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August 18, 2025

Jamieson Greer
United States Trade Representative
Office of the United States Trade Representative
600 17th Street NW
Washington, DC 20508

Submitted Via USTR portal: [https:// comments.ustr.gov/s/](https://comments.ustr.gov/s/)

Re: R-CALF USA's Written Comments in Docket No. USTR-2025-0043| Initiation of Section 301 Investigation: Brazil's Acts, Policies, and Practices Related to Digital Trade and Electronic Payment Services; Unfair, Preferential Tariffs; Anti-Corruption Enforcement; Intellectual Property Protection; Ethanol Market Access; and Illegal Deforestation; Hearing; and Request for Public Comments

Dear Ambassador Greer:

The Ranchers-Cattlemen Action Legal Fund, United Stockgrowers of America (R-CALF USA) appreciates this opportunity to submit written comments to the Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) regarding the above captioned docket, published at 90. Fed. Reg., 34,069-072 (July 18, 2025).

Estimated to have generated over \$100 billion in cash receipts during each of the past two years,¹ the U.S. live cattle industry is the largest single segment of American agriculture. Another measure of the U.S. live cattle industry's importance to Rural America is that close to 40 percent of America's farms are involved in raising cattle.²

R-CALF USA is the largest trade association that exclusively represents United States cattle farmers and ranchers within the multi-segmented beef supply chain. Its thousands of members are located in 43 states and include cow-calf operators, cattle backgrounders and stockers, and feedlot owners.

¹ See Farm Income and Wealth Statistics - Cash receipts by commodity, USDA ERS, available at [Farm Income and Wealth Statistics - Cash receipts by commodity](#).

² See Table 1. Historical Highlights: 2022 and Earlier Census Years, 2022 Census of Agriculture (stating there are ~1.9 million farms and ~732,000 farms have cattle and calves, representing ~38.5%), available at [st99_1_001_001.pdf](#).

Unlike many, if not most, of the agricultural organizations that purport to represent farmers and ranchers, and who are resisting your efforts and the efforts of President Trump to substantively reform trade policy, R-CALF USA strongly favors such reforms.

The difference between R-CALF USA and the many other agricultural organizations that support the status quo is that those other organizations attempt to represent not just the production sectors of their respective industries, but also the processing sectors as well, including foreign processors with global subsidiaries that have no particular loyalty to the United States or to its independent cattle producers.³

The United States is the world's largest beef consuming nation and for decades its cattle industry has been incapable of maintaining a national herd size needed to produce sufficient amounts of beef to satisfy domestic demand. Consequently, for decades the U.S. has been growing its dependency on imports to make up for the industry's underproduction.

Unfortunately, this reliance on imports to satisfy domestic demand has resulted in a contraction of the U.S. cattle industry. Imported cattle and beef are now a direct substitute for domestic cattle and beef. Because those imported substitutes cost less and are undifferentiated, there are little to no incentives for the U.S. cattle industry to grow or even to continually attract new entrants. Instead, any and all economic opportunities that might lead to expanding the U.S. cattle industry or that might attract a younger generation are stymied by the availability of growing volumes of cheaper, undifferentiated imported product.

A. Brazilian Beef Imports Are Weakening America's Beef Supply Chain

With respect to the subject matter of this docket, though Brazil is subject to a tariff rate quota (TRQ) of 65,005 metric tons, which it shares with other countries,⁴ imports of Brazilian beef have exploded in recent years, far exceeding the TRQ. Brazilian beef imports increased from 74,057 metric tons (carcass weight, 1,000 lbs.) in 2019 to 313,261 metric tons (carcass weight, 1,000 lbs.) in 2024.⁵ Media reports indicate that Brazil met its TRQ limit within the first 17 days of 2025,⁶ and from January to June, 2025, Brazilian beef imports had already reached 336,373 metric tons (carcass weight, 1,000 lbs.), a five-fold increase over its tariff rate quota.⁷

Since 2019, Brazil persistently exceeded its TRQ and, consequently, global importers have economically paid the over-quota tariff rate of 26.4% on Brazil's excessive beef shipments.⁸ To the extent the U.S. imposed the TRQ to regulate the quantity of Brazilian beef imports for the purpose of preventing Brazilian imports from undercutting the domestic beef supply chain, both the TRQ and the over-quota tariff rate of 26.4% are manifestly inadequate.

³ See, e.g., *Under Siege: The U.S. Live Cattle Industry*, Bill Bullard, 58 S.D.L. Rev. 560(2013), at 569, available at ["Under Siege: The U.S. Live Cattle Industry"](#).

⁴ See QB 25 – 201 2025 Beef, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, available at [QB 25 – 201 2025 Beef | U.S. Customs and Border Protection](#)

⁵ See Beef and veal: annual and cumulative year-to-date U.S. trade (carcass weight, 1,000 pounds), USDA ERS, available at [BeefVeal_YearlyFull.xlsx](#).

⁶ US Tariffs on Brazilian Imports Spark Cross-Commodity Concerns, Expana, July 10, 2025, available at [US Tariffs on Brazilian Imports Spark Cross-Commodity Concerns](#).

⁷ See *supra*, note 4.

⁸ See *Reviewing the Tariff-Rate Quotas for U.S. Beef Imports*, USDA FAS, Dec. 1, 2022, at available at [Reviewing the Tariff-Rate Quotas for U.S. Beef Imports | USDA Foreign Agricultural Service](#).

Indeed, the latest U.S. agriculture census reveals a correlation between the weakening of the domestic beef supply chain – in terms of the loss of farmers and ranchers, beef cows, and the number of feedlots – and the surge in Brazilian beef imports. As Brazilian imports surged in the late 2010s, from 2017 through 2022 nearly 107,000 additional domestic beef cattle operations and nearly 5,000 additional domestic feedlots ceased operations.⁹ In addition, the U.S. beef cow herd declined by over 2.5 million head of cows.¹⁰ America's dependency on beef imports has increased over the past few decades and by 2024, approximately 22% of beef consumed in America was imported, a circumstance that threatens national security.¹¹

Brazilian beef imports are accelerating the ongoing contraction of the U.S. cattle industry by displacing domestic cattle producers, their cattle, and the number of intermediary marketing outlets (i.e., feedlots). This is weakening America's ability to be self-reliant in the production of such an important staple as beef.

B. Brazil has a Sordid Food Safety and Disease Reporting Record

Media reports abound regarding the Brazilian meat scandal know as Operation Weak Flesh. It reportedly involved dozens of Brazilian beef packers, including JBS S.A. and BRF S.A., that were subjects of a multi-year criminal investigation that in 2017 had found at least 40 cases of Brazilian food safety regulators who had accepted bribes to allow food processors to distribute adulterated food products.¹² The next year Brazilian police found that several Brazilian laboratories had falsified salmonella testing results.¹³

The USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service's (APHIS') National Veterinary Accreditation Program (NVAP) requires all accredited veterinarians to immediately report all diagnosed or suspected cases of communicable animal diseases or reportable foreign animal diseases such as bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) to protect the safety of the U.S. livestock herd and humans.¹⁴

The World Health Organization and the Office International des Epizooties (OIE) both require member countries to report notifiable diseases within 24 hours of all incidents that could be of

⁹ See Table 1 Historical Highlights: 2022 and Earlier Census Years, Census of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), 2022 Census Volume 1, Chapter 1: U.S. National Level Data, available at [st99_1_001_001.pdf](#); see also Table 13. Cattle and Calves-Sales: 2022 and 2017, Census of Agriculture, available at [st99_1_013_014.pdf](#).

¹⁰ See Table 1 Historical Highlights: 2022 and Earlier Census Years, Census of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), 2022 Census Volume 1, Chapter 1: U.S. National Level Data, available at [st99_1_001_001.pdf](#)

¹¹ See USDA ERS' Meat supply and disappearance tables, historical, available at [Livestock and Meat Domestic Data | Economic Research Service](#). The calculation for imported beef consumption is based on the total disappearance column (a proxy for consumption), and import volume was obtained from USDA Foreign Agriculture Service' Global Agricultural Trade System (GATS) database with live cattle imports converted to a beef equivalent based on annual U.S. carcass weights.

¹² See BRF, Brazilian government reach leniency deal, Meat+Poultry, Ryan McCarthy, Jan. 5, 2023, available at [BRF, Brazilian government reach leniency deal | MEAT+POULTRY](#).

¹³ See More fraud in Brazil food industry; labs falsified pathogen tests, Food Safety News, Catherine Huddle, March 8, 2018, available at [More fraud in Brazil food industry; labs falsified pathogen tests | Food Safety News](#).

¹⁴ See NVAP Reference Guide: Notifiable Diseases and Conditions, USDA APHIS, available at [NVAP Reference Guide: Notifiable Diseases and Conditions | Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service](#).

international concern for public health emergencies (WHO) and that are reportable diseases listed by the OIE, including BSE.¹⁵

Despite Brazil's duty to provide immediate notification (at least within 24 hours) of a suspected case of BSE, Brazil identified a suspected case of BSE in a cow that had died on December 18, 2010, but did not report the case until nearly two years later, on December 7, 2012.¹⁶ Brazil's failure to timely report BSE cases is chronic. Since 2012, Brazil has reported five additional cases of BSE, but none were timely reported: A suspected case identified on March 19, 2014, was not reported until May 2, 2014; a suspected case identified on April 5, 2019, was not reported until May 31, 2019; a suspected case identified on June 11, 2021, and another on June 25, 2021, were not reported until September 3, 2021; and a suspected case identified on January 18, 2023, was not reported until March 5, 2023.¹⁷

Brazil's documented history of corruption and its chronic failure to timely report suspected disease cases threatens the integrity of the U.S. beef supply, the viability of the U.S. cattle industry, and the health of Americans. It additionally highlights the inadequacy of the periodic audits conducted by the USDA of Brazilian beef packing companies that the U.S. relies upon to ensure the safety and wholesomeness of imported Brazilian beef.

For the foregoing reasons, R-CALF USA recommends the immediate termination of Brazilian beef imports. Brazilian beef imports should not be resumed until the U.S. conducts a thorough, probing investigation into Brazil's entire beef production and beef processing acts, policies, and practices. If Brazilian imports are to resume upon the conclusion of such an investigation, a finite tariff rate quota should be assigned to Brazil that allows the U.S. cattle industry to rebuild, expand, and encourage new entrants. Further, mandatory country-of-origin labeling on all beef products sold at retail should first be implemented to enable consumers to decide if they wish to purchase Brazilian beef. In the event of any additional food safety infractions in Brazil, country-of-origin labeling will facilitate the avoidance and recall of Brazilian beef in the domestic market thereby protecting the integrity of the domestic beef supply for Americans, including American cattle farmers and ranchers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bill Bullard", with a stylized, cursive script.

Bill Bullard, CEO

¹⁵ See Notification of animal and human diseases Global legal basis, OIE, available at [notification-EN.pdf](#).

¹⁶ See World Animal Health Information System, OIE, Report ID: IN_5666, Dec. 7, 2012, available at [WAHIS](#).

¹⁷ See Events Management, World Organization for Animal Health, World Animal Health Information System, available at [WAHIS](#).