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USDA restricts PACA violators in Florida, Georgia and Texas

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The U.S. Department of Agriculture has imposed sanctions on three produce businesses — Trinity Vegetable Co., Efruit Fresh Produce and Rooted Connections — 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:

- Trinity Vegetable Co. LLC, operating out of Elberton, GA, for failing to pay a \$34,873 award in favor of a Georgia seller. As of the issuance date of the reparation order, Joseph N. Haynes II was listed as the member of the business.
- Efruit Fresh Produce LLC, operating out of Laredo, TX, for failing to pay a \$13,046 award in favor of a California seller. As of the issuance date of the reparation order, Eduardo Vaca Villanueva and Carlos Vaca Villanueva were listed as the Manager and Member of the business.
- Rooted Connections LLC, operating out of Ft. Lauderdale, FL, for failing to pay a \$12,654 award in favor of a Texas seller. As of the issuance date of the reparation order, Nitzelle Coenen was listed as the member of the business.

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. By issuing these penalties, USDA continues to enforce the prompt and full payment for produce while protecting the rights of sellers and buyers in the marketplace.

In the past three years, USDA handled more than 2,340 cases valued at \$126.3 million. PACA staff also assisted over 5,600 callers with issues valued at \$146.7 million.

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