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My name is Sammy Duda. I am vice president of Duda Farm Fresh Foods, Inc., a large leafy green grower-shipper with operations in the Salinas and San Joaquin Valley's of California, Yuma, AZ and Belle Glade, FL. I have held my present position for the past 7 years and have been in the industry virtually my entire life. Our company plants and harvests approximately 3,500 acres of iceberg lettuce, 1,600 acres of romaine and approximately 500 acres of mixed leaf lettuces including green leaf, red leaf and butter lettuces. We are considered a large handler.

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 were 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-, affected the entire industry: and we destroyed crops and experienced financial losses even though we don't grow and ship spinach because consumers lost confidence in our entire industry's ability to put forward the safest products possible.

The leafy green marketing agreements, governing fresh leafy greens in Arizona and California respectively assist us in doing just that. We believe that as a signatory to the Marketing Agreements, we are less likely to be detrimentally impacted by the safety performance of another grower or shipper. 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. Those enrolled handlers agree to purchase only leafy greens grown according to the accepted good agricultural practices. By adhering to these best practices, we are effectively minimizing the potential for product contamination. Participation is renewed on an annual basis.

As a signatory to the California Leafy Greens Agreement, we also believe we are effectively minimizing the potential for contamination and that the state LGMA's position the industry to engage directly with the 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.

The implementation of the California and Arizona Leafy Green Marketing Agreements provides our buyers and ultimately the consumer with a science based safety program.

They now know the full scope of what we look for, test and monitor when implementing food safety programs and can have confidence that our efforts are consistently and constantly verified by state government inspectors. While some buyers still have unique requirements, the marketing agreement has fostered consistency in safety requirements.

With approximately 90 percent of all leafy greens already being covered by the CA or AZ LGMA, the implementation of a national marketing agreement should bring about nominal incremental costs for both growers selling to handlers and handlers who are signatories of those state's agreements. Involvement in a national program could be financially beneficial with improved buyer and consumer confidence.

I do not expect our costs to increase significantly under the National Leafy Greens Marketing Agreement since we have already made the necessary investments to comply with the California and Arizona Leafy Greens Marketing Agreements and have, on our own, implemented similar programs in our regional areas of production. The addition of a national agreement will not result in additional personnel, capital or testing costs.

I have examined the business case study financials as a large grower/shipper and find them to be representative of the costs we have incurred and may incur.

Our experience with the California/Arizona Leafy Greens Marketing Agreement has been positive and we would expect the same kind of experience nationally. This national agreement will bring the same standards to all companies growing, packaging, or selling leafy greens across the U.S. This is a huge leap forward for product safety. With national standards in place, industry buyers can now see the issues on food safety much more clearly and thus address these issues with a consistent and cost-effective direction or plan.

We would therefore like to go on record as supporting the National Leafy Green Marketing Agreement which should bring standardization across the country to our industry that will improve all aspects and phases of growing, handling, processing and shipping, thereby allowing consumers, the final end users, confidence and trust in these nutritious products.