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August 24, 2026

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

TRANSMITTED ELECTRONICALLY

Dear President Trump,

We, the undersigned national, state and county cattle associations, urge you to reconsider your proposal to allow an additional 300,000 metric tons of imported beef to enter the United States without over-quota tariffs for 90 days.

We share your concern that the beef supply chain is not functioning as it should, resulting in historically high beef prices for consumers. However, we believe the solution lies in addressing the beef supply chain rather than treating the symptoms of low domestic supplies and historically high beef prices.

The cattle side of the beef supply chain has been in a chronic state of contraction for decades, losing hundreds of thousands of cattle producers, millions of beef cows and tens of thousands of cattle feedlot operations. Alarmingly, this contraction continued even after domestic beef consumption began increasing rapidly after 2015.

During much of this period, the beef side of the supply chain, from packers to retailers, was earning record margins while the cattle herd was shrinking and retailers were charging record high prices for beef. This occurred even while domestic cattle prices were suppressed. Increased imports coincided with the beef packers' record margins up through 2021, and with the record margins retailers continue receiving today.

In recent years, in the face of incredibly strong beef demand and a severely reduced cattle herd, cattle prices began chasing retail beef prices higher. And while this would be expected to increase beef prices in proportion to increased cattle prices, the recent increase in cattle prices cannot explain the rapid surge in retail margins which began in 2022 and continues contributing to today's historically high beef prices.

When cattle prices began recovering in 2023 and then continued to increase, the expansion phase of the cattle cycle should have been triggered. But it was not. With imports at record levels, concentrated beef packers exercising market power against cattle producers, and retailers exercising market power over retail prices, American cattle producers have no confidence that their investment to expand the nation's herd would be met any differently than during the last herd expansion phase that started in 2014 and ended in 2018. Investments made to expand then were met with rapidly increasing imports and the unrestrained exercise of market power by concentrated beef packers and retailers, which drove cattle prices downward and caused the herd to liquidate.

This is the basis for our concern with the proposed import increase. It represents a doubling down of the same strategy that has caused and continues causing our cattle industry to contract while not addressing the concentrated beef packers' exercise of buying power to leverage down domestic cattle prices or the concentrated retailers' exercise of buying and selling power to continue maximizing their already record margins.

Rather than increasing imports, we respectfully recommend three immediate actions to meaningfully address the dysfunctional condition of our domestic beef supply chain:

1. **Restore mandatory country-of-origin labeling for beef** so consumers can choose to purchase either lower cost beef imports or the higher quality beef from animals born, raised, and slaughtered in the United States.
2. **Restore competition and price discovery in cattle markets** by preventing beef packers from acquiring cattle through unpriced forward (formula) contracts that do not establish a negotiated price.
3. **Implement phased-in import controls** to ensure that when domestic cattle producers invest again to expand the U.S. cattle herd, their investment will not be undercut by excessive imports.

We believe these recommended reforms will address the underlying problems within the entire beef supply chain by increasing competition and transparency while providing consumers with more competitive beef prices, not prices that are currently controlled by monopolistic beef packers and retailers.

We share your goal of providing American consumers with an abundant and affordable beef supply. We believe the best long-term path toward achieving that goal is rebuilding America's cattle-producing capacity and strengthening competition throughout the domestic beef supply chain.

Thank you for your consideration of our concerns and please contact any of us if we can be of further help in restoring national security by rebuilding our nation's beef supply chain.

Respectfully,

Bill Bullard
CEO, R-CALF USA
On behalf of R-CALF USA and the undersigned cattle associations

Buckeye Quality Beef Association (OH)
Calaveras County Cattleman's Association (CA)
Cattle Producers of Washington (WA)

Colorado Independent CattleGrowers Association (CO)
Independent Beef Association of North Dakota (ND)
Independent Cattlemen of Missouri (MO)
Independent Cattlemen of Wyoming (WY)
Oklahoma Independent Stockgrowers Association (OK)
South Dakota Stockgrowers Association (SD)
Southern Colorado Livestock Association (CO)
Southwestern Colorado Livestock Association (CO)
Stevens County Cattlemen's Association (WA)