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Department of Justice

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Eastern District of Michigan

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday, February 14, 2014

Detroit Produce Business Sentenced On A Charge Of Bribery

A Detroit area produce business was sentenced Tuesday for bribing a Teamsters Union business agent, United States Attorney Barbara L. McQuade announced today.

McQuade was joined in the announcement by Cincinnati Regional Director L. Joe Rivers, U.S. Department of Labor Employee Benefit Security Administration, and Special Agent in Charge James Vanderberg, Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General, Office of Labor Racketeering and Fraud Investigations.

U.S. District Judge Arthur Tarnow sentenced Sam LaGrasso Produce, Inc. to a fine of \$500,000, and a special assessment of \$400. Additionally, the company will be required to make quarterly donations of \$1,500 to a local non-profit food bank for five years. Sam LaGrasso Produce operates in the Eastern Market area of Detroit.

The evidence presented at a plea hearing established that between June 2005 and August 2008, the company made quarterly payments to a business agent of the Teamsters Union in order to ensure that no effort would be made to unionize the employees of Sam LaGrasso Produce, Inc., or any of its' affiliated companies.

"LaGrasso Produce undercut its employees' opportunity to organize by bribing a Teamsters official," McQuade said. "This prosecution and sentence send an important message that the criminal justice system will protect employees' rights to organize."

The case was investigated by special agents of the Department of Labor. The case was investigated and prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Mark Chutkow and David Morris.

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