

FACT SHEET FOR REPORTERS

Ridaura v. Valley Harvesting & Packing, Inc., et al. — Imperial County Superior Court, El Centro — Case No. ECU004760

Every line below is an allegation in the filed cross-complaint. The ¶ column gives the paragraph number so you can verify it against the pleading. Nothing here goes beyond the filing.

ALLEGATION (as pleaded in the cross-complaint)	¶
THE PARTIES	
Leticia Ridaura was employed from June 1996 to April 2026, rising from an entry-level position to Chief Operating Officer.	34, 39
Twelve affiliated entities operate under the Scaroni Family of Companies umbrella as an alleged integrated enterprise / joint employer.	2-14, 19, 20
Steve Scaroni is founder and CEO; sons Matt Scaroni and David Scaroni are alleged managing agents and officers.	15-17
Mexican growing operations run through Harvest Tek de Mexico , a subsidiary of Harvest Tek, Inc.	10, 38, 44
ORGANIC / AGROCHEMICAL ALLEGATIONS	
Employer Defendants knowingly used unapproved and synthetic chemicals and pesticides on produce grown in Mexico for export to the United States.	46
Employees who commute across the U.S.-Mexico border were directed to personally carry the chemicals across , bypassing requirements to declare them, identify intended use, confirm approved-list status, and pay fees.	46
The produce was “ overwhelmingly designated as organic. ”	49
Ridaura complained to Steve Scaroni in fall 2024; again weeks later; again in early 2025.	49, 50, 51-52
Steve Scaroni told her the chemicals were “ to secure better crop yields. ”	50
Steve Scaroni relayed Matt Scaroni’s response: “ just because it is not organic does not mean it’s bad. ”	52
Ridaura personally witnessed chemical pickups on at least two occasions; Gerardo Beltran told her he was ordered by Matt Scaroni not to declare or export the items.	53, 54
Produce sold to clients including Fresh Express, Christopher Ranch, Foxy Fresh Produce, Blazer, Wilkinson and Gee.	38, 45
Those clients sell to retailers and restaurants including Costco, Walmart, Albertsons, Aldi, Whole Foods, Trader Joe’s, Subway and Jersey Mike’s. Certification standards referenced: Oregon Tilth, QAI, USDA NOP. NOTE: no retailer, client or certifier is accused of wrongdoing in the pleading.	45
Export invoices and food safety paperwork represented to clients and USDA border inspection agents that only approved methods were used.	57(f)
Statutes alleged violated: OFPA, NOP regs (7 C.F.R. Pt. 205), FFDCA, FIFRA, Cal. Sherman Law, Cal. Organic Products Act.	58
WORKER SAFETY / INJURY SUPPRESSION ALLEGATIONS	
Employer Defendants are self-insured for workers’ compensation and bore direct financial responsibility for every claim.	61
Employees, including H-2A workers, were required to sign daily forms declaring no injury occurred ; forms were approved by in-house counsel. Foremen allegedly threatened to lower production numbers of workers who refused.	62
Crews were often required to sign before the workday ended , attesting to hours that had not yet elapsed.	63
Signed forms were later used to challenge the legitimacy of injury claims.	64

ALLEGATION (as pleaded in the cross-complaint)	¶
A truck dispatcher passed out three times, was hospitalized with a heart attack , had benefits cut off, and was placed on unpaid leave; the injury was deemed “personal.”	66-68
David Scaroni allegedly said: “ he was overweight and didn’t take care of himself and I’m sure that is why he had a heart attack. ”	68
Three H-2A workers crashed driving their own vehicle to a lettuce field; treated as “personal”; no treatment initially authorized.	69-70
David Scaroni allegedly said he would have preferred to persuade the injured workers to return to Mexico and be removed from the contract.	70
A worker vomiting during extreme heat was given Gatorade and a cooling vest and returned to work; hospitalized only after worsening at company housing. Never reported.	71
During a measles outbreak in Mexico operations, Matt Scaroni allegedly instructed that ill and exposed workers keep working in groups.	73
After Ridaura reported a call with the director of the Office of Self-Insured Plans (OSIP) , David Scaroni barred her from further OSIP contact.	75
AGE DISCRIMINATION / RETALIATION / TERMINATION	
Escalating age-based comments from 2024 onward (“aren’t you tired,” “surely you want out”); Matt Scaroni allegedly stated “ everyone becomes irrelevant with age. ”	90-92
Year-end bonus denied December 2024 for the first time in over a decade.	93
Told to cancel medical appointments until “sometime next year... unless you are dying.”	94
March 31, 2026: COO title eliminated; demoted to part-time project manager at \$60,000/year, no benefits . Stated reason: younger employees needed the money.	95
April 6-7, 2026: told she could resolve matters “the easy way or the hard way,” then sent a three-sentence DocuSign transferring her rights — no consideration, no description of what was surrendered. She refused.	97, 98
April 9, 2026: counsel sent a letter of representation and litigation hold. Terminated by voicemail within five hours . Employer Defendants then sued her and amended to name her daughter and husband as alleged co-conspirators (¶137).	99

CLAIMS PLEADED: Whistleblower retaliation, Lab. Code §§ 98.6/1102.5 (¶¶101-110) • Age discrimination, Gov. Code § 12940(a) (¶¶111-115) • Retaliation, § 12940(h) (¶¶116-122) • Wrongful termination in violation of public policy (¶¶123-130) • Breach of oral contract / promissory estoppel (¶¶131-134) • IIED (¶¶135-138) • Indemnity, Lab. Code § 2802 (¶¶139-144). Jury trial demanded. CRD right-to-sue notices obtained; administrative remedies exhausted (¶100).

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These are allegations in a cross-complaint. They have not been proven, and the cross-defendants have not yet responded. No retailer, restaurant, produce distributor or certifying organization named above is alleged in the cross-complaint to have engaged in any wrongdoing.