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Farmers & Ranchers Seek To Defend Packers & Stockyards Act Rules In Federal Court

For decades, Big Ag corporations have leveraged illegal practices to control livestock markets, squeeze producers and gouge consumers; industry lawsuit seeks to greenlight abuse

Today, Food & Water Watch [filed a motion](#) to intervene in a federal lawsuit on behalf of Ranchers Cattlemen Action Legal Fund United Stockgrowers of America, Western Organization of Resource Councils, Latino Farmer and Ranchers International, and the Alabama Contract Poultry Growers Association to defend new commonsense protections safeguarding farmers and ranchers from meatpacker discrimination, retaliation, and deception under the Packers & Stockyards Act. The lawsuit, filed by the National Chicken Council, Meat Institute, and other industry groups, seeks to strike down these protections to greenlight continued abuse.

“Over 100 years ago, Congress realized that U.S. producers had no recourse when subjected to marketing abuses by highly concentrated meatpackers,” said **Bill Bullard of Ranchers Cattlemen Action Legal Fund United Stockgrowers of America**. “Though conditions for producers have worsened since Congress passed the Packers and Stockyards Act of 1921 and hundreds of thousands of livestock producers have been forced to cease operations, this rule is a meaningful step taken by USDA to remedy this untenable situation. We view it as critical to the livelihoods of our nation’s remaining livestock producers.”

Intervenors seek to defend the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Packers & Stockyards Act [Inclusive Competition and Market Integrity Rule](#) issued in 2024, which protects livestock and poultry producers by spelling out certain types of discriminatory, retaliatory, and deceptive practices that violate the law. The Rule provides much needed clarity on what the law prohibits and reflects precisely how the Packers & Stockyards Act was designed to protect America’s family farmers and ranchers.

“America owes our independent ranchers and farmers a fair playing field. That’s exactly what Congress intended to safeguard when it enacted the Packers and Stockyards Act over a hundred years ago,” said **Food & Water Watch Staff Attorney Tyler Lobdell**. “The world’s biggest meat and poultry companies have spent decades taking advantage of farmers and ranchers, all to enrich their coffers and consolidate control over our food system. Now, they are asking the court to greenlight continued mistreatment. We’re not going to let that happen without a fight.”

“What’s at stake here is the rights of ranchers to speak up against bad actors in the market. This rule would protect ranchers from retaliation and discrimination from packers when they fight for fair treatment, even if they simply make a public comment in support of a rule like this one, or

sign onto a legal defense like in this very case,” said **Dena Hoff, a farmer from Glendive, Montana, and WORC board member.** “We have a responsibility to our neighbors, independent ranchers who are subject to deception, retaliation, and discrimination from the 'Big 4' packers who up until now have acted as if they are above the law. We are excited to join this case and defend these important rules.”

For decades, a handful of corporations have leveraged illegal practices to control livestock markets, squeeze producers and gouge consumers. Today, just four corporations control [81% of the beef market and 65% of the pork market](#); while virtually all ([99.5%](#)) of broiler poultry production value occurs under contracts. While prices skyrocket, farmers and ranchers receive only [15.9 cents](#) of every food dollar spent.

In February 2025, the Court granted a Department of Justice request to stay court proceedings, while the Trump Administration decides whether to defend the Rule.

The intervenors are represented by Food & Water Watch and Hilder & Associates. The case is *National Chicken Council et al. v. Rollins et al.*, No. 4:24-cv-03786 (S.D. Tex.).

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