



Statement by Tom Nassif, president and CEO of Western Growers:

“Western Growers is extremely disappointed with USDA’s termination of the proposed National Marketing Agreement for Leafy Greens.

After investing hundreds of man hours in the development of a proactive approach that would have afforded leafy green producers across the country an opportunity to craft their own food safety programs with oversight from USDA and FDA, the Agency has opted to step back.

After working successfully in California and Arizona to create marketing agreements that would voluntarily engage producers in self-funded food safety regulatory programs we hoped that the model could be advanced on a national level.

The National LGMA was an opportunity to shift to a constructive paradigm in which government and industry collaborated to enhance food safety, including incorporating any new federal food safety regulations and providing the funding mechanism to ensure compliance.

During the NLGMA public hearing process, many in industry objected to the proposal to allow growers to voluntarily implement food safety programs under USDA oversight. The result of those objections was a proposed marketing agreement that nobody supported and almost three years worth of silence from USDA because of ex parte rules governing the proceedings.

During this period, Congress and FDA filled the void with the passage of the Food Safety Modernization Act and the development of Standards for the Growing, Harvesting, Packing and Holding of Produce for Human Consumption, administered by the US Food and Drug Administration.

This Act and its companion rules are being strenuously fought by many of the same organizations and entities that objected to the NLGMA.

It is time to stop saying NO to food safety on the farm and engage in the development of preventive programs at all levels.

Hopefully, with the termination of this rule proceeding, USDA can re-engage in food safety in a meaningful way and work constructively with reluctant parties to foster a culture and commitment to food safety.”