



# 2022/2023 ANNUAL REPORT





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## OVERVIEW

Arizona is often called the winter lettuce capital of the United States because the desert climate provides a short growing season from November to March. During that time, Arizona farmers grow approximately 25% of the total U.S. lettuce supply each year.

### Organization

The Arizona LGMA protects public health by providing safe and healthy lettuce and leafy greens. This food safety program cultivates food safety practices, verifies on-farm compliance, utilizes data for improvement and empowers industry with tools to advance food safety. The Arizona LGMA food safety standards require agricultural water risk assessments, field personnel training, environmental risk assessments, field and transport sanitation, evaluation of soil amendments prior to use, equipment cleaning and sanitation, food safety practices for harvest, and more.

### Members

Arizona farmers are committed to growing and harvesting safe lettuce and leafy greens through the Arizona LGMA food safety certification program. Arizona LGMA members are shippers of Arizona leafy greens who utilize strict food safety standards to ensure the integrity of leafy greens grown, harvested, and shipped from Arizona. The program is administered by the Arizona Department of Agriculture. In 2022/2023, Arizona LGMA members represent 98.9% of leafy greens grown in Arizona.



### Audits & Compliance

To be certified, Arizona LGMA members must complete multiple audits each growing season. Audits are conducted by United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and ISO certified auditors that verify compliance with the food safety standards (also called metrics).

### Funding

The Arizona LGMA operates solely using collected fees from its members. The Arizona LGMA assessment fee can vary from year to year depending upon projected costs. The assessment rate for a standard carton was set at \$.007 from July 1, 2022, to June 30, 2023.

The Arizona LGMA is accountable to its members, the fresh produce industry, and consumers for providing safe and healthy lettuce and leafy greens. Beyond the food safety standards and audits, science and training are important elements of success. The program also values education and is driven to improve the knowledge and practices of everyone in our industry. We understand and appreciate the role that each individual plays in every step of the leafy greens production process.



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## HAPPENINGS

### Food Safety Standards Updated

The Arizona LGMA Food Safety Committee approved multiple changes to the food safety standards (also known as metrics) that all Arizona LGMA members must adhere to. The changes went into effect September 16, 2022, and Arizona Department of Food and Agriculture auditors began verifying compliance in November when harvest began for the 2022/2023 season.

“The Arizona leafy greens farming community works continuously to protect public health. These changes will impact more than 9 billion servings of lettuce produced by Arizona farmers this winter,” said C.R. Waters, Arizona LGMA Chairman.

The changes included:

- New Glossary Terms for risk and root cause analysis
- Minor editorial changes throughout
- Issue 4: Personnel Qualification and Training
- Training requirements for those who conduct environmental hazard/risk assessments.
- Issue 5: Environmental Assessments
- Table 0: Updated to align buffer distances to California LGMA
- New Pre-Harvest Product Testing SOP requirements
- Issue 8 through Issue 14: Are reorganized to better align specific, food safety best practices to on-farm production, handling, and harvest practices.
- Issue 18- References were updated to include current and available documents.

### Staffing

In Fall of 2022, Arizona LGMA Technical Assistant Vicki Scott resigned from her position. Several months later, Kami (Weddle) Van Horn stepped into the position of Technical Assistant for the organization.

### Arizona Lettuce and Leafy Greens Harvest Celebration

Arizona’s Governor Doug Ducey proclaimed November 2022 as Arizona Leafy Greens month. This was the State’s 10<sup>th</sup> annual celebration of the start of harvest for Arizona leafy greens. The Arizona LGMA conducted outreach on this topic via social media partnerships and giveaways as well as produce trade press outreach.



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## LEADERSHIP & STAFF

The Arizona LGMA is managed by the Arizona Leafy Greens Food Safety Committee, a five-member committee of signatory shippers or their designated representative. The members have three seats that represent the Yuma area and the other two seats are for any other leafy greens growing areas. The volunteer leadership consists of industry professionals who are shippers or designated representatives of shippers. The Arizona LGMA has the Arizona Leafy Greens Technical Subcommittee overseeing and maintaining the science-based Metrics. The Arizona Leafy Greens Communications Subcommittee then oversees public relations for both the consumer and industry.

Food Safety Committee Members	
C.R. Waters – Chairman	Duda Farm Fresh Foods, Inc.
Herman Cassio	Ippolito International, Inc.
Kristina Nunes	The Nunes Company, Inc.
Chato Valdez	Sabor Farms, LLC.
Kami Weddle	Pacific International Marketing

Technical Subcommittee Members	
Amanda Brooks (Chair)	Harrison Farms
Guadalupe Camarena	Nature Fresh Farms
Jesus Canchola	Fresh Express
Kristina Nunes	The Nunes Company
Bob Mills	Harbinger dba Misionero
Michael Menes	True Organics
Valentin Sierra	Amigo Farms
Megan Chedwick – Alternate	Church Brothers Farms
Matthew Burk – Alternate	Tanimura & Antle
Jeremy Vanderzyl– Alternate	Diamond Block Services

Communications Subcommittee Members	
Kelly Miller – Chair	Griffin Ranches
Amanda Brooks – Co-Chair	Harrison Farms
Valentin Sierra	Amigo Farms, Inc.
Kelly Williams	Smith Farms
Kami Weddle	Rousseau Farms

Staff	
Teressa Lopez	Administrator
Vicki-Lynne Scott	Technical Assistant
April Ward	Public Relations Liaison
Kevin Watson	Compliance Officer



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## MEMBERS

<b>Amigo Farms, Inc.</b>	<b>Hitchcock Farms, Inc.</b>	<b>Taylor Farms California</b>
<b>Bengard Ranch, Inc.</b>	<b>Ippolito International, Inc.</b>	<b>TLC Custom Farming Company, LLC</b>
<b>Bonipak Produce</b>	<b>Mann Packing Company, Inc.</b>	<b>Zada Fresh Farms</b>
<b>Braga Fresh Family Farms</b>	<b>Muzzi Family Farms, LLC</b>	
<b>Church Brothers, LLC / True Leaf Farms</b>	<b>The Nunes Company</b>	 <p>Certified Members of Arizona LGMA are shippers who are committed to adhering to the food safety standards set forth.</p> <p>View the current member list at:  <a href="http://www.arizonaleafygreens.org">www.arizonaleafygreens.org</a></p>
<b>Classic Salads, LLC</b>	<b>Ocean Mist Farms</b>	
<b>Coastline Family Farms</b>	<b>organicgirl, LLC</b>	
<b>D'Arrigo Bros Co of California</b>	<b>Pacific International Vegetable Marketing, Inc.</b>	
<b>Dole Fresh Vegetables, Inc.</b>	<b>Ratto Bros., Inc.</b>	
<b>Duda Farm Fresh Foods, Inc.</b>	<b>Ready Pac Foods, Inc.</b>	
<b>Dynasty Farms, Inc.</b>	<b>River Fresh Farms, LLC</b>	
<b>Everkrisp Vegetables, Inc.</b>	<b>Steinbeck Country Produce</b>	
<b>Field Fresh Farms, LLC</b>	<b>Sabor Farms, LLC</b>	
<b>Fresh Express, Inc.</b>	<b>The Salad Farm, LLC</b>	
<b>Gold Coast Packing, Inc.</b>	<b>Salad Savoy Corporation</b>	
<b>Green Gate Fresh, LLP</b>	<b>Steinbeck Country Produce</b>	
<b>Harbinger Group dba Misionero</b>	<b>Tanimura &amp; Antle Fresh Foods, Inc.</b>	



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## CROP STATISTICS

The Arizona LGMA food safety program covers 15 different types of leafy greens and members reported shipping the following 24lb cartons or carton equivalents:

Commodity		2021/2022	2022/2023
	Iceberg Lettuce	24,147,896	28,805,728
	Romaine	13,426,037	12,195,276
	Romaine Hearts	11,989,761	11,484,018
	Green Leaf	4,145,442	4,661,019
	Red Leaf	769,306	762,377
	Butter Leaf	568,846	598,159
	Spinach (Teen & Baby)	10,384,608	10,249,657
	Baby Leaf Items (Spring Mix)	5,791,653	6,969,465
	Cabbage (Green, Red & Savoy)	3,879,955	4,007,508
	Kale	825,016	797,565
	Arugula	951,023	903,493
	Chard	88,605	79,800
	Escarole	35,593	40,959
	Endive	22,330	23,206
	Radicchio	95,936	100,403
<b>Total Cartons</b>		<b>77,122,007</b>	<b>81,678,683</b>



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## AUDIT REPORT

The Arizona LGMA is a part of the Arizona Department of Agriculture (AZDA). The AZDA uses United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and ISO certified auditors that verify compliance with the Arizona LGMA Food Safety Standards (also known as metrics).



Each year the Arizona and California LGMA come together to discuss auditing plans for the year. Auditors from both states are calibrated on metrics intent and new metrics requirements from both states and address any challenges from the previous season. This helps to ensure all metrics are being evaluated in the same manor throughout the LGMA programs.

Representatives from the following agencies attend this discussion:

- Arizona Department of Agriculture
- Arizona LGMA
- California Department of Food and Agriculture
- California LGMA
- U.S. Department of Agriculture

The Arizona LGMA contracts with AZDA/USDA to conduct two scheduled and one unannounced audit with each shipper, and to audit each grower at least once. There are some shippers that only ship from Arizona a few weeks a year and therefore will only receive one scheduled audit and one unannounced audit.

Audit Type	2021/2022	2022/2023
Scheduled Audits	70	73
Unannounced Audits	35	36
<b>Total Audits</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>109</b>





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## COMPLIANCE

After an audit is conducted, the Arizona LGMA Compliance Officer conducts a review of the audit and sets each citation at one of four violation levels. The Compliance Officer works with each LGMA member to ensure that all violations are corrected in a timely manner. Additionally, the LGMA Technical Assistant conducts an annual review at the end of the season for member to assess compliance and address recurring issues.

Violation Level	2021/2022	2022/2023
Flagrant	0	0
Major Deviation	0	3
Minor Deviation	399	584
Minor Infraction	83	46
<b>Total</b>	<b>482</b>	<b>633</b>

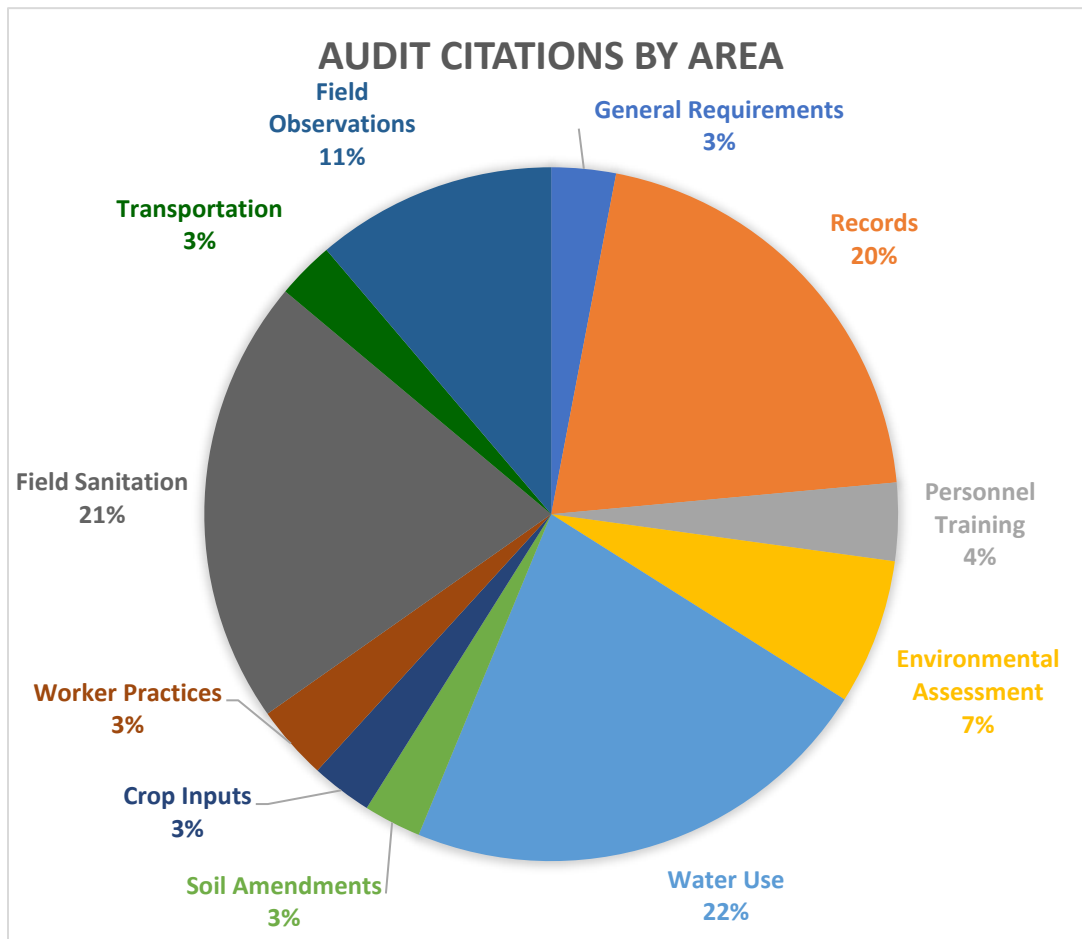
- A **Flagrant violation** occurs when the signatory shipper buys, consigns, or otherwise accepts or handles a leafy green product and knows or should have known the product was grown, packed, shipped, processed, or handled in violation of the best practices and the violation significantly increased the risk of delivering unsafe product into commerce. A single flagrant violation leads to a loss of the privilege to use the LGMA service mark.
- A **Major Deviation** is a violation of the food safety standards that may inhibit the maintenance of food safety, but that does not necessarily result in an unsafe product. A signatory who commits a major deviation must submit a corrective action plan to the Food Safety Committee or its designee, within five business days of receipt of the inspection report, noting the deviation. The Food Safety Committee may consider a major deviation to be a flagrant violation if the signatory fails to provide a timely corrective action plan. Once the Food Safety Committee or its designee accepts the signatory's corrective action plan, an unannounced audit will be performed. **In 2022/2023 there were three Major Deviations given for excessively dirty gloves, improper harvest equipment sanitation and falsification of sanitation records.**
- A **Minor Deviation** is a violation of the food safety standards that the signatory can correct within five business days and that does not necessarily increase the risk of a food borne illness. A signatory who commits a minor deviation must submit a corrective action plan to the Food Safety Committee or its designee, within five business days of receipt of the inspection report noting the deviation. A minor deviation does not require a follow-up inspection within three business days of submitting the corrective action plan. Instead, the inspectors will ensure compliance at the next regularly scheduled inspection.
- A **Minor Infraction** is a violation of the food safety standards that is corrected before the inspector leaves the inspected premises and that does not necessarily increase the risk of a food borne illness. The Food Safety Committee or its designee may treat an otherwise minor infraction as a minor deviation; if there have been multiple similar minor infractions over the past twelve months.



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## COMPLIANCE

Another way to look at Arizona LGMA compliance is by the area of the food safety practices, or metrics, where audit citations are frequently occurring.



The chart above shows that the top three areas for audit citations in the 2022/2023 year were Water Use (141 citations, 22% of the total), Field Sanitation (132 citations, 21% of the total), and Records (130 citations, 20% of the total). Throughout the season, Arizona LGMA staff monitors audit citation trends and provide targeted training to help improve compliance.



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## TRAINING

### Food Safety Training

The Arizona LGMA provided multiple opportunities for members to obtain information, ask questions, and hear from others in the industry through a series of virtual outreach events entitled “office hours”. This season was the third year of office hours offerings, and four sessions were held. There was a diverse section of the industry participating representing shippers, growers, harvesters, and service providers. Office hours covered the topics of New Metrics Review, New Audit Checklist Review, Mid- Season Program Review and End of Season.

In 2022, additional requirements for Environmental Risk Assessment training were implemented. The Arizona LGMA has conducted several Environmental Risk Assessment training courses, both virtually and classroom, to ensure compliance with the new training requirements. Six English sessions were held where 95 participants were trained. Four Spanish sessions were held where 82 participants were trained.

The Arizona LGMA also updated the California LGMA Cleaning and Sanitation of Harvest Equipment training materials and provided the following Cleaning and Sanitation of Harvest Equipment training sessions: two English sessions for a total of 22 people and three Spanish sessions for a total of 38 people.



The Arizona LGMA utilizes special bulletins and focused email shares to address timely topics with a goal of improving compliance with established best practices and metrics.

Arizona LGMA also contracted with Food Safety Consulting & Training Solutions, LLC, The University of Arizona Cooperative Extension and Factor IV to host training courses for 338 participants. Topics included Environmental Risk Assessment, Root Cause Analysis, and Improving your Food Safety Training Program.



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## COMMUNICATIONS

### Arizona Leafy Greens Month

In November 2022 Arizona LGMA and the farming community in Arizona celebrated the 10<sup>th</sup> annual Arizona Leafy Greens Month. The celebration included a proclamation from the Governor’s office, social media education and prize giveaways. Arizona LGMA partnered with Yuma Safe Produce Council, as well as online influencers including Farmer Jon (Dinsmore), Ram628 (Ramiro Ruiz), Camelback Nutrition & Wellness (Kristin Carli) and The Produce Nerd (Meghan Crivelli). The social media campaign included recipe development, the farmers perspective, the harvester’s view, and consumer education.



### Stakeholder Communications

The Arizona LGMA maintained its communications efforts with the farming community (growers, shippers, harvesters), produce buyers and the greater produce industry. Regular updates were provided via a multitude of communications including blog posts, Harvest Times newsletters and social media posts.

### Trade Outreach

The Arizona LGMA partnered with the California LGMA on its produce buyer field tour which hosted over 25 individuals from 14 companies who sell lettuce and leafy greens in the U.S. and Canada. The tour was hosted out of Yuma, Arizona and featured an “Arizona” day and a “California” day where all farmers demonstrated how they utilize the LGMA program. This tour received positive feedback from all involved and is something the two organizations hope to collaborate on in the future.

