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Pilgrim's Pride Issues Statement in Response to U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Immigration and Customs Enforcement Action at Five Company Facilities

PITTSBURG, Texas, April 16 /PRNewswire-FirstCall/ -- Pilgrim's Pride Corp. (NYSE: PPC) today issued the following statement in response to an enforcement action today by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) division:

"Officials from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) division took into custody a total of approximately 400 hourly, non-management employees at Pilgrim's Pride processing facilities in Batesville, Ark., Chattanooga, Tenn., Live Oak, Fla., Moorefield, W. Va. and Mt. Pleasant, Texas.

"According to the U.S. Attorney's Office, these individuals have engaged in immigration-related crimes, including aggravated identity theft, in order to fraudulently obtain employment with the company.

"No civil or criminal charges, including charges that Pilgrim's knowingly hired these employees or conspired to hire them, have been filed against the company in any of these cases. Pilgrim's Pride cooperated fully with ICE and the U.S. Attorney's office to help them apprehend these individuals. In fact, it was Pilgrim's Pride that uncovered the identity theft situation in Batesville and notified the federal government, and we worked closely with them to identify those individuals who were apprehended at the Batesville site.

"The approximately 400 employees taken into custody by ICE represent about 4% of the 9,400 people employed at these facilities. The company is working diligently to prevent or minimize any disruption in operations or service at these affected sites, and we are continuing to cooperate fully with the government in its investigation.

"We share the government's goal of eliminating the hiring or employment of unauthorized workers. We have terminated all of the employees who were taken into custody and will terminate any employee who is found to have engaged in similar misconduct. We are investigating these allegations further.

"All of Pilgrim's Pride's U.S. locations -- including those visited by ICE today -- voluntarily participate in E-Verify (formerly known as the Basic Pilot/Employment Eligibility Verification Program), which determines employment eligibility for all new hires.

"The E-Verify program, which is under the jurisdiction of the Department of Homeland Security, verifies the authenticity of the applicant's social security or alien number and personal information using an automated system that includes verification checks of Social Security Administration (SSA) and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) databases. However, as noted by Michael Chertoff, Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, the E-Verify/Basic Pilot program cannot detect identity theft situations.

"Pilgrim's Pride has relied on the ICE Best Hiring Practices in designing its immigration compliance program. These practices include participation in E-Verify, prompt attention to Social Security No-Match letters, and retention of outside experts in immigration compliance to ensure that the company is doing all that it can to verify that its employees have work authorization. These practices also require that the company be sensitive to all applicable anti-discrimination laws.

"As a company, Pilgrim's Pride continually audits and reviews its processes and procedures to assure continuing compliance with best hiring practices and existing employment law. The company provides education and training on proper hiring procedures, fraudulent document detection, use of the E-Verify/Basic Pilot Employment Verification Program, and anti-discrimination procedures. Pilgrim's Pride also conducts internal and third-party audits of I-9 forms and hiring practices on an ongoing basis, and fully investigates any reports of alleged identity theft."

About Pilgrim's Pride

Pilgrim's Pride Corporation is the largest chicken company in the United States and Puerto Rico and the second-largest in

Mexico. Pilgrim's Pride employs approximately 54,500 people and operates 37 chicken processing and 12 prepared-foods facilities, with major operations in Texas, Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia, Mexico and Puerto Rico as well as other facilities in Arizona, Iowa, Mississippi, Ohio and Utah.

Pilgrim's Pride products are sold to foodservice, retail and frozen entree customers. The Company's primary distribution is through retailers, foodservice distributors and restaurants throughout the United States and Puerto Rico and in the Northern and Central regions of Mexico. For more information, please visit <http://www.pilgrimspride.com>.

Forward-Looking Statements

Statements contained in this press release that state the intentions, plans, hopes, beliefs, anticipations, expectations or predictions of the future of Pilgrim's Pride Corporation and its management, including as to the expected benefits and synergies associated with the acquisition of Gold Kist and changes in pricing, demand and market conditions for chicken products and profitability, are forward-looking statements. It is important to note that the actual results could differ materially from those projected in such forward-looking statements. Factors that could cause actual results to differ materially from those projected in such forward-looking statements include: matters affecting the poultry industry generally, including fluctuations in the commodity prices of feed ingredients, chicken and turkey; additional outbreaks of avian influenza or other diseases, either in our own flocks or elsewhere, affecting our ability to conduct our operations and/or demand for our poultry products; contamination of our products, which has previously and can in the future lead to product liability claims and product recalls; exposure to risks related to product liability, product recalls, property damage and injuries to persons, for which insurance coverage is expensive, limited and potentially inadequate; asset impairment and other charges related to facility closures or modifications; management of our cash resources, particularly in light of our substantial leverage; restrictions imposed by, and as a result of, our substantial leverage; changes in laws or regulations affecting our operations or the application thereof; new immigration legislation or increased enforcement efforts in connection with existing immigration legislation that cause our costs of doing business to increase, cause us to change the way in which we do business, or otherwise disrupt our operations; competitive factors and pricing pressures or the loss of one or more of our largest customers; inability to consummate, or effectively integrate, any acquisition, including integrating our recent acquisition of Gold Kist, or realize the associated cost savings and operating synergies currently anticipated; currency exchange rate fluctuations, trade barriers, exchange controls, expropriation and other risks associated with foreign operations; disruptions in international markets and distribution channels; and the impact of uncertainties of litigation as well as other risks described under "Risk Factors" in our Annual Report on Form 10-K and subsequent filings with the Securities and Exchange Commission. Pilgrim's Pride Corporation undertakes no obligation to update or revise publicly any forward-looking statements, whether as a result of new information, future events or otherwise.

SOURCE Pilgrim's Pride Corp.

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