

January 27, 2014

Dear Farm Bill Conferee:

The undersigned 150 farm, consumer, faith and rural organizations are writing to reiterate our strong objections to the inclusion of any provisions in the final Farm Bill to limit the authority of the Secretary of Agriculture to enforce the Packers and Stockyards Act.

The Packers and Stockyards Act is one of the most important federal statutes for our nation's livestock and poultry farmers and ranchers. This is because it prohibits meatpackers and poultry companies from using their market power to subject farmers and ranchers to anticompetitive, deceptive, fraudulent and abusive business practices.

During the 2008 Farm Bill process, Congress heard extensively from livestock and poultry producers, farmer organizations, and consumer groups about anti-competitive and unfair business practices that unfortunately have become commonplace in the livestock and poultry sectors of our agricultural economy.

As a result, the final 2008 Farm Bill included provisions to require USDA to write regulations under the Packers and Stockyards Act to address the most egregious of these practices and to define certain terms in the statute. USDA published a proposed rule and received over 60,000 comments, the majority of which strongly supported many aspects of the proposed rule. But the livestock and poultry companies whose practices were examined by the 2008 Farm Bill provisions and/or USDA's implementing regulations didn't appreciate that scrutiny, and launched a multi-year campaign to urge Congress prohibit the Secretary from taking any further action to address these concerns.

In response to the efforts of meatpackers and poultry companies to insulate themselves from USDA scrutiny, the House Farm Bill includes a provision (Section 12102) to impose severe limitations on the authority of the Secretary of Agriculture to enforce the Packers and Stockyards Act. The Senate has objected to the inclusion of such limitations in the Farm Bill.

It is our hope that the 2014 Farm Bill will do nothing to interfere with the ability of farmers and ranchers to prosper in a business environment based on mutual cooperation and fair business standards, not fear, coercion and retaliation.

We therefore strongly urge all Farm Bill Conferees to oppose the inclusion of any language in the final Farm Bill to limit the authority of the Secretary of Agriculture to enforce the Packers and Stockyards Act.

Sincerely,

Agricultural Missions, Inc. (NY)
Alabama Contract Poultry Growers
Association
Alabama Sustainable Agriculture Network
Alternative Energy Resources Organization
(MT)
American Agriculture Movement
American Federation of Government
Employees (AFL-CIO), Local 3354,
USDA-St. Louis
American Grassfed Association
Ashtabula, Geauga, Lake County (OH)
Farmers' Union
Berks (PA) Gas Truth
BioRegional Strategies (NM)
Brooklyn Food Coalition (NY)
Buckeye Quality Beef Association (OH)
Bull Mountain Land Alliance (MT)
California Dairy Campaign
California Farmers Union
California Institute for Rural Studies
Campaign for Contract Agriculture Reform
Campaign for Family Farms and the
Environment
Caney Fork Headwaters Association (TN)
Carolina Farm Stewardship Association
(NC)
Catholic Charities of Central and Northern
Missouri--Rural Life
Cattle Producers of Louisiana
Cattle Producers of Washington
Center for Food Safety
Center for Media and Democracy's Food
Rights Network
Center for Rural Affairs
Central Co-op (WA)
Church Women United of New York State
Citizen Action Coalition of Indiana
Citizens for Sanity.Com, Inc. (FL)
Colorado Independent CattleGrowers
Association
Community Alliance for Global Justice (WA)
Community Food & Agriculture Coalition
(MT)
Community Food and Justice Coalition (CA)
Contract Poultry Growers Association of the
Virginias
The Cornucopia Institute
Cornucopia Network NJ/TN Chapter
Cumberland Countians for Peace & Justice

(TN)
Dakota Resource Council
Dakota Rural Action
East New York Farms!/United Community
Centers
Ecological Farming Association (CA)
Endangered Habitats League (CA)
Equal Exchange
Family Farm Defenders (WI)
Farm Aid
Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance
Farmworker Association of Florida
Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land
Assistance Fund
Florida Certified Organic Growers and
Consumers, Inc.
Food & Water Watch
Food Chain Workers Alliance
Food Democracy Now!
Food First
Georgia Organics
Grassroots International
Hmong National Development, Inc.
Idaho Organization of Resource Councils
Illinois Stewardship Alliance
Independent Beef Association of North
Dakota (I-BAND)
Independent Cattlemen of Nebraska
Independent Cattlemen of Wyoming
Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy
International Texas Longhorn Association
Intertribal Agriculture Council
Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement
Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future
(MD)
Kansas Cattlemen's Association
Kansas Rural Center
Land Loss Prevention Project
Land Stewardship Project (MN)
Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners
Association (MOFGA)
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
Michael Fields Agricultural Institute (WI)
Michigan Farmers Union
Michigan Land Trustees
Midwest Environmental Advocates (WI)
Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education
Service
Mississippi Assoc. of Cooperatives
Missouri Farmers Union

Missouri Rural Crisis Center	Oregon Rural Action
Missouri's Best Beef Cooperative	Organic Farmers' Agency for Relationship Marketing (OFARM)
Montana Farmers Union	Organic Seed Alliance
Murray County (OK) Independent Cattlemen's Association	Organization for Competitive Markets
Mvskoke Food Sovereignty Initiative (OK)	Peach Bottom Concerned Citizens Group (PBCCG) (PA)
National Catholic Rural Life Conference	Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture
National Cooperative Grocers Association (NCGA)	Pesticide Action Network North America
National Family Farm Coalition	Poultry Partners (AR)
National Farmers Organization	Powder River Basin Resource Council (WY)
National Farmers Union	Provender Alliance (OR)
National Grange	R-CALF USA
National Organic Coalition	Rocky Mountain Farmers Union
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition	Roots of Change
National Women Involved in Farm Economics	Rural Advancement Foundation International -- USA
National Young Farmers Coalition	Rural Coalition/Coalición Rural
Nature Abounds (PA)	Rural Development Leadership Network (NY)
Nebraska Farmers Union	Rural Vermont
Nebraska Sustainable Agriculture Society	Simply Living (OH)
Nebraska Women Involved in Farm Economics	Slow Food California
Network for Environmental & Economic Responsibility of United Church of Christ	Slow Food USA
Nevada Live Stock Association	South Dakota Farmers Union
New England Farmers Union	South Dakota Stockgrowers Association
North Dakota Farmers Union	Southern Sustainable Agriculture Working Group
Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance	Tilth Producers of Washington
Northeast Organic Farming Assoc. -- MA	United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society
Northeast Organic Farming Assoc. -- NH	Virginia Association for Biological Farming
Northeast Organic Farming Assoc. -- VT	Weiser River Resource Council (ID)
Northeast Organic Farming Association, Interstate Council	Western Colorado Congress
Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Working Group	Western Organization of Resource Councils (WORC)
Northern Plains Resource Council (MT)	Western Sustainable Agriculture Working Group
Northern Wisconsin Beef Producers	WhyHunger
Northwest Atlantic Marine Alliance (MA)	Williams County Alliance (OH)
Northwest Farm Bill Action Group	Women Involved in Farm Economics (WIFE)
Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association	Women, Food and Agriculture Network
Ohio Environmental Stewardship Alliance	
Ohio Farmers Union	