

DARLING INGREDIENTS INC.
Form DEF 14A
March 31, 2015
UNITED STATES
SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20549

SCHEDULE 14A INFORMATION
PROXY STATEMENT PURSUANT TO SECTION 14(A) OF
THE SECURITIES EXCHANGE ACT OF 1934

Filed by Registrant Filed by a Party other than the Registrant

Check the appropriate box:

- Preliminary Proxy Statement
- CONFIDENTIAL, FOR USE OF THE COMMISSION ONLY (AS PERMITTED BY RULE 14A-6(E)(2))
- Definitive Proxy Statement
- Definitive Additional Materials
- Soliciting Material Pursuant to Section 240.14a-12

DARLING INGREDIENTS INC.

(Name of Registrant as specified in its charter)

NOT APPLICABLE

(Name of Person(s) Filing Proxy Statement if other than the Registrant)

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(3) Filing Party:

(4) Date Filed:

251 O'Connor Ridge Boulevard, Suite 300
Irving, Texas 75038

NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING OF STOCKHOLDERS
TO BE HELD MAY 12, 2015

To the Stockholders of Darling Ingredients Inc.:

An Annual Meeting of Stockholders of Darling Ingredients Inc. (the "Company") will be held on Tuesday, May 12, 2015, at 10:00 a.m., local time, at the Four Seasons Resort and Club, 4150 N. MacArthur Blvd., Irving, Texas 75038, for the following purposes (which are more fully described in the accompanying Proxy Statement):

1. To elect as directors of the Company the nine nominees named in the accompanying proxy statement to serve until the next annual meeting of stockholders (Proposal 1);
2. To ratify the selection of KPMG LLP, independent registered public accounting firm, as the Company's independent registered public accountant for the fiscal year ending January 2, 2016 (Proposal 2);
3. To consider an advisory vote to approve executive compensation (Proposal 3); and
4. To transact such other business as may properly come before the Annual Meeting or any adjournment or postponement thereof in accordance with the provisions of the Company's bylaws.

The Board of Directors recommends that you vote to approve Proposals 1, 2 and 3.

The Board has fixed the close of business on March 18, 2015, as the record date for the determination of stockholders entitled to notice of and to vote at the Annual Meeting and any adjournment or postponement thereof.

This year we will again seek to conserve natural resources and reduce annual meeting costs by electronically disseminating annual meeting materials as permitted under rules of the Securities and Exchange Commission. Many stockholders will receive a Notice of Internet Availability of Proxy Materials containing instructions on how to access annual meeting materials via the Internet. Stockholders can also request mailed paper copies if preferred.

Your vote is important. You are cordially invited to attend the Annual Meeting. However, whether or not you expect to attend the Annual Meeting, please vote your proxy promptly so your shares are represented. You can vote by Internet, by telephone or by signing, dating and mailing the enclosed proxy.

A copy of our Annual Report for the year ended January 3, 2015 is enclosed or otherwise made available for your convenience.

By Order of the Board,

John F. Sterling
Secretary

Irving, Texas
March 31, 2015

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251 O'Connor Ridge Boulevard, Suite 300

Irving, Texas 75038

PROXY STATEMENT

FOR AN ANNUAL MEETING OF STOCKHOLDERS

TO BE HELD MAY 12, 2015

This Proxy Statement is provided to the stockholders of Darling Ingredients Inc. (“Darling,” “we” or “our company”) in connection with the solicitation of proxies by our Board of Directors (the “Board”) to be voted at an Annual Meeting of Stockholders to be held at the Four Seasons Resort and Club, 4150 N. MacArthur Blvd., Irving, Texas 75038, at 10:00 a.m., local time, on Tuesday, May 12, 2015, and at any adjournment or postponement thereof (the “Annual Meeting”). This Proxy Statement and the enclosed proxy is first being sent or made available to stockholders on or about March 31, 2015. This Proxy Statement provides information that should be helpful to you in deciding how to vote on the matters to be voted on at the Annual Meeting.

We are asking you to elect the nine nominees identified in this proxy statement as directors of Darling until the next annual meeting of stockholders, to ratify our selection of KPMG LLP as our registered public accounting firm for our fiscal year ending January 2, 2016 and to consider an advisory vote to approve executive compensation.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT VOTING

Why am I receiving these materials?

Our records indicate that you owned your shares of Darling common stock at the close of business on March 18, 2015 (the “Record Date”). You have been sent this Proxy Statement and the enclosed proxy card because Darling is soliciting your proxy to vote your shares of common stock at the Annual Meeting on the proposals described in this Proxy Statement.

What am I voting on?

There are three matters scheduled for a vote:

• the election of the nine nominees identified in this proxy statement as directors, each for a term of one year (“Proposal 1”);

• the ratification of the selection of KPMG LLP as our independent registered public accounting firm for our fiscal year ending January 2, 2016 (“Proposal 2”); and

• an advisory vote to approve executive compensation (“Proposal 3”).

Who is entitled to vote at the Annual Meeting?

All owners of our common stock as of the close of business on the Record Date are entitled to vote their shares of common stock at the Annual Meeting and any adjournment or postponement thereof. As of the Record Date, a total of 165,216,049 shares of common stock are outstanding and eligible to vote at the Annual Meeting. Each share of common stock is entitled to one vote on each matter properly brought before the Annual Meeting. The enclosed proxy card or voting instruction card shows the number of shares you are entitled to vote at the Annual Meeting.

Stockholder of Record: Shares Registered in Your Name

If on the Record Date your shares were registered directly in your name with Darling, then you are a stockholder of record. As a stockholder of record, you may vote in person at the Annual Meeting or vote by proxy. Whether or not you plan to attend the Annual Meeting, to ensure your vote is counted, Darling encourages you to vote either by Internet, by telephone or by filling out and returning the enclosed proxy card.

Beneficial Owner: Shares Registered in the Name of a Broker or Bank

If on the Record Date your shares were held in an account at a brokerage firm, bank, dealer, or other similar organization, then you are the beneficial owner of shares held in “street name” and these proxy materials are being forwarded to you by that organization. The organization holding your account is considered the stockholder of record for purposes of voting at the Annual Meeting. As the beneficial owner, you have the right to direct your broker or other agent on how to vote the shares in your account.

How do I vote?

Your shares may only be voted at the Annual Meeting if you are present in person or are represented by proxy. Whether or not you plan to attend the Annual Meeting, we encourage you to vote by proxy to ensure that your shares will be represented. To vote by proxy, complete the enclosed proxy card and mail it in the postage-paid envelope provided, or you may vote by using the telephone or the Internet in accordance with the instructions provided on the enclosed proxy card. The telephone and Internet voting procedures are designed to authenticate stockholders’ identities, to allow stockholders to vote their shares and to confirm that their instructions have been properly recorded. You may revoke your proxy at any time before it is exercised by timely submission of a written revocation to our Secretary, submission of a properly executed later-dated proxy or by timely voting by ballot at the Annual Meeting. Voting by proxy will in no way limit your right to vote at the Annual Meeting if you later decide to attend in person. Attendance at the Annual Meeting will not by itself constitute a revocation of your proxy – you must vote at the Annual Meeting.

If your shares are held in the name of a brokerage firm, bank, dealer or other similar organization that holds your shares in “street name,” you will receive instructions from that organization that you must follow in order for your shares to be voted.

All shares that you are entitled to vote and that are represented by a properly-completed proxy received prior to the Annual Meeting and not revoked will be voted at the Annual Meeting in accordance with the instructions on the proxy. If you properly deliver your proxy but fail to indicate how your shares should be voted, the shares represented by your proxy will be voted FOR Proposal 1, FOR Proposal 2, FOR Proposal 3 and in the discretion of the persons named in the proxy as proxy appointees as to any other matter that may properly come before the Annual Meeting.

Who may attend the Annual Meeting?

All stockholders that were stockholders of Darling as of the Record Date, or their authorized representatives, may attend the Annual Meeting. Admission to the Annual Meeting will be on a first-come, first-served basis. If your shares are held in the name of a brokerage firm, bank, dealer or other similar organization that holds your shares in “street name” and you plan to attend the Annual Meeting, you should bring proof of ownership to the Annual Meeting, such as a current bank or brokerage account statement, to ensure your admission.

How will votes be counted?

The Annual Meeting will be held if a quorum, consisting of a majority of the outstanding shares entitled to vote, is represented in person or by proxy. Abstentions and broker “non-votes” will be counted as present and entitled to vote for purposes of determining a quorum. A broker “non-vote” occurs when a nominee, such as a bank or broker, holding shares for a beneficial owner, does not vote on a particular proposal because the nominee does not have discretionary voting power with respect to that item and has not received instructions from the beneficial owner. Under the rules of the New York Stock Exchange (the “NYSE”), absent instructions from the beneficial owners, banks and brokers who hold shares in street name for beneficial owners have the authority to vote on routine corporate matters. The ratification of the selection of our independent registered public accounting firm is considered to be a routine matter, while the election of directors and the advisory vote to approve executive compensation are not.

Proposal 1. With respect to the nominees for director listed under “Proposal 1 – Election of Directors,” to be elected, each nominee must receive a majority of all votes cast (assuming a quorum is present) with respect to that nominee’s election. A majority of votes cast means that the number of votes cast for a nominee’s election must exceed the number of votes cast against such nominee’s election. Each nominee receiving more votes for his election than votes against his election will be elected. In the election of directors, you may vote “FOR,” “AGAINST” or “ABSTAIN” with respect to each nominee. If you elect to abstain in the election of directors, the abstention will not impact the election of directors. In tabulating the voting

results for the election of directors, only “FOR” and “AGAINST” votes are counted. Broker “non-votes” will not be counted as a vote cast with respect to a nominee and will therefore not affect the outcome of the vote on Proposal 1.

Proposal 2. With respect to Proposal 2 – “Ratification of Selection of Independent Registered Public Accountant,” the affirmative vote of a majority of shares present in person or represented by proxy and entitled to vote is required for approval of this item. You may vote “FOR,” “AGAINST” or “ABSTAIN”. If you abstain from voting, it will have the same effect as a vote against this item. Your broker (or another organization that holds your shares for you) may exercise its discretionary authority to vote your shares in favor of Proposal 2.

Proposal 3. With respect to Proposal 3 – “Advisory Vote to Approve Executive Compensation,” the affirmative vote of a majority of shares present in person or represented by proxy and entitled to vote is required for approval of this item. You may vote “FOR,” “AGAINST” or “ABSTAIN”. If you abstain from voting, it will have the same effect as a vote against this item. Your broker (or another organization that holds your shares for you) does not have discretionary authority to vote your shares with regard to Proposal 3. Therefore, if your shares are held in the name of a brokerage firm, bank, dealer or similar organization that provides a proxy to us, and the organization has not received your instructions as to how to vote your shares on this proposal, your shares will be counted as if you had voted against Proposal 3.

Although the advisory vote on Proposal 3 is non-binding, as provided by law, our Board will review the results of the vote and will take it into account in making future decisions regarding executive compensation.

Who will count the votes?

Our transfer agent, Computershare Investor Services, will tally the vote and will serve as inspector of election at the Annual Meeting.

Why did I receive in the mail a Notice of Internet Availability of Proxy Materials rather than a full set of proxy materials?

Securities and Exchange Commission (“SEC”) rules allow companies to provide stockholders with access to proxy materials over the Internet rather than mailing the materials to stockholders. To conserve natural resources and reduce costs, we are sending to many of our stockholders a Notice of Internet Availability of Proxy Materials (the “Notice”). The Notice provides instructions for accessing the proxy materials on the website referred to in the Notice or for requesting printed copies of the proxy materials. The Notice also provides instructions for requesting the delivery of the proxy materials for future annual meetings in printed form by mail or electronically by email.

How are proxies being solicited and who will pay for the solicitation of proxies?

We will bear the expense of the solicitation of proxies. In addition to the solicitation of proxies by mail, solicitation may be made by our directors, officers and employees by other means, including telephone, over the Internet or in person. No special compensation will be paid to our directors, officers or employees for the solicitation of proxies. To solicit proxies, we will also request the assistance of banks, brokerage houses and other custodians, nominees or fiduciaries, and, upon request, will reimburse these organizations or individuals for their reasonable expenses in forwarding soliciting materials to beneficial owners and in obtaining authorization for the execution of proxies. We will also use the services of the proxy solicitation firm of Georgeson Inc. to assist in the solicitation of proxies. For these services, we will pay a fee that is not expected to exceed \$7,500, plus out-of-pocket expenses.

Who can help answer my other questions and to whom should I send a request for copies of certain material?
If you have more questions about voting, wish to obtain another proxy card or wish to receive a copy of our Annual Report on Form 10-K for the fiscal year ended January 3, 2015 without charge, you should contact:

Brad Phillips

Treasurer

Darling Ingredients Inc.

251 O'Connor Ridge Boulevard, Suite 300

Irving, Texas 75038

Telephone: 972.717.0300 Fax: 972.281.4449

E-mail: ir@darlingii.com

Important Notice Regarding the Availability of Proxy Materials for
the Stockholder Meeting to Be Held on May 12, 2015

The Proxy Statement and the 2014 Annual Report to security holders are available at
www.edocumentview.com/DAR

CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

In accordance with the General Corporation Law of the State of Delaware, our restated certificate of incorporation, as amended, and our amended and restated bylaws, our business, property and affairs are managed under the direction of the Board.

Independent Directors

The Board has determined that each of its current non-employee directors, O. Thomas Albrecht, D. Eugene Ewing, Mary R. Korby, Charles Macaluso, John D. March, Justinus J.G.M. Sanders and Michael Urbut meet the independence requirements of the NYSE and the SEC.

Meetings of the Board

During the fiscal year ended January 3, 2015, the Board held six regular meetings and four special meetings. Each of the serving directors attended at least 75% of all meetings held by the Board and all meetings of each committee of the Board on which the applicable director served during the fiscal year ended January 3, 2015.

Communications with the Board

Stockholders and other interested parties who wish to communicate with the Board as a whole, or with individual directors, may write them: c/o Secretary, Darling Ingredients Inc., P.O. Box 141481, Irving, Texas 75014-1481. All communications sent to this address will be shared with the Board, or the Lead Director or any other specific director, if so addressed.

It is a policy of the Board to encourage directors to attend each annual meeting of stockholders. The Board's attendance allows for direct interaction between stockholders and members of the Board. All of our directors attended our 2014 annual meeting of stockholders.

Board Leadership Structure

Randall C. Stuewe, our Chief Executive Officer, serves as our Chairman of the Board pursuant to his employment agreement. As further discussed below, our company has an empowered independent Lead Director who is elected annually by our Board. We believe that the combined role of Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, together with an empowered independent Lead Director, is the optimal Board structure to provide independent oversight and hold management accountable while ensuring that our company's strategic plans are pursued to optimize long-term shareholder value.

Because the Chairman of the Board is also the Chief Executive Officer, the Board has designated an independent director to serve as Lead Director to enhance the Board's ability to fulfill its responsibilities independently. The Board appointed Mr. Macaluso as lead director. The Lead Director's role includes:

- convening and chairing meetings of the non-employee directors as necessary from time to time;
- coordinating the work and meetings of the standing committees of the board;
- acting as liaison between directors, committee chairs and management; and
- serving as an information resource for other directors.

Our Lead Director's responsibilities and authorities are more specifically described in our Corporate Governance Guidelines.

The Board's Role in Risk Oversight

The Board and each of its committees are involved in overseeing risk associated with our company. In its oversight role, the Board annually reviews our company's strategic plan, which addresses, among other things, the risks and opportunities facing our company. While the Board has the ultimate oversight responsibility for the risk management process, it has delegated certain risk management oversight responsibilities to the Board committees. One of the primary purposes of the audit committee, as set forth in its charter, is to act on behalf of the Board in fulfilling its responsibilities to oversee company

processes for the management of business/financial risk and for compliance with applicable legal, ethical and regulatory requirements. Accordingly, as part of its responsibilities as set forth in its charter, the audit committee is charged with (i) inquiring of management and our company's outside auditors about significant risks and exposures and assessing the steps management has taken or needs to take to minimize such risks and (ii) overseeing our company's policies with respect to risk assessment and risk management, including the development and maintenance of an internal audit function to provide management and the audit committee with ongoing assessments of our company's risk management processes and internal controls. In connection with these risk oversight responsibilities, the audit committee has regular meetings with our company's management, internal auditors and independent, outside auditors. The nominating and corporate governance committee annually reviews our company's corporate governance guidelines and their implementation. The compensation committee considers risks related to the attraction and retention of talented senior management and other employees as well as risks relating to the design of compensation programs and arrangements. Each committee provides the Board with regular, detailed reports regarding committee meetings and actions. In addition, our company employs Michael Rath as our Senior Vice President – Fats, Hides, Energy and Chief Risk Officer. Mr. Rath reports directly to our CEO with respect to risk management and provides regular updates and reports to our CEO and Board regarding all of our company's commodity risk positions.

Committees of the Board

The Board has a standing nominating and corporate governance committee, audit committee and compensation committee.

Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee. The nominating and corporate governance committee currently consists of Messrs. Macaluso (Chairman), Albrecht and Urbut, each of whom is independent under the rules of the NYSE and the SEC. The nominating and corporate governance committee met three times during the fiscal year ended January 3, 2015. The nominating and corporate governance committee is generally responsible for:

- identifying, reviewing, evaluating and recommending potential candidates to serve as directors of our company;
 - recommending to the Board the number and nature of standing and special committees to be created by the Board;
 - recommending to the Board the members and chairperson for each Board committee;
 - developing, recommending and annually reviewing and assessing our Corporate Governance Guidelines and Code of Business Conduct and making recommendations for changes to the Board;
 - establishing and annually re-evaluating and recommending to the Board the standards for criteria for membership for, and the process of selection of, new and continuing directors for the Board;
 - communicating with our stockholders regarding nominees for the Board and considering whether to recommend these nominees to the Board;
 - evaluating annually the status of Board compensation in relation to comparable U.S. companies and reporting its findings to the Board, along with its recommendation of general principles to be used in determining the form and amount of director compensation;
 - periodically reviewing corporate governance matters generally and recommending action to the Board where appropriate;
 - reviewing and addressing any potential conflicts of interest of our directors and executive officers;
 - developing criteria for and assisting the Board in its annual self-evaluation;
 - overseeing the annual evaluation of management of our company, including oversight of the evaluation of our Chief Executive Officer by the compensation committee; and
 - overseeing the implementation and interpretation of, and compliance with, our company's stock ownership guidelines.
- The Board has adopted a written charter for the nominating and corporate governance committee.

Audit Committee. The audit committee currently consists of Messrs. Urbut (Chairman), Ewing and March, each of whom is independent under the rules of the NYSE and the SEC. The audit committee continued its long-standing practice of meeting directly with our internal audit staff to discuss the current year's audit plan and to allow for direct interaction between the audit committee members and our internal auditors. The audit committee also meets directly with our independent auditors. The audit committee met four times during the fiscal year ended January 3, 2015, during each of which meetings it also met directly with our independent auditors. The audit committee is generally responsible for:

- appointing, compensating, retaining, directing and overseeing our independent auditors;
- reviewing and discussing with management and our independent auditors the adequacy of our disclosure controls and procedures and internal accounting controls and other factors affecting the integrity of our financial reports;
- reviewing and discussing with management and our independent auditors critical accounting policies and the appropriateness of these policies;
- reviewing and discussing with management and our independent auditors any material financial or non-financial arrangements that do not appear on the financial statements and any related party transactions;
- reviewing our annual and interim reports to the SEC, including the financial statements and the "Management's Discussion and Analysis" portion of those reports and recommending appropriate action to the Board;
- discussing our audited financial statements and any reports of our independent auditors with respect to interim periods with management and our independent auditors, including a discussion with our independent auditors regarding the matters to be discussed by Statement of Auditing Standards No. 61 and No. 90;
- reviewing relationships between our independent auditors and our company in accordance with Independence Standards Board Standard No. 1;
- inquiring of management and our independent auditors about significant risks or exposures and assessing the steps management has taken to minimize those risks;
- preparing the report of the audit committee required to be included in our proxy statement; and
- creating and periodically reviewing our whistleblower policy.

The Board has determined in its own business judgment that all members of the audit committee are financially literate and have financial management expertise. The Board has designated Mr. Urbut, an independent director, as an audit committee financial expert in accordance with the requirements of the NYSE and the SEC.

The Board has adopted a written charter setting out the audit-related functions that the audit committee is to perform. Please see page 64 of this Proxy Statement for the "Report of the Audit Committee."

Compensation Committee. The compensation committee currently consists of Messrs. Albrecht (Chairman), Ewing and March, each of whom is independent under the rules of the NYSE and the SEC. The compensation committee met six times during the fiscal year ended January 3, 2015. The compensation committee is generally responsible for:

- establishing and reviewing our overall compensation philosophy and policies;
- determining and approving the compensation level of our Chief Executive Officer;
- reviewing and approving corporate goals and objectives relevant to the compensation of our executive officers;
- evaluating at least annually the performance of our Chief Executive Officer and other executive officers in light of the approved goals and objectives;
- examining and making recommendations to the Board with respect to the overall compensation program for managerial level employees;
 - reviewing and recommending to the Board for approval new compensation programs;

- reviewing our incentive compensation, equity-based and other compensation plans and perquisites on a periodic basis;
- reviewing employee compensation levels generally;
- drafting and discussing our Compensation Discussion and Analysis required to be included in our annual proxy statement and recommending its inclusion to the Board; and
- preparing the report of the compensation committee for inclusion in our annual proxy statement.

The Board has adopted a written compensation committee charter setting forth meeting requirements and responsibilities of the compensation committee.

Please see page 44 of this Proxy Statement for the “Compensation Committee Report.”

Code of Business Conduct

The Board has adopted a Code of Business Conduct to which all officers, directors and employees, who for purposes of the Code of Business Conduct are collectively referred to as employees, are required to adhere in addressing the legal and ethical issues encountered in conducting their work. The Code of Business Conduct requires that all employees avoid conflicts of interest, comply with all laws, rules and regulations, conduct business in an honest and fair manner, and otherwise act with integrity. Employees are required to report any violations of the Code of Business Conduct and may do so anonymously by contacting Darling’s independent ombudsman. The Code of Business Conduct includes specific provisions applicable to Darling’s principal executive officer and senior financial officers. The Code of Business Conduct also addresses our company’s procedures with respect to the review and approval of “related party transactions” that are required to be disclosed pursuant to SEC regulations. The Code of Business Conduct provides that any transaction or activity, in which Darling is involved, with a “related party” (which is defined as an employee’s child, stepchild, parent, stepparent, spouse, sibling, mother-in-law, father-in-law, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, brother-in-law, or sister-in-law, and any person (other than a tenant or employee) sharing the household of an employee of ours) shall be subject to review by our general counsel so that appropriate measures can be put into place to avoid either an actual conflict of interest or the appearance of a conflict of interest. Any waivers of this conflict of interest policy must be in writing and be pre-approved by our general counsel.

Stock Ownership Guidelines; Prohibition on Short-Term and Speculative Trading and Pledging

The Board has adopted stock ownership guidelines to further align the interests of our non-employee directors and officers with those of our stockholders. The guidelines provide that our Chief Executive Officer should maintain an investment in Darling common stock that is equal to five times his annual base salary. Our Executive Vice Presidents and named executive officers other than our Chief Executive Officer should each maintain an investment in Darling common stock that is equal to 2.5 times his or her annual base salary, while our Senior Vice Presidents should maintain an investment in Darling common stock that is equal to one times his or her annual base salary.

Non-employee directors should each maintain an investment in Darling common stock that is equal to five times his or her annual retainer. Each person to whom the stock ownership guidelines apply must hold at least 75% of shares received by such person through incentive awards (after sales for the payment of taxes and shares withheld to cover the exercise price of stock options) until such person is in compliance with the stock ownership guidelines referred to above. In determining whether the required investment levels have been met, shares will be valued using the closing price of Darling common stock on the date(s) acquired; however, shares held on March 23, 2011 (the date that the stock ownership guidelines were adopted) will be valued at the closing price of Darling common stock on such date. In addition, under the Company’s policy on securities tr