



# PRESS NOTICE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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**INDICTED GREENVILLE POULTRY PLANT COMPANY  
TO ENTER INTO DEFERRED PROSECUTION AGREEMENT**  
***Two Employees to Enter Pre-Trial Diversion Program***

**Columbia, South Carolina** ---- United States Attorney W. Walter Wilkins stated today that Greenville poultry processing plant Columbia Farms, Inc., and its affiliated companies with House of Raeford Farms, have entered into a Deferred Prosecution and Global Settlement Agreement with the federal government to resolve pending criminal charges, as well as any civil and administrative violations, regarding the companies' alleged hiring of undocumented workers. The Agreement was filed today in federal court, just before jury selection was scheduled to begin in the criminal trial against Columbia Farms and two of its employees, Elaine Crump and Barry Cronic, on federal

charges related to the alleged hiring of undocumented workers at the Greenville plant. Under the terms of the Agreement, the criminal case against Columbia Farms will be continued for 24 months, allowing the company and its affiliates to continue with ongoing efforts to institute internal hiring procedures and controls at each of its eight poultry processing facilities in South Carolina, North Carolina, and Louisiana. The companies will adopt and maintain a compliance program during the 24-month period to ensure that its hiring practices comport with federal law. The companies' efforts will be subject to review by the court, the U.S. Attorney's Office, and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). The remedial actions called for by the Agreement include:

- use of the Department of Homeland Security's "E-Verify" employment eligibility verification program for all hiring;

- use of Spanish language services for the completion of I-9 Employee Eligibility Verification Forms by Spanish-speaking job applicants;

- use of the Social Security Number Verification Service to ensure that job applicants and current employees hold a validly-assigned Social Security Number;

- provide regular training to employees on hiring practices so as ensure compliance with federal law; and

- use of an external auditor to conduct annual reviews of the companies' I-9 employment forms.

In addition, the company will pay \$1.5 million dollars to the government to settle

all criminal, civil, or administrative claims that are pending or could be brought as a result of the investigation. Provided the company and its affiliates successfully comply with the terms of the Agreement, the criminal charges against Columbia Farms will be dismissed.

Mr. Wilkins stated that Crump and Cronin will participate in a pre-trial diversion program for one year, supervised by the United States Probation Office. Upon successful completion of that program, their respective criminal charges will likewise be dismissed.

The federal investigation into Columbia Farms' hiring practices began in December 2007, when ICE agents began reviewing the company's I-9 Employment Eligibility Forms and supporting employment documentation for suspected violations of employing undocumented workers and their continued employment. That review and an October 2008 search of the Greenville plant resulted in the criminal prosecution of 21 supervisory employees who were hired with false documents, and the administrative deportation of more than 300 employees who were likewise determined to be in the country illegally.

Mr. Wilkins stated, "I am pleased with the agreement that was reached today. I have no reservations in entering into this agreement, as Columbia Farms and its affiliates have clearly demonstrated their acceptance of responsibility by making corporate decisions to overhaul their hiring practices not only in Greenville, but in each of the plants in the House of Raeford Farms family. They began making these changes soon after the October search of the Greenville

plant, and I've been impressed with the steps they have taken so far. By entering into this agreement, we are acknowledging the improvements made to date, and we are allowing for the continuation of this process by the companies with oversight by the government. I am confident that we are seeing a true change in these companies' approach to hiring, one that can serve as a model for other employers."

"Today's announcement demonstrates ICE's sustained effort to hold companies and employers accountable for their hiring practices," said Homeland Security Assistant Secretary for ICE John Morton. "We are committed to bringing employers into compliance with the law and will leverage all of our authorities to achieve that goal. Although voluntary compliance is our preferred outcome, ICE will use enforcement tools, civil and criminal, when appropriate to bring about compliance."

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