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For Immediate Release

Texas farmers are unintentional victims of FDA closure of Sunland

LUBBOCK, Texas (November 29, 2012) – This week, the [U.S. Food and Drug Administration](#) suspended [Sunland, Inc.'s](#) registration as a food facility – an execution of the [Food Safety Modernization Act of 2011](#) to ensure the safety of food products for Americans. However, yet to be acknowledged are the many Texas farmers still waiting for payment on the peanuts they have contracted and delivered to the company.

Sunland is the country's largest organic peanut butter manufacturer and specializes in processing Valencia peanuts – a low-yielding variety that requires extra attention to ensure the crop's success.

"Farmers are the unintentional victims of FDA's closure of the plant," TPPB Executive Director Shelly Nutt said. "The men and women who worked hard nurturing their peanut crop this past year are left wondering when or even if they will be paid."

"I know farming is uncertain," Haldon Messamore, a farmer in Sudan, Texas, said. "I plan for drought, wind, hail, early freeze and fluctuating markets. But I didn't plan on getting caught in the middle of a battle between a big food company and big government agency."

The situation needs to be resolved in a timely fashion, according to Brent Nelson, another farmer from Sudan.

"There seems to be a major disconnect between FDA and Sunland in resolving this issue," Nelson said.

Though Sunland may have insurance or reserves to sustain itself through the coming months until the situation is resolved, farmers cannot continue waiting to be paid for their peanuts.

"What other business or household could continue if one-third of their revenue is in limbo?" Messamore said.

The financial burden this is placing on farmers doesn't just stop with them and their families; it goes on to the businesses and communities supported by them.

"There's a ripple effect of who is impacted by this," Brent Nelson, a farmer from Sudan, explained. "It may start with the farmers, but it goes on to the people we do business with and the causes we donate to. From equipment dealers and bankers to restaurants and churches, there's no part of the community that remains untouched by this situation."

"I'm getting calls from nervous landlords and lenders who want answers, and I have none," Messamore said.

While we need to have measures in place to ensure a safe food supply for consumers, the process needs to move at a pace that will relieve the farmers' financial burden soon.

"I know FDA was aiming at Sunland but their shot hit the farmers too," Nutt said. "Something needs to be done soon to address the economic hardships this has caused for farmers in the region."

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The Texas Peanut Producers Board is a statewide board funded by a voluntary checkoff program. TPPB is responsible for coordinating peanut research, promotion and marketing programs. For more information, visit www.TexasPeanutBoard.com.