

**Testimony of Athur William Beckwith  
Manager, B&B Farms/Beckwith Produce  
Supporter of Proposed Amendments to the South Texas Onion Committee Marketing Order (TX1015)**

Hello,

My name is Will Beckwith, and I am the manager B&B Farms and Beckwith Produce. I am a fourth-generation farmer working alongside my grandfather, father, and brother. For the past seven years I have had the opportunity to help manage our family's vegetable and row crop farms across the Rio Grande Valley and packing shed in La Villa, Texas. I'm here to voice 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 funds for paid advertising
- Establish continuation referendums at 51%

### **Why These Changes Matter**

The produce industry has changed drastically over the past two decades. The number of farmers and packers growing and marketing TX1015 onions has decreased over the years due to competition from outside the industries such as urban expansion, warehousing and infrastructure to support imported goods from Mexico, and increased pressure on the agricultural workforce in South Texas from the Construction, Manufacturing, Oil & Gas, and healthcare industries. At the same time competing US onion producing regions have increased their storage capabilities and now compete against TX 1015 sweet onions, and imports from Mexico and South America for retail floorspace and at the foodservice level.

#### **1) Public Member**

Adding a Public Member to the committee would improve the overall effectiveness of the committee market our onions. Having an outside voice from growers and shippers will increase the diversity of viewpoints at the table and help us make better long-term decisions that improve the entirety of the South Texas Onion Industry.

#### **2) Acceptance of Outside Monies**

Acceptance of outside monies/grants would help the industry cover the costly expense of creative development, media, and outreach. The help of matched funds from retailers, health initiatives, and grants to help match our assessment dollars would be a tremendous benefit.

#### **3) Use of Assessment Funds for Paid Advertising**

Under the current rules, the marketing order does not allow the use of assessment funds to support paid media. Paid advertising would be extremely beneficial in the promotion of the TX 1015 onion. Today so many different media outlets are available, such as social media platforms, digital billboards, industry publications, and trade shows available, the STOC is missing out on many opportunities to inform the consumer of the benefits of TX 1015 sweet onions.

#### 4) Continuation Referendums at 51%

As time goes on the rules and regulations, and marketing efforts set by marketing order 959 will **only** become more impactful and effective. A simple majority helps preserve continuity and effectiveness of the program while still reflecting the industries will.

#### Closing

These updates to the marketing order will help committee members more effectively maintain a **quality** product and better educate consumers. Adding a public member will improve relevance and **diversity** of viewpoints on the committee; allowing outside monies and paid advertising ensures we have **adequate** resources to achieve our advertising/outreach goals; and a 51% continuation standard helps keep **work** being done by the committee moving forward. Together these amendments allow the committee **to do a** better job reflecting the opinions of growers, handlers, the South Texas onion industry and **inform the** public about the benefits of choosing TX 1015 onions.

Thank you for your consideration and time!