

May 31, 2012

Attention: Agriculture Leg. Staff

United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator:

The 108 undersigned organizations are writing to strongly urge you to support an amendment to the 2012 Farm Bill to ban packer ownership of livestock. Senator Grassley (R-IA) intends to introduce the amendment on the Senate Floor during the Farm Bill debate.

The Packer Ban amendment would make it unlawful for a packer to own, feed, or control livestock intended for slaughter more than 14 days.

This provision has been a longstanding priority for the livestock producers of our country.

Fair, accessible, and competitive markets are essential for free enterprise to function properly in the U.S. livestock industry. Congress must ensure that the 2012 Farm Bill restores economic fairness, real competition, and equity in the food and farm system if we are to maintain economic viability in our small businesses. Currently, inadequate federal legislation and the lack of enforcement of antitrust measures already in place allow a handful of corporations to continue to consolidate market power, manipulate prices, and create anti-competitive market structures.

Mega-meatpackers such as Tyson, Cargill, JBS and Smithfield Foods use packer-owned livestock as a major tool for exerting unfair market power over farmers and ranchers. This practice fosters industrial livestock production and freezes independent farmers out of the markets. Packer ownership of livestock has been proven to artificially lower farmgate prices to farmers and ranchers while consumer food prices continue to rise.

By prohibiting direct ownership of livestock by major meatpackers, a ban on packer ownership would reduce the anticompetitive effects of captive supplies, which packers use to manipulate markets, and would help increase market access for America's independent producers who currently experience significant market-access restrictions due in large part to packer ownership of livestock.

We urge you to join Senators Grassley, Conrad, Harkin and Johnson in championing strong, competitive markets in the Farm Bill by supporting the Packer Ban amendment when it comes to the Senate Floor.

[Undersigned organizations attached.]

American Agriculture Movement
 American Federation of Govt. Employees Local 3354,
 St. Louis (MO)
 American Grassfed Association
 American Raw Milk Producers Pricing Association
 Ashtabula, Geauga, Lake Counties Farmers Union (OH)
 Buckeye Quality Beef Association (OH)
 California Dairy Campaign
 California Farmers Union
 California Food and Justice Coalition
 Campaign for Contract Agriculture Reform
 Campaign for Family Farms and The Environment
 Carolina Farm Stewardship Association
 Cattle Producers of Louisiana
 Cattle Producers of Washington
 Center for Rural Affairs
 Central Co-op (Seattle, WA)
 Citizens for Sanity.Com, Inc. (FL)
 City Rising Farm (Cleveland, OH)
 Colorado Independent CattleGrowers Association
 Community Food Security Coalition
 Contract Poultry Growers Association of the Virginias
 The Cornucopia Institute
 Crawford Stewardship Project (WI)
 Dakota Rural Action
 Ecological Farming Association
 Endangered Habitats League
 Family Farm Defenders
 Farm Aid
 Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance
 Farmworker Association of Florida
 Federation of Southern Cooperatives
 Food & Water Watch
 Food for Maine's Future
 Food System Economic Partnership (FSEP)
 GardenShare (NY)
 Grassroots International
 Greenleaf (CO)
 Government Accountability Project
 Hmong National Development, Inc.
 Illinois Stewardship Alliance
 Independent Beef Association of North Dakota
 (I-BAND)
 Independent Cattlemen of Nebraska
 Independent Cattlemen of Wyoming
 Indian Nations Conservation Alliance
 Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy
 Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement
 Iowa Environmental Council
 Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future
 Kansas Cattlemen's Association
 Land Stewardship Project
 Live Real (MA)
 Michael Fields Agricultural Institute (WI)
 Michigan Land Trustees
 Mississippi Association of Cooperatives
 Missouri Farmers Union
 Missouri Rural Crisis Center
 Minnesota Farmers Union
 Mvskoke Food Sovereignty Initiative (OK)
 National Catholic Rural Life Conference
 National Family Farm Coalition
 National Farmers Organization
 National Farmers Union
 National Hmong American Farmers Inc.
 National Latino Farmers & Ranchers Trade Association
 National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition
 National Young Farmers Coalition
 Nebraska Sustainable Agriculture Society
 Nebraska Wildlife Federation
 Nevada Live Stock Association
 New England Farmers Union
 North Carolina Association of Black Lawyers Land Loss
 Prevention Project
 Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance
 Northeast Organic Farming Association - Interstate
 Council (NOFA-IC)
 Northeast Organic Farming Association –
 New Hampshire
 Northern Plains Resource Council
 Northwest Atlantic Marine Alliance (MA)
 Northwest Farm Bill Action Group (WA)
 Ohio Ecological Food & Farm Association
 Ohio Farmers Union
 Oregon Livestock Producers Association
 Oregon Rural Action
 Organization of Competitive Markets
 Organizacion en California de Lideres Campesinas, Inc.
 Partnership for Earth Spirituality
 PCC Natural Markets (Seattle, WA)
 Peach Bottom Concerned Citizens Group
 Pew Environment Group
 Powder River Basin Resource Council
 ProgressOhio
 Progressive Agriculture (PA)
 R-CALF USA
 Rocky Mountain Farmers Union
 Rural Advancement Foundation International—USA
 Rural Coalition/Coalición Rural
 Rural Development Leadership Network (NY)
 Rural Vermont
 Slow Food Nebraska
 Slow Food USA
 South Dakota Stockgrowers Association
 Sustain Rural Wisconsin Network
 Tilth Producers of Washington
 Union of Concerned Scientists
 Virginia Association for Biological Farming
 Western Organization of Resource Councils
 WhyHunger
 Wisconsin Farmers Union
 Women, Food and Agriculture Network
 World Farmers