May 31, 2012

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 Cattle Growers 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
Myskoke 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