



# 2021/2022 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 2021/2022, Arizona LGMA members represent 99.4% 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 \$.0065 from July 1, 2021, to June 30, 2022.

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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## YEAR IN REVIEW

### Updated Food Safety Standards

The Arizona LGMA Food Safety Committee approved changes to the adjacent land use and soil amendments sections of the food safety standards (also known as metrics) that all members must adhere to. The changes took effect in August 2021 and Arizona Department of Agriculture auditors began verifying compliance in November 2021 after providing leafy greens shippers, growers and harvest crews with training events and online resources.

### Food Safety Training Kit Available Online

The Arizona Leafy Greens Food Safety Training Kit (FSTK) was developed in part to encourage the industry to adopt uniform food safety handling practices. Since its inception, it has evolved into a completely engaging program that can be delivered in the field, in a classroom or via video. All materials are produced in both English and Spanish. In September 2021 the full kit was made available online for free to anyone who needs these resources.

### No FDA Surveillance Sampling in Yuma

On September 28, 2021, the FDA communicated that it did not plan to conduct surveillance sampling of leafy greens at Yuma, Arizona coolers during the 2021/2022 growing season. The Arizona LGMA and the Yuma farming community welcomed this news. Knowing that FDA assessed the LGMA food safety program and has confidence in the efforts of Arizona LGMA members is validation of years of hard work by everyone in the industry.

### Arizona Lettuce and Leafy Greens Harvest Celebration

Arizona's Governor Doug Ducey, proclaimed November 2021 as Arizona Leafy Greens month. Through this proclamation he called upon all residents to recognize the Arizona leafy greens industry during the month of November for consistently producing an abundance of nutritious and safe leafy greens. The Arizona LGMA conducted outreach on this topic via social media partnerships and giveaways as well as produce trade press outreach.

### Metrics 101 Training Updated

Arizona LGMA has updated its free, on-demand Metrics 101 Training module that was initially launched in 2017 to include updates to the Food Safety Standards (also known as Metrics). The training, developed in 16 easy-to-digest modules, covers everything from environmental assessments to encroachment by animals. It includes quizzes following each module, as well as online games and activities





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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 (Co-Chair)	Harrison Farms
Lupe Camarena	Nature Fresh Farms
Jesus Canchola	Fresh Express
Bob Mills	Misionero
Kristina Nunes	The Nunes Company
Jeremy Vanderzyl	Duncan Family Farms
Kami Weddle – Chair	Rousseau Farms
Michael Menes – Alternate	True Organics
Valentin Sierra – Alternate	Amigo Farms
Alternate Vacancy	

Communications Subcommittee Members	
Amanda Brooks – Chair	Harrison Farms
Kelly Miller – Co Chair	Griffin Ranches
Valentin Sierra	Amigo Farms, Inc.
Kelly Williams	Smith Farms
Kami Weddle – Alternate	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>Green Gate Fresh, LLP</b>	<b>Tanimura &amp; Antle Fresh Foods, Inc.</b>
<b>Andrew Smith Co.</b>	<b>Harbinger Group dba Misionero</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>	 <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>Church Brothers, LLC / True Leaf Farms</b>	<b>The Nunes Company</b>	
<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>Fresh Kist Produce, LLC</b>	<b>Sabor Farms, LLC</b>	
<b>Field Fresh Farms, LLC</b>	<b>The Salad Farm, LLC</b>	
<b>Fresh Express, Inc.</b>	<b>Salad Savoy Corporation</b>	
<b>Gold Coast Packing, Inc.</b>	<b>Steinbeck Country Produce</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		2020/2021	2021/2022
	Iceberg Lettuce	23,230,811	24,147,896
	Romaine	10,741,267	13,426,037
	Romaine Hearts	12,257,743	11,989,761
	Green Leaf	4,223,500	4,145,442
	Red Leaf	899,251	769,306
	Butter Leaf	733,881	568,846
	Spinach (Teen & Baby)	9,790,305	10,384,608
	Baby Leaf Items (Spring Mix)	5,575,043	5,791,653
	Cabbage (Green, Red & Savoy)	3,426,040	3,879,955
	Kale	743,583	825,016
	Arugula	674,643	951,023
	Chard	109,266	88,605
	Escarole	36,841	35,593
	Endive	26,271	22,330
	Radicchio	88,273	95,936
<b>Total Cartons*</b>		<b>72,556,718</b>	<b>77,122,007</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).

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.

In the 2020/2021 there was an auditor staffing issue that resulted in lower audit numbers than normal. In the 2021/2022 season the Arizona LGMA conducted 105 audits (70 scheduled and 35 unannounced) of its 38 members.

	2020/2021	2021/2022
Scheduled Audits	51	70
Unannounced Audits	36	35
Total Audits	87	105





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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	2020/2021	2021/2022
Flagrant	1	0
Major Deviation	7	0
Minor Deviation	520	399
Minor Infraction	67	83
<b>Total</b>	<b>595</b>	<b>482</b>

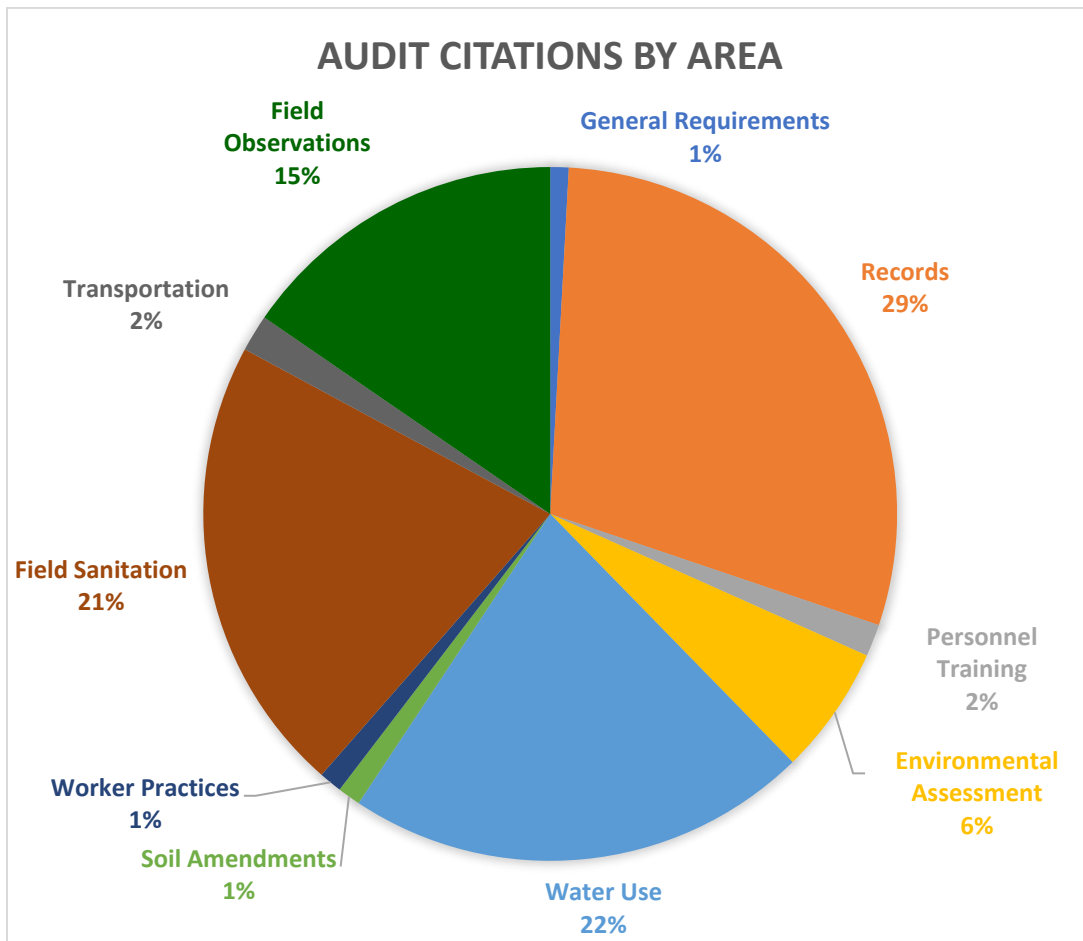
- A **Flagrant violation** occurs when the signatory shipper buys, consigns, or otherwise accepts or handles a leafy green product and knows or should have known the product was grown, packed, shipped, processed, or handled in violation of the best practices and the violation significantly increased 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. **In 2021/2022 there was one flagrant violation which led to the company being decertified for a period of two weeks. This decertification also included a financial penalty to be paid by the company.**
- 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.
- 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. [create with different colors]



The chart above shows that the top three areas for audit citations in the 2021/2022 year were Records (137 citations, 29% of the total), Water Use (101 citations, 22% of the total), and Field Sanitation (100 citations, 21% 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

### Special Topics

Modifications to food safety standards (metrics) sections on Environmental Assessments and Soil Amendments & Crop Inputs were identified in early 2021 as priorities. The updated metrics were in effect for the Arizona growing season beginning in August 2021. Outreach training and education on these topics was informational and supplemented industry knowledge on newly identified concepts within the modified metrics. Also identified through audit compliance trends was the need to provide continued assistance with irrigation water treatment and signature requirements on records. Six Arizona LGMA training sessions were held in-person and virtually.



### General 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 second year of office hours offerings and four sessions were held. Members were encouraged to submit questions ahead of office hours to ensure that a thoroughly researched answer was provided. There was a diverse section of the industry participating representing shippers, growers, harvesters, and service providers. Topics are selected based on industry inquiries, trends in audit findings, and seasonal applicability.

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. During the 2021-2022 season special bulletins and email information was shared on Responsible Party and Signature Requirements, an Ag Water Assessment Template, Asymptomatic Illness Awareness Training Outline, Audit Compliance Levels, Audit Preparation Tips, Off-Season Tips for Preparing for the Upcoming Season, seasonality/transition reminders, and pre-harvest product testing resources.

Arizona LGMA also contracted with Food Safety Consulting & Training Solutions, LLC to conduct trainings on the topic of Environmental Risk Assessment and Managing Harvest Operations (two times).



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## COMMUNICATIONS

### A New Hire

The Arizona LGMA announced its new public relations liaison April Ward, in August 2021. April brings two decades of marketing and communications experience and a wealth of knowledge relating to leafy greens farming and food safety. Although she is new to working with Arizona LGMA, she is a familiar face to many in the Arizona farming community.

### Arizona Leafy Greens Month

The highlight of the Communications Program each year is Arizona Leafy Greens Month which takes place throughout the month of November when harvest kicks off for the industry. Arizona Governor Doug Ducey proclaimed November 2021 Arizona Leafy Greens Month. The Arizona LGMA celebrated primarily through social media outreach and partnerships. AZ Foodie (@azfoodie) and Jon Dinsmore (@farmerjon) partnered with Arizona LGMA on Instagram. Arizona LGMA also partnered with Yuma Safe Produce Council for some giveaways. The goal of these activities was to raise awareness of the Arizona leafy greens farming community and their commitment to public health and food safety.

### Stakeholder Communications

The Arizona LGMA greatly increased 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 ten blog posts, eight Harvest Times newsletters and over 300 social media posts. Newsletter readership increased over the year from 44% - 59%.

### Public Relations

The Arizona LGMA sent 4 press releases on the topics of food safety standard updates, the hire of a new public relations liaison, November is Arizona Leafy Greens Month and Arizona and California LGMA's meet and Exceed FDA's New Water Rule. This generated over 20 news articles and improved relations with the produce trade press. Additionally, the organization conducted a comprehensive review of its crisis plan.

