

PASQUINELLI PRODUCE CO
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Good afternoon.

My name is Paul Muthart (spelled MUTHART).

Thank you for coming to Yuma to hear this testimony.

I represent Pasquinelli Produce Co. I am the General Manager and an officer in the Company.

I am here to speak in favor of the National Leafy Greens Marketing Agreement.

Pasquinelli Produce is a family farm that has been growing winter vegetables in the Yuma area for over 60 years.

We are currently growing approximately 8,500 acres of vegetables, of which 4,900 acres are head lettuce, and 2,200 acres are leaf lettuce. It is our goal to be compliant with the Arizona Leafy Greens Marketing Agreement.

I have downloaded, and read the amended draft of the National Marketing Agreement.

From our perspective, the last point in the "Purpose" paragraph (section 970.35) should really be the beginning point, and the end goal:

"...improve consumer confidence in leafy green vegetables".

That confidence will come if our industry can consistently deliver a quality leafy green vegetable, that is safe to eat.

There are many participants along the "field to fork" journey of a leafy green vegetable.

As a grower/producer, Pasquinelli is at the beginning of that journey.

Our contribution would be to grow a quality, safe-to-eat leafy green vegetable.

Our interest in the proposed National Leafy Greens Marketing Agreement can be focused to the promulgation and verification of good agricultural practices that would reduce microbial food safety hazards, regardless of where the leafy green vegetable is grown.

We are particularly pleased to see the importance of having science be the "driver" in our industry's efforts. This is demonstrated by the establishment of the Technical Review Board to assist the Committee in establishing the appropriate metrics.

I would like to emphasize the point that our primary concern is that the American consumer receive a safe-to-eat leafy green vegetable, regardless of where the vegetable is grown, or how large or small the farm is.

Accordingly, we are happy to see in Sec 970.66 (a)(2) the inclusion of leafy green vegetables produced in foreign companies.

This goal of a safe food product should be readily understood and embraced by all who have a conscience.

All of the farmers that I know, have such a conscience, and would be terribly distraught if they knew that they grew a vegetable that made someone sick, or worse yet, die.

But there is another reason that we would like to see national agreement on the role that good agriculture practices play in delivering a safe food.

And that reason has to do with business.

In this day and age of instant, and graphic communication, what happens in any part of our Country is quickly know by the entire Country.

And, what happens in any part of our Country has the potential to affect all other parts of the Country.

So by way of example, if a leafy green producer in the state of New York were responsible for introducing e-coli contaminated romaine lettuce into the marketplace, the entire country would be alerted.

Based on past history, it is reasonable to conclude that consumption of romaine would be diminished all across the Country.

This would likely mean that Pasquinelli's production in Yuma County would be halted, even though the 2 growing regions are miles apart. Because we are growing a highly perishable food, we cannot hold our crops in "inventory" until the aforementioned New York incident is properly disposed of. Discing an un-harvested field means that Pasquinelli would suffer financial losses through no fault of its own.

Pasquinelli could also suffer financial losses from the food borne illness, even if the New York incident occurred when Pasquinelli is not harvesting. We have business relationships with shippers/handlers who put product into the marketplace each day of the calendar year. We can imagine a situation where that New York incident negatively impacts one of our shipper's sales, to the point of causing our shipper to go out of

business. So once again, Pasquinelli may have a financial loss through no fault of its own, due to an uncollectable receivable from a bankrupt shipper.

To summarize, Pasquinelli Produce Co supports the National Leafy Greens Marketing Agreement. We are particularly attracted to the ideal of crafting guidelines for good agricultural practices, so that regardless of where the leafy green vegetable is grown, the risk of microbial food safety hazards is reduced.