

Nunes Vegetables, Inc.

October 14, 2009

Testimony for National Leafy Green Marketing Agreement:

My name is Tom Nunes. I am Vice-President of Nunes Vegetables Inc., a large family owned leafy greens grower-shipper. I have held this position for over 20 years and have been in the industry for over 30 years.

Nunes Vegetables grows and ships western vegetables seasonally from the Salinas Valley, Central San Joaquin Valley, Ventura County and Yuma Arizona. Yuma is our home for winter production of western vegetables.

We grow and ship from approximately 12,000 acres of leafy greens which include iceberg lettuce, romaine lettuce and other leafy green vegetables. The Yuma district represents approximately one-third of this production.

Our grower base in California and Arizona include 15 grower companies ranging in size from 100 acres to 5000 acres of leafy greens of which we are the largest. As a participant in the California and Arizona Leafy Green Marketing Agreements, I have seen the programs in action. As you know, these are voluntary programs; however, once you join their requirements are mandatory. Signatories have numerous audits throughout the growing seasons, including unannounced audits, all conducted by the California Department of Agriculture with oversight from the USDA. As an enrolled signatory, we agree to ship only leafy greens grown according to accepted science based Good Agricultural Practices referred to as "metrics".

Listed are the benefits, I believe the California and Arizona LGMA Programs have brought to our company and our industry:

1) The food quality verification audits that reduce microbial food safety hazards are uniform with other signatory grower-shippers in each production district and state.

2) The California and Arizona LGMA's Programs have educated the handlers and have no doubt elevated the importance of a safer food supply right down to the smallest grower and their workforce. In my opinion, in order to have a successful food safety program it must be systemic and part of the culture of your company. These programs have given us the tools to do so!

3) The LGMA audits provide our buyers with a science based food safety program that brings consistency to testing and food safety requirements. This is basic in educating the buyer, that this is the Food Safety Program of choice.

4) These verification audits have enhanced the food quality of fresh leafy green vegetables with consistent, stringent, and science-based requirements that will increase consumer confidence in leafy greens.

5) The LGMA programs have given its signatories and their buyers a level of comfort knowing that each company has a capable trace back program in place in the event of a recall or market withdrawal.

Our experience with the California and Arizona programs has been a positive one. It has provided our company a template to a safer food supply. I believe the proposed National Agreement will bring the same advantages to all leafy green grower-shippers across the United States. Nunes Vegetables Inc. would like to go on record supporting this National Leafy Greens Marketing Agreement.

Thomas P. Nunes, Jr.



Nunes Vegetables, Inc.
Vice President