



Steve Alameda walks a field of leafy greens at Topflavor Farms in Yuma, Arizona.

## Gratitude for Farmworkers

The Labor of Love program thanks farmworkers for harvesting your leafy greens

### THE SITUATION

"It's a giant vegetable factory!" exclaims Steve Alameda, describing Yuma, Arizona, in the thick of harvest season. Indeed, from November to March, the town produces 90 percent of America's leafy greens: 1,000 trucks a day leave with 50,000 pounds of vegetables. And 20,000 people harvest it all. "It is *hard work*," underscores Alameda, co-owner of Topflavor Farms and president of the Yuma Fresh Vegetable Association. Farmworkers enter fields before the sun rises, and can toil for 10 to 12 hours, up to 7 days a week. The physical toll is rough: bending, cutting, in all types of weather. Add to this a hefty commute: many are migrant workers who cross the border from Mexico daily. "They really don't get the appreciation they deserve," Alameda says.

### WHAT HE DID

In 2015, Alameda and the Yuma Fresh Vegetable Association started Labor of Love, a campaign to say thank you. Yes, it's a small way to do so, and no, it does not fix larger issues farmworkers can face, like low wages and lack of benefits, but nevertheless, it's a step in the right direction. The idea is simple: a vegetable grower or shipper surprises a farm crew with breakfast. Work stops, and burritos or doughnuts and coffee are passed around. The sponsor thanks crew members individually for their work and gives everyone on the crew a gesture of appreciation, like gift cards.

### WHY IT'S COOL

So far, sponsors like Dole have thanked 80 field crews at Labor of Love events from Yuma to Salinas, California. Crew supervisor Silvino Ponce got props at one Foothill Packing event for his 20 years of service. "It's very good," Ponce says of the initiative. "Everyone looks forward to being a crew that gets chosen. We feel that what we're doing is worthwhile and very important." 🍌