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**USDA restricts PACA violators in three states and Puerto Rico**

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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. These sanctions include suspending the businesses' PACA licenses and barring the principal operators of the businesses from engaging in PACA-licensed business or other activities without approval from USDA.

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

- Stephan Eckel, doing business as Paniolo Produce, operating out of Winchester, CA, for failing to pay a \$108,340 award in favor of a Missouri seller. As of the issuance date of the reparation order, Eckel was listed as the sole proprietor of the business.
- Island Fresh of Puerto Rico, operating out of Bayamon, Puerto Rico, for failing to pay a \$48,847 award in favor of a Florida seller. As of the issuance date of the reparation order, Jorge Mayendia was listed as the officer, director and major stockholder of the business.
- Ayar Produce NY Inc., operating out of Brooklyn, NY, for failing to pay a \$45,089 award in favor of a Texas seller. As of the issuance date of the reparation order, Necati Ayar was listed as the officer, director and major stockholder of the business.
- Alko Green Fresh LLC, operating out of Las Vegas, for failing to pay a \$19,900 award in favor of an Illinois seller. As of the issuance date of the reparation order, Jorge Ortega was listed as the manager and member of the business.

PACA provides an administrative forum to handle disputes involving produce transactions; this may result in USDA's issuance of a reparation order that requires damages to be paid by those not meeting their contractual obligations in buying and selling fresh and frozen fruits and vegetables. USDA is required to suspend the license or impose sanctions on an unlicensed business that fails to pay PACA reparations awarded against it as well as impose restrictions against those principals determined to be responsibly connected to the business when the order is issued. Those individuals, including sole proprietors, partners, members, managers, officers, directors or major stockholders, may not be employed by or affiliated with any PACA licensee without USDA approval.

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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