

NCBA questions R-CALF's partnership with animal rights group

Representatives of the [National Cattlemen's Beef Association](#) (NCBA) questions the affiliation of the [Ranchers-Cattlemen Action Legal Fund](#) (R-CALF) with the animal rights and environmental activist group [Food and Water Watch](#). According to separate news releases issued by the two groups, R-CALF and Food and Water Watch are joining forces on the campaign to support the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyard Administration's (GIPSA) [proposed rule](#) on livestock marketing. NCBA President Steve Foglesong said well-funded activist groups, like Food and Water Watch, are working to obstruct the success of U.S. agriculture and its efforts to feed a growing global population. He said Food and Water Watch, a lobbyist group full of "career activists," has a longstanding history of lobbying for stringed agricultural regulations that are devoid of science.

"This group seems to fly under the radar compared to other groups like the Humane Society of the United States, which is larger and more vocal," said Foglesong. "As a cattle producer, it is concerning that an organization in my industry is admittedly partnering with a group that spreads fiction as fact to 98 percent of the population removed from production agriculture. This industry can disagree – that's how progress is achieved – but to blatantly misrepresent the hardworking men and women in this industry is something that we cannot take lightly."

Food and Water Watch on its Web site defines factory farms as an agribusiness-controlled operation where "tens of thousands of animals are raised in crowded facilities." In an attempt to portray the livestock industry as factories, Food and Water Watch sponsored an animated video called [The Meatrix](#), which Foglesong calls a "strong manipulation of reality preying on consumers removed from production agriculture." [The Monday Campaigns, Inc.](#) (Meatless Monday) is also associated with the film, according to the [Web site](#) for the video.

Foglesong said the lack of science-based information is a red flag on the credibility of this activist group. He said, according to USDA, 98 percent of all U.S. farms are family farms. USDA reports 91 percent of farms in the United States are considered "small family farms," which is contrary to Food and Water Watch reporting that "the work of producing our food has been replaced by large corporate enterprises." Foglesong said innovation, profitability and a commitment to consumers have driven expansion of family owned operations throughout the United States, not agribusiness.

"The fact is farmers and ranchers are the most innovative individuals in the country. As the economy plummeted the last two years, agriculture was the shining star. We are resilient and believe the marketplace should be allowed to work without government interference. GIPSA's proposed rule will open the doors for frivolous lawsuits; allow government control of family owned operations; and limit our ability to contract. The fact R-CALF is partnering with an extremist organization, to support GIPSA's proposed rule, that wants to regulate us out of business is frightening and makes me wonder what the desired outcome really is. Why would Food and Water Watch want to interfere with how I market my cattle? Their goal far surpasses marketing."

http://www.drovers.com/news_editorial.asp?pgID=675&ed_id=7794

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