

Testimony of Tim Dunn  
Arizona Farm Bureau Federation

My name is Tim Dunn and I am a producer here in the Yuma Area. My family produces a number of crops including leafy greens. I am also the Chairman of the Arizona Agricultural Advisory Committee and the 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President of the Arizona Farm Bureau Federation.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak today in favor of the National Leafy Greens Marketing Agreement on behalf of the Arizona Farm Bureau. The Arizona Farm Bureau has roughly 2700 agricultural producer members in 13 counties of the state. We represent a wide spectrum of commodities in the state including leafy greens with a large number of our membership coming from the Yuma Area.

While we believe the current food supply is very safe now, recent food safety concerns have shown the impacts uncertainty can have on the fresh produce industry. With that in mind we have a vested interest in the development and implementation of a national marketing agreement that creates a benchmark set of standards that are science based and practical to implement.

We applaud USDA in moving forward with a marketing agreement approach to developing standards for the produce industry rather than imposing marketing orders or federal mandates. We believe that this approach will ensure flexibility and allow for adjustment as new practices and technology are developed to further minimize the potential for contamination.

We also believe the establishment of a nationally recognized standard for food safety that recognizes regional differences is critical to ensure the practical implementation of a successful safety standard for handling of fresh produce.

When it comes to this type of system one size does not fit all and we believe the National Leafy Green Marketing agreement is the best approach in creating a practical, voluntary system accessible to producers of all sizes and geographical areas.

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Uncertainty in the marketplace is also detrimental to the creation of capital that is sorely needed in our current economy. Investment thrives on limiting risk and minimizing uncertainty. We have seen the success of regional voluntary marketing agreements in California and Arizona and by creating one recognizable standard should also minimize the need for multiple metrics and audits. Our hope is that such a system will drive much of the cost out of the current system and the uncertainty that comes with it.

While we recognize that we cannot be guaranteed that any one system will satisfy and be agreed upon by every buyer, we believe that the NLGMA is a good start to providing a platform for uniform management practices that reduce food safety risks.

We are also encouraged by the amount of input producers and handlers will have in the proposed system. We feel that this is critical element to ensure that the handling practices outlines in the agreement are practical to implement. After all the sustainability of such a program relies heavily on the ability of producers to adopt and implement the outlined practices.

I will end my remarks with a thank you to the USDA for their willingness to work with the industry in creating a workable program to improve the marketability of our products and benefit the consumer. We applaud the efforts that have been made thus far in the implementation of this program and stand ready to work with other interested parties in implementing this program.