



memo

To: Rancho Laguna Farms Employees
From: Larry Ferini
Date: June 15, 2020
Re: Message to all Rancho Laguna Farms employees from the owner

During these unsettling times, we as employees, as business owners, as fathers, mothers and as families, as a community, have much unrest in our minds. Many of us have high concerns, such as, are we going to be able to continue to support our families financially. While countless of us also have ongoing concerns about the safety of our loved ones.

Even with COVID-19, you kept coming to work. Day after day, you arrive at our fields enthusiastically, ready to start a new workday. For that, I want to thank you, as I am extremely grateful as we worked through and continue to work through these troubling times.

Our government has designated all of you as “Essential Workers,” but to me, you are much more than that. You are the heart and soul of this Company. In the years to come, when Rancho Laguna Farms successfully comes out of these unsettling times, it will be because of you. You always have and will continue to play a major role in our success, and I am immensely proud to say that of our employees.

In return for your hard work and loyalty to Rancho Laguna Farms, I will do all I can to help you support and protect your families.

On May 25, 2020, I gave a \$0.10 per box raise to all employees. That raise placed Rancho Laguna Farms at the upper levels of competitiveness with wages in our local industry. But I wanted to do more for all of you.

In the weeks after that wage increase, I looked at the industry. I personally met with almost all our employees. I worked hard with my business partners to continue to help improve the lives of all our employees, and on June 8, 2020, I decided to give another \$0.10 per box raise to all employees picking strawberries. I also decided to give all the hourly employees a wage increase as well.

This latest wage increase moved this Company from the upper levels of competitiveness in pay to just about the very top in our industry.

As the end of the 2020 picking season comes to an end, we must look to the future. I am aware that current challenges are negatively affecting the lives of our community and employees. As I plan for the 2021 season, barring any unforeseen economic downturns, I expect that all strawberry pickers working for Rancho Laguna Farms will start the 2021 picking season at \$2.10 per box. I am proud to reiterate that the \$2.10 per box rate puts us remarkably close to the top if not at the top in our industry with regards to pay for our employees.

Furthermore, every employee that ends the 2020 season with Rancho Laguna Farms will be eligible for recall for the 2021 season. I will welcome all of you back. If any employee has questions or concerns as the 2021 season starts, they are welcomed to call the office and speak with our human resources department.

In this memo, I want to address some concerns which have come to my attention. For 30 years, Rancho Laguna Farms has built its foundation, reputation, and success on the morals of respect, honesty, family values, and community involvement. It brings me great sorrow that some individuals erroneously believe that I might disturb employee rights.

Among other rights, California law grants all employees these basic rights:

Employees always have the right to:

- Meet with your employer on behalf of yourself and fellow workers to try to change your wages and working conditions representation.

- Exercise any of the rights which the Agricultural Labor Relations Act (Act) gives you without fear that your employer will fire you, refuse to rehire, or discriminate against you in any other manner.
- Participate in “Walkouts,” “Work-stoppage,” and strikes.
- Discuss matters affecting your work during breaks, lunch, or before or after work, even while on the employer’s property.
- File a complaint with the Agricultural Labor Relations Board (ALRB), testify at an ALRB hearing, or give a statement or declaration to an official of the ALRB.
- Give or make statements in private or public to community leaders or agents of the press.
- Circulate and sign, or refuse to sign, a petition to support, change, or improve working conditions.
- Openly express opinions that might or might not be in line with the company’s point of view.
- Be free from being observed, listened to by the employer and supervisor while engaging in the activities described above, as long as the employee is not disturbing work.

I want to make this extremely clear to all employees. **I WILL NEVER INFRINGE ON YOUR RIGHTS!**

I encourage all members of the community, including all Rancho Laguna Farms’ employees, to exercise all and any rights you have.

I will always respect your rights, and **I WILL NEVER RETALIATE AGAINST ANYONE FOR PRACTICING THEIR RIGHTS!**

Year after year, our employees come back to work for Rancho Laguna Farms. We currently have employees that have been with us for almost 30 years. Many other companies struggle to maintain a constant labor force. Many of those companies sometimes are forced to use farm labor contractor or H2-A employees to complete their season. I am proud to say that we continue to be an “Employer of Choice,” and we continue to complete our season after season with only in-house employees.

As proud as I am with my Company and my management and leadership team, I also know we are not perfect. We always have room for improvement. We are going to immerse ourselves in a training program that will help develop leadership and managerial skills. Skills like; communication, conflict resolution, minimizing favoritism, understanding what respect means to employees, conveying orders with dignity, understanding how better to implement laws and company policies, and much more.

One of Rancho Laguna Farms' strengths is the vast diversity of employees we have. In our fields, we have identified at least half a dozen languages and dialects. From various dialects of Mixteco and Triqui to the more common Spanish. We often use interpreters to communicate with all our workers. The use of interpreters, I am proud to say, has genuinely strengthened the trust with our employees as we continue to develop and improve employee relations with all our workforce.

With current situations, as uncertain we might be of the future, I remain very confident that by investing in our employees, by developing trust and building strong bonds, the Company and our employees will be set for a brighter and more prosperous future.