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7 JOSE CARRASCO

8 **SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA**  
9 **COUNTY OF MONTEREY**

11 JOSE CARRASCO, as an aggrieved  
12 employee and private attorney general;

13 Plaintiff,

14 vs.

15 RIVER VALLEY FARMS, LLC, a  
California limited liability company;  
16 SOUTHERN PACIFIC FARMING, INC.;  
a Florida corporation; SOUTHERN  
17 PACIFIC FARMING II, LLC, California  
limited liability company; and DOES 1  
18 through 50, inclusive,

19 Defendants.

Case No.:

**REPRESENTATIVE ACTION  
COMPLAINT**

**(1) VIOLATION OF CALIFORNIA  
LABOR CODE § 2699, ET SEQ.  
(PRIVATE ATTORNEYS  
GENERAL ACT)**

1 Plaintiff JOSE CARRASCO (“Plaintiff”), as an aggrieved employee and as a private  
2 attorney general, based upon facts that either have evidentiary support or are likely to have  
3 evidentiary support after a reasonable opportunity for further investigation and discovery, alleges  
4 as follows:

### 5 **JURISDICTION AND VENUE**

6 1. Plaintiff bring this action against Defendants RIVER VALLEY FARMS, LLC;  
7 SOUTHERN PACIFIC FARMING, INC.; SOUTHERN PACIFIC FARMING II, LLC and  
8 DOES 1 THROUGH 50 (hereinafter also collectively referred to as “Defendants”) as a  
9 representative action on behalf of himself and certain other current and former non-exempt  
10 employees of Defendants against whom one or more of the alleged violations was committed  
11 (hereinafter collectively referred to as the “Aggrieved Employees”) pursuant to California Labor  
12 Code sections 2698, *et seq.* Plaintiff is an aggrieved employees against whom one or more of the  
13 alleged violations was committed. The civil penalties sought by Plaintiff exceed the minimal  
14 jurisdiction limits of the Superior Court and will be established according to proof at trial.

15 2. The Court has jurisdiction over this action pursuant to the California Constitution,  
16 Article VI, Section 10, which grants the superior court “original jurisdiction in all other causes”  
17 except those given by statute to other courts. The statutes under which this action is brought do  
18 not specify any other basis for jurisdiction.

19 3. This Court has jurisdiction over Defendants because, upon information and belief,  
20 Defendants are citizens of California, have sufficient minimum contacts in California, or  
21 otherwise intentionally avail themselves of the California market so as to render the exercise of  
22 jurisdiction over them by the California courts consistent with traditional notions of fair play and  
23 substantial justice.

24 4. Venue is proper in this Court because, upon information and belief, Defendants  
25 maintain offices, have agents, and/or transact business in the State of California, County of  
26 Monterey.

### 26 **PARTIES**

27 5. Plaintiff JOSE CARRASCO is an individual residing in the County of Monterrey,  
28

1 State of California.

2 6. Defendant RIVER VALLEY FARMS, LLC is, and at all times herein mentioned  
3 was, a limited liability company organized and existing under the laws of the State of California,  
4 and registered to do business in the state of California.

5 7. Defendant SOUTHERN PACIFIC FARMING, INC. is, and at all times herein  
6 mentioned was, a corporation organized and existing under the laws of the State of Florida, and  
7 registered to do business in the state of California.

8 8. Defendant SOUTHERN PACIFIC FARMING II, LLC is, and at all times herein  
9 mentioned was, a limited liability company organized and existing under the laws of the State of  
10 California, and registered to do business in the state of California.

11 9. Plaintiff is ignorant of the identities of defendants Does 1 through 50, inclusive,  
12 and therefore sues these defendants by such fictitious names. The Doe defendants may be  
13 individuals, partnerships, or corporations. Plaintiff is informed and believes, and thereon alleges,  
14 that, at all times mentioned herein, each of the Doe defendants was the parent, subsidiary, agent,  
15 servant, employee, co-venturer, and/or co-conspirator of each of the other defendants and was at  
16 all times mentioned acting within the scope, purpose, consent, knowledge, ratification and  
17 authorization of such agency, employment, joint venture and conspiracy. Plaintiff will amend this  
18 Complaint to allege their true names and capacities when ascertained. Plaintiff is informed and  
19 believes and thereon alleges that each of the fictitiously named Doe defendants is responsible in  
20 some manner for the occurrences herein alleged, and that Plaintiff's damages as herein alleged  
21 were proximately caused by its conduct.

22 10. Defendants are and at all times herein mentioned were, (a) conducting business in  
23 the County of Monterey, State of California, and (b) the employer of Plaintiff consistent with the  
24 California Labor Code and Industrial Welfare Commission Wage Orders ("Wage Orders").

25 11. Plaintiff further alleges that Defendants, directly or indirectly controlled or  
26 affected the working conditions, wages, working hours, and conditions of employment of Plaintiff  
27 and Aggrieved Employees so as to make each of said Defendants employers and employers jointly  
28 liable under the statutory provisions set forth herein. Defendants share a same address, have same

1 corporate officers/managers, and exercised control over the wages, hours, working conditions,  
2 and trainings of Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees such that each Defendant is an employer  
3 of Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees.

#### 4 **GENERAL ALLEGATIONS**

5 12. Defendants are an agricultural company.

6 13. Defendants employed Plaintiff JOSE CARRASCO to work as a seasonal harvester  
7 for the 2022 season which ended approximately in October 2022.

8 14. At all relevant times set forth herein, Defendants employed Plaintiff and  
9 Aggrieved Employees as hourly-paid or non-exempt employees.

10 15. Throughout the time period involved in this case, Defendants had the authority to  
11 hire and terminate Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees; to directly or indirectly control work rules,  
12 working conditions, wages, working hours, and conditions of employment of Plaintiff and  
13 Aggrieved Employees; and to hire and terminate the employment of Plaintiff and Aggrieved  
14 Employees.

15 16. At all times herein mentioned, Defendants were subject to the Labor Code of the  
16 State of California and the applicable Industrial Welfare Commission Orders.

17 17. Plaintiff is informed and believes, and thereon alleges that Defendants engaged in  
18 an ongoing and systematic scheme of wage abuse against their hourly-paid or non-exempt  
19 employees. As set forth in more detail below, this scheme involved, *inter alia*, regularly requiring  
20 Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees to work off-the-clock without compensation, thereby failing  
21 to pay them for all hours worked, including minimum and overtime wages. Defendants also  
22 implemented time rounding practices that resulted in the systematic underpayment of wages to  
23 Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees, including minimum and overtime wages. Defendants also  
24 implemented policies that prohibited Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees from accurately  
25 recording the actual time worked, resulting in a failure to pay Plaintiff and the Aggrieved  
26 Employees all wages owed. In addition, Defendants routinely failed to permit Plaintiff and the  
27 Aggrieved Employees to take timely and duty-free meal periods and rest periods in violation of  
28 California law. Defendants also failed to reimburse Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees for all

1 necessary business-related expenses, failed to pay all wages owed upon termination of  
2 employment, unlawfully withheld or deducted collected of wages, and failed to maintain accurate  
3 records.

4 18. Throughout the time period involved in this case, Defendants have implemented  
5 policies and practices which failed to provide Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees with timely and  
6 duty-free meal periods. Defendants routinely failed to relieve Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees  
7 of all duties during their meal periods, regularly failed to relinquish control over Plaintiff and  
8 Aggrieved Employees during their meal periods, regularly failed to permit Plaintiff and  
9 Aggrieved Employees a reasonable opportunity to take their meal periods, and regularly impeded  
10 or discouraged Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees from taking thirty (30) minute uninterrupted  
11 meal breaks no later than the end of their fifth hour of work and/or from taking a second thirty  
12 (30) minute uninterrupted meal break no later than their tenth hour of work for shifts lasting more  
13 than ten (10) hours. Defendants also failed to maintain accurate records of meal periods taken by  
14 Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees.

15 19. Throughout the time period involved in this case, Defendants did not adequately  
16 inform Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees of their right to take meal periods under California  
17 law. Moreover, Defendants systematically disregarded their own written policies regarding the  
18 provision and timing of meal periods for Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees. Instead,  
19 Defendants' actual policy and practice was to schedule Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees in a  
20 way the prohibited them from taking timely and duty-free meal periods, and to require Plaintiff  
21 and Aggrieved Employees to work through their meal periods, for which they were not  
22 compensated.

23 20. Throughout the time period involved in this case, Defendants failed to pay Plaintiff  
24 and Aggrieved Employees premium wages for meal periods that were missed, late, interrupted,  
25 or shortened in violation of California law. Defendants knew or should have known that Plaintiff  
26 and Aggrieved Employees were entitled to receive all meal periods or payment of one additional  
27 hour of pay at their regular rate of pay when a meal period was missed, short, late, and/or  
28 interrupted. Notwithstanding this knowledge, Defendants routinely failed to provide legally

compliant meal periods to Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees, and routinely failed pay one additional hour of pay to Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees at their regular rate of pay when a meal period was missed, short, late, and/or interrupted.

21. Throughout the time period involved in this case, Defendants have implemented policies and practices which prohibited Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees from taking timely and duty-free rest periods. Defendants regularly failed to provide, authorize, and permit Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees to take full, uninterrupted, off-duty rest periods for every shift lasting three and one-half (3.5) to six (6) hours and/or two full, uninterrupted, off-duty rest periods for every shift lasting six (6) to ten (10) hours, and failed to make a good faith effort to authorize, permit, and provide such rest breaks in the middle of each work period.

22. Throughout the time period involved in this case, Defendants did not adequately inform Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees of their right to take rest periods under California law. Moreover, Defendants systematically disregarded their own written policies regarding the provision and timing of rest periods for Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees. Instead, Defendants' actual policy and practice was to schedule Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees in a way that regularly prohibited them from taking timely and duty free rest periods, and to regularly require Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees to work through their rest periods.

23. Throughout the time period involved in this case, Defendants failed to pay Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees premium wages for rest periods that were missed, late, interrupted, or shortened in violation of California law. Defendants knew or should have known that Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees were entitled to receive all rest periods or payment of one additional hour of pay at their regular rate of pay when a rest period was missed, short, late, and/or interrupted. Notwithstanding this knowledge, Defendants routinely failed to authorize and permit Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees to take duty-free rest periods, and failed to pay one additional hour of pay to Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees at their regular rate of pay when a rest period was missed, short, late and/or interrupted.

24. Throughout the time period involved in this case, Defendant regularly required Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees to perform work off-the-clock. Although Defendants

1 prohibited overtime, Defendants still regularly required Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees  
2 complete all of their assigned duties. To do so, Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees were regularly  
3 required to perform work off-the-clock for which they were not compensated.

4 25. Throughout the time period involved in this case, Plaintiff and Aggrieved  
5 Employees worked more than eight (8) hours in a day, and/or forty (40) hours in a week.

6 26. Throughout the time period involved in this case, Defendants regularly failed to  
7 pay overtime compensation to Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees when they worked in excess  
8 of eight (8) hours in a single work day and/or forty (40) hours in a single work week, or in excess  
9 of twelve (12) hours in a single work day and/or eighty (80) hours in a single work week.  
10 Defendants knew or should have known that Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees were entitled to  
11 receive certain wages for overtime or double overtime compensation and that they were not  
12 receiving wages for overtime or double overtime compensation.

13 27. Throughout the time period involved in this case, Defendants failed to pay  
14 overtime to Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees for all overtime hours worked based on regular  
15 rates of pay correctly calculated to include all applicable remuneration.

16 28. Throughout the time period involved in this case, Defendants regularly failed to  
17 pay Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees at least minimum wages for all hours worked. Defendants  
18 knew or should have known that Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees were entitled to receive at  
19 least minimum wages for all hours worked and that they were not receiving at least minimum  
20 wages for all hours worked. Defendants' failure to pay minimum wages included, *inter alia*,  
21 failing to pay Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees at the required minimum wage pursuant to  
22 California law, and requiring Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees to perform work off-the-clock.

23 29. Throughout the time period involved in this case, Defendants regularly failed to  
24 pay Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees at least minimum wages for all hours worked.  
25 Defendants knew or should have known that Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees were entitled  
26 to receive at least minimum wages for all hours worked and that they were not receiving at least  
27 minimum wages for all hours worked. Defendants' failure to pay minimum wages included, *inter*  
28 *alia*, failing to pay Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees at the required minimum wage pursuant

1 to California law, requiring Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees to perform work off-the-clock.

2 30. Throughout the time period involved in this case, Defendants regularly failed to  
3 pay Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees all wages owed to them upon discharge or resignation.  
4 Defendant knew or should have known that Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees were entitled  
5 to receive all wages owed to them upon termination within the time permissible under California  
6 Labor Code section 202. Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees did not receive payment of all  
7 final wages owed to them upon discharge or resignation, including overtime compensation and  
8 minimum wages within any time permissible under California Labor Code section 202.

9 31. Throughout the time period involved in this case, Defendants regularly failed to  
10 pay Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees all wages within any time permissible under California  
11 law, including, *inter alia*, California Labor Code section 204. Defendants knew or should have  
12 known that Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees were entitled to receive all wages owed to them  
13 during their employment. Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees did not receive payment of all  
14 wages, including overtime compensation, minimum wages, and meal and rest period premiums,  
within any time permissible under California Labor Code section 204.

15 32. Throughout the time period involved in this case, Defendants regularly failed to  
16 provide complete or accurate wage statements to Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees. Defendants  
17 knew or should have known that Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees were entitled to receive  
18 complete and accurate wage statements in accordance with California law, but, in fact, they did  
19 not receive complete and accurate wage statements from Defendants. The deficiencies included,  
20 *inter alia*, the failure to include the total number of hours worked, the actual gross wages earned,  
21 the correct rates of pay, and number of piece-rate units paid and any applicable piece rate.

22 33. Throughout the time period involved in this case, Defendants regularly failed to  
23 keep complete or accurate payroll records for Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees. Defendants  
24 knew or should have known that Defendants were required to keep complete and accurate payroll  
25 records for Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees in accordance with California law, but, in fact, did  
26 not keep complete and accurate payroll records.

27 34. Throughout the time period involved in this case, Defendants regularly failed to  
28

maintain accurate records relating to Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees' work periods, meal periods, total daily hours, hours per pay period, and applicable pay rates

35. Throughout the time period involved in this case, Defendants implemented policies and practices that allowed Defendants to deduct from the wages paid to Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees. Defendants' policies and practices allowing for deduction of wages does not comport with any exception enumerated in California Labor Code section 224, and is therefore unlawful under California law.

36. Throughout the time period involved in this case, Defendants failed to reimburse Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees for all necessary business-related expenses, including but not limited to work related tools. Defendants knew or should have known that Defendants were required to reimburse Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees for all necessary business-related expenses and costs, but, in fact, failed to do so in violation of California law.

37. Throughout the time period involved in this case, Defendants knew or should have known that they had a duty to compensate Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees pursuant to California law. Defendants had the financial ability to pay such compensation, but willfully, knowingly, and intentionally failed to do so, and falsely represented to Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees that they paid all wages owed to them, all in order to increase Defendants' profits.

38. On or about September 29, 2023, Plaintiff notified Defendants via certified mail and filed an online PAGA claim notice with the California Labor and Workforce Development Agency ("LWDA") identifying Defendants' violations of the California Labor Code identified in this Complaint and Plaintiff's intent to bring a claim for civil penalties under California Labor Code section 2698 *et seq.* in accord with Cal. Lab. Code section 2699.3. As of the filing of this Complaint, the LWDA has not responded to Plaintiff's PAGA claim notice.

### **FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION**

**(Violation of California Labor Code § 2699, Et Seq.)**

**(Against All Defendants)**

39. Plaintiff incorporates by reference and re-alleges as if fully stated herein each and every allegation set forth above.

1           40.       Plaintiff brings his first and only cause of action as a representative action on  
2 behalf of himself and similarly Aggrieved Employees in the capacity as a private attorney general  
3 pursuant to the Private Attorneys General Act of 2004, California Labor Code section 2698, *et*  
4 *seq.* (“PAGA”).

5           41.       PAGA specifically provides for a private right of action to recover civil penalties  
6 for violations of the Labor Code as follows: “Notwithstanding any other provision of law, any  
7 provision of this code that provides for a civil penalty to be assessed and collected by the Labor  
8 and Workforce Development Agency or any of its departments, divisions, commissions, boards,  
9 agencies, or employees, for a violation of this code, may, as an alternative, be recovered through  
10 a civil action brought by an aggrieved employee on behalf of himself or herself and other current  
11 or former employees pursuant to the procedures specified in Section 2699.3.” Cal. Lab. Code §  
12 2699(a).

13           42.       Plaintiff was employed by Defendants and the Labor Code violations alleged  
14 above were committed against him during his time of employment. Plaintiff and the other non-  
15 exempt employees of Defendants are therefore “aggrieved employees” as defined by California  
16 Labor Code section 2699(c) in that they are all current or former employees of Defendants, and  
17 one or more of the alleged violations were committed against them.

18           43.       As set forth in detail above, during all times relevant to this Action, Defendants  
19 have routinely subjected Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees to violations of California Labor  
20 Codes by:

- 21           a. Failing to pay Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees all earned minimum wage  
22           compensation in violation of Labor Code §§ 1194 and 1198 *et seq.*
- 23           b. Failing to pay Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees all earned overtime  
24           compensation in violation of Labor Code §§ 204, 510, 1194, and 1198 *et seq.*
- 25           c. Failing to provide legally required meal periods to Plaintiff and the Aggrieved  
26           Employees, and failing to pay Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees an additional  
27           hour of premium pay for meal period violations in violation of Labor Code §§  
28

226.7 and 512.

- d. Failing to provide authorize and permit Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees to take duty-free rest periods, and failing to pay Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees an additional hour of premium pay for rest period violations in violation of Labor Code §§ 226.7 and 512.
- e. Failing to timely pay Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees all wages at the end of their employment in violation of Labor Code § 203.
- f. Failing to timely pay Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees all wages owed during employment in violation of Labor Code § 204.
- g. Failing to furnish Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees with complete, accurate, itemized wage statements in violation of Labor Code § 226.
- h. Failing to maintain accurate records relating to Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees' work periods, meal periods, total daily hours, hours per pay period, total wages and compensation, and applicable pay rates in violation of Labor Code § 1174(d) and the applicable IWC Wage Order.
- i. Failing to reimburse Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees for necessary business-related expenses in violation of Labor Code §§ 2800 and 2802.

44. Pursuant to California Labor Code sections 2699 and 2699.5, Plaintiff, individually and on behalf of the Aggrieved Employees and the State of California, request and are entitled to recover penalties against Defendants for the Labor Code violations described above, including but not limited to penalties under California Code of Regulations Title 8 sections 11114 penalties under California Labor Code sections 2699, 558, 210, 1197.1, 225.5, 226, 226.3 and 1174.5, and 1197.1, and any and all additional penalties and sums as provided by the California Labor Code and/or other statutes. The exact amount of the applicable penalties, in all, is in an amount to be shown according to proof at trial.

45. Plaintiff has exhausted his administrative remedies pursuant to Labor Code § 2699.3. On September 29, 2023, Plaintiff, through his counsel of record, by online filing with the

1 LWDA and by certified mail to the Defendants, notified Defendants and the LWDA of the  
2 specific provisions of the Labor Code and IWC Wage Orders that Defendants have violated,  
3 including the facts and theories to support the violations, and of Plaintiff's intent to bring a claim  
4 for civil penalties under PAGA. Plaintiff also paid the filing fee required under Labor Code §  
5 2699.3. As of the filing of this Complaint, more than sixty-five (65) days have elapsed since the  
6 mailing of Plaintiff's September 29, 2023, notice, and the LWDA has not indicated that it intends  
7 to investigate the violations discussed in the notice. Accordingly, Plaintiff may commence a civil  
8 action to recover penalties for himself and other Aggrieved Employees pursuant to Labor Code §  
9 2699.3.

10 46. Plaintiff was compelled to retain the services of counsel to file this court action to  
11 protect his interests and the Aggrieved Employees, and to assess and collect the civil penalties  
12 owed by Defendants. Plaintiff therefore seeks an award of reasonable attorneys' fees and costs  
13 pursuant to Labor Code § 2699(g)(1), and any other applicable statute.

14 47. Plaintiff may amend this complaint as a matter of right pursuant to California  
15 Labor Code § 2699.3 as this complaint has been filed within sixty days of the time periods  
16 specified in Labor Code §2699.3.

17 **PRAYER FOR RELIEF**

18 WHEREFORE, Plaintiff, individually and on behalf of all other aggrieved employees, and  
19 as a private attorney general, prays for relief and judgment against Defendants, jointly and  
20 severally, as follows:

21 **As to the First Cause of Action**

22 1. For statutory attorneys' fees and costs pursuant to 2699(g)(1) of California Labor  
23 Code;

24 2. For the imposition of civil penalties pursuant to California Labor Code §§ 2699,  
25 210, 558, 226, 226.3, 1174.5, 1197.1 and all other penalties allowed by the California Labor Code  
26 and/or other applicable statutes; and

27 ///

1           3.           For such other relief as the Court deems just and proper.

2  
3           Dated: December 14, 2023

**PROTECTION LAW GROUP**

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6           By: 

Priscilla Gamino  
Brendan J. Burton  
*Attorneys for Plaintiff*  
JOSE CARRASCO