that is under the age 35 years old have another way and more opportunities to network with fellow professional produce members with YTIPA. I also been part of the South Texas Onion Committee previously serving as the first women Vice Chairperson for STOC and currently now I sit as a Producer member. With my relatively short time within the produce industry, I am here to express my support for the four proposed amendments to the marketing order. I truly believe with these changes it will not only help the industry and the better position the Texas 1015 onion in the marketplace, but modernize our marketing order to reflect the changes of new technologies, the way consumers now shop for produce and show a accurate market of our Texas 1015 onions to consumers.

- Addition of a Public Member to the Committee

The inclusion of a public representative on the committee will strengthen its effectiveness by advancing transparency, broadening representation, and incorporating an independent community perspective. As stewards of an industry that nourishes both our neighbors and our state, it is essential that we uphold public confidence in our work. Establishing this public member position will promote open dialogue and greater understanding of the practices and initiatives that support the cultivation and promotion of Texas's state vegetable, the Texas 1015 Sweet Onion.

- Allowing outside monies (grants/partner funds)

Securing external funding is essential to advancing the Texas onion industry. With additional financial support, we can accelerate the adoption of new technologies, expand research into mechanical harvesting, and develop innovative varieties uniquely suited to our region. These investments will strengthen our capacity to compete and grow. Access to grants will also allow us to leverage Federal and State funding opportunities, ensuring that every dollar we invest generates greater returns for our growers and communities. In the past, limited resources hindered our ability to meet matching requirements and pursue these opportunities. As the costs of research, media and creative development continue to rise, outside funding has become vital to sustaining progress and enhancing the market presence of Texas onions across the produce industry.

- Use of assessment funds for paid advertising

As previously outlined, authorizing the use of paid advertising would substantially strengthen the committee's capacity to conduct outreach and promotion of the Texas 1015 onion- the nation's first domestically developed onion. Current restrictions on paid advertising have limited ability to effectively promote, educate, and conduct research that highlights the unique value of the Texas 1015. This variety holds a distinguished place in the onion industry, not only for its pioneering development but also for the role its research has played in improving numerous other onion cultivars. Increasing advertising opportunities will enable the South Texas Onion Committee to share this story more broadly, communicate the distinct qualities of our short-day onion, and engage a wider audience through diverse marketing and educational initiatives. Expanding these efforts will ultimately strengthen recognition of the Texas 1015 onion and reinforce its prominence during its celebrated season.

- Continuation referendums at 51%

The current requirement of a 68 percent supermajority in the referendum process has posed challenges for equitable representation of onion growers and shippers. As the number of producers in our region has declined in recent years, it has become increasingly difficult to meet this threshold, thereby limiting the industry's ability to act efficiently on key matters. Adjusting the requirements to a

simple majority of 51 percent would ensure that decisions continue to reflect the will of the majority while streamlining the decision-making process. This modification would maintain fair representation of all producers and growers, reduce procedural inefficiencies, and provide a more practical framework for advancing or rejecting proposals.

In conclusion, with my short time in the onion industry as a producer, I have witnessed firsthand the challenges that the current Federal marketing Order No. 959 has presented for the South Texas Onion Committee, particularly in limiting opportunities for growth, innovation, and equitable representation. As our industry and communities continue to evolve, implementing key updates- such as adding public member, securing external funding, authorizing paid advertising, and adjusting the voting threshold to a simple majority of 51 percent- will position us to meet the demands of a modern marketplace while preserving our integrity and heritage. These revisions will not only sustain the proud agricultural legacy of the Texas 1015 onion but also ensure the continued vitality, competitiveness, and engagement of our growers, handlers, and the broader community. I respectfully submit these recommendations with confidence that they will strengthen both the South Texas Onion Committee and the future of the Texas onion industry. Thank you for your time, consideration, and commitment to our shared success.