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## **USDA restricts PACA violators in California, Maryland and North Carolina**

November 20, 2020

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has imposed sanctions on four produce businesses for failing to meet contractual obligations to the sellers of produce they purchased and failing to pay reparation awards issued under the Perishable Agricultural Commodities Act.

The following businesses and individuals are currently restricted from operating in the produce industry:

- First Fruits Holdings LLC, operating out of Wake Forest, NC, for failing to pay a \$71,405 award in favor of an Idaho seller. As of the issuance date of the reparation order, John T.

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Fowler, Mark H. Black and Sean P. Swanson were listed as managers of the business.

- California Fresh Citrus Company, operating out of Porterville, CA, for failing to pay a \$40,000 award in favor of a California seller. As of the issuance date of the reparation order, Vincent H. Lobue and Christine C. Lobue were listed as the officers, directors and/or major stockholders of the business.
- Los Fuertes Produce LLC, operating out of Elkridge, MD, for failing to pay a \$37,322 award in favor of a Pennsylvania seller. As of the issuance date of the reparation order, Jose A. Ramirez and Aracely Ortiz were listed as members of the business.
- Espirit Trading Inc., operating out of Vernon, CA, for failing to pay a \$26,990 award in favor of a California seller. As of the issuance date of the reparation order, Lin Calin was listed as the officer, director and major stockholder of the business.

In the past three years, USDA resolved approximately 3,625 PACA claims involving more than \$104 million. PACA staff also assisted more than 7,600 callers with issues valued at approximately \$166 million.

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