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Pilgrim's Pride Announces Settlement Agreement With U.S. Attorney's Office for Eastern District of Texas and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

PITTSBURG, Texas, Dec 30, 2009 /PRNewswire-FirstCall via COMTEX/ -- Pilgrim's Pride Corp. (NYSE: PPC) today announced that it has reached a settlement agreement with the U.S. Attorney's office for the Eastern District of Texas and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in relation to a two-year investigation into identity theft and the employment of individuals who are not authorized to work in the United States.

Under the terms of the non-prosecution agreement, the company has agreed to pay the federal government a total of \$4.5 million over the next three years. The agreement marks the completion of the government's investigation, which began in 2007. No civil or criminal charges were ever filed against the company during the course of the investigation, and both the U.S. Attorney's office and Pilgrim's Pride acknowledge that the settlement does not constitute any admission of civil or criminal misconduct on the part of Pilgrim's Pride or any of its directors, officers, management or other employees.

In 2007 and 2008, ICE conducted worksite enforcement and identify-theft investigations at five Pilgrim's Pride locations. As a result of these actions, a total of approximately 338 unauthorized workers were apprehended. Pilgrim's Pride cooperated fully with the U.S. Attorney's office and ICE throughout the course of the investigation.

As part of the settlement, Pilgrim's Pride recognizes that its voluntary compliance programs can be enhanced to more accurately identify unauthorized persons who seek or gain employment through identity fraud or other unlawful means.

Pilgrim's Pride shares the government's goal of eliminating the hiring or employment of unauthorized workers, and has stringent workplace verification programs in place. All of the company's U.S. locations voluntarily participate in E-Verify (formerly known as the Basic Pilot/Employment Eligibility Verification Program), which determines employment eligibility for all new hires. However, the E-Verify/Basic Pilot program is unable to 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.

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 employs approximately 41,000 people (including approximately 36,000 in the United States) and operates chicken processing plants and prepared-foods facilities in 12 states, Puerto Rico and Mexico. The Company's primary distribution is through retailers and foodservice distributors. For more information, please visit <http://www.pilgrimspride.com/>.

SOURCE Pilgrim's Pride Corporation

<http://www.pilgrimspride.com>

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