

NATIONAL LEAFY GREENS MARKETING AGREEMENT

My name is: Jorge Fonseca

The spelling of my last name is: F- O-N-S-E-C-A

My current address is: 3801 21ST Place, Yuma, AZ 85364

My position in the Leafy Greens Industry currently is: I am a researcher/extension specialist with the University of Arizona in the areas of postharvest physiology and produce safety

I grow and handle just about any types of leafy green as part of my research with The University of Arizona.

I produce conventional and organic crops...As part of my research both I produce romaine lettuce both conventional and organic. Any of the other leafy greens on conventional fields.

My testimony is in support of the National Leafy Greens Marketing Agreement.

The intent of this Agreement is the national standardization of requirements and best practices for all phases of the Leafy Greens industry.

I support the National Leafy Greens Marketing Agreement because I see it as the most efficient way to minimize risk of contamination in the field in the short term. Also, because I believe mistakes in other regions due to lack of efficient programs on Good Agricultural Practices will affect the entire industry and the health of innocent consumers across the nation.

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My name is Jorge Fonseca. I am a researcher and extension specialist in the areas of postharvest physiology and produce safety with The University of Arizona, stationed at the Yuma Agricultural Center. I have held my present position for the past 6 years. As part of my research I grow about 10 acres per year of leafy greens, however, the impact of the results of my research go beyond that acreage.

I have been an active consultant for the leafy green industry in the area of produce safety, both to growers and to third party audit companies. I have done specific research that targets some of the current metrics in the CA/AZ Leafy Greens Marketing Agreement. I have been a regular instructor for FDA/JIFSAN in their international training programs on Good Agricultural Practices. I am a collaborator with multi-state efforts to transfer technology on food safety. I have received funding from state, federal, commodity groups association and private entities to conduct studies that aim to identify better ways to prevent contamination of product in leafy green fields.

94

I support the NLGMA, because my understanding is that what happens in one area of the country, and even overseas (if the country ships product to the USA), can be devastated for the entire leafy green industry. I have conducted research and extension work throughout the country and at other regions of the world and by observing what is being done in all of those places my opinion is that in California and Arizona the industry has taken the most aggressive approach to reduce the risk of contaminated vegetables. Whether the new guidelines are too stringent or not, is something that needs to be evaluated during the next few years, but clearly, it is better to lean on the safer side, meaning we should rather have a more conservative approach while more information is generated by research. We are talking about saving the industry, but the main point is that we want to protect the lives of consumers.

Further I believe, that based on my recent research, the guidelines may even need to be a bit more stringent in the future when more data confirms initial information that is being generated. I found for example that the area contaminated as a result of splashed fecal particles from animal feces in the field goes beyond the 5 feet perimeter indicated in CA/AZ leafy green marketing agreement metrics. The farthest distance travelled by fecal matter can even be more than twice what has been established depending on the speed wind during a sprinkle irrigation session. Moreover, the national marketing agreement would allow the industry to engage with Federal and state agencies to facilitate the rapid identification and mitigation of any contamination as well as to refine the program with vigilance towards continual improvement.

Nevertheless, the current leafy green marketing agreement has already incorporated metrics that are clearly the result of science, something that is far better than just conducting produce safety programs based on “common sense.”

I don't discuss here issues related with logistics. For example, concerning who should be overseeing and who should audit this agreement, and what the impact on cost production is, as these are not issues directly related with my work as university employee.

Based on what I can perceive as researcher I give my support to the National Leafy Green Marketing Agreement, thus, I want to go on record as supporter of this movement that will bring standardization across the country, for the sake of our industry , and ultimately for the safety and standard of living of the consumers. I will welcome any question related to my statement.