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102 Groups Urge Congress to Choose Farmers over Transnational Corporations in Ag Appropriations Bill

The letter calls out an appropriations policy rider as an “unacceptable attack” on the USDA’s ability to ensure fair competition for farmers.

WASHINGTON, D.C. — 102 farmer, rancher, consumer, labor, farmworker, and faith organizations sent a [letter](#) urging the U.S. House Committee on Appropriations to remove a policy rider from its FY24 Agriculture Appropriations bill when it is considered during Wednesday’s markup. The rider would prevent USDA from writing, preparing, or publishing proposed rules to strengthen the Packers and Stockyards Act, a landmark law intended to protect farmers and ranchers from abusive and anti-competitive behavior.

The proposed rules are particularly crucial now, the [letter](#) states, “because of the highly concentrated and vertically integrated nature of the livestock and poultry industries.” Such concentration gives “dominant meatpacking corporations considerable market power and [enables] their use of unfair contracting provisions and retaliatory practices that are abusive and harmful to family farmers.”

The [letter](#) provides examples of the harmful and anticompetitive behavior the rules would prevent: “Whether it be a contract poultry grower whose contract is abruptly terminated when they resist taking on overwhelming debt for corporate-mandated facility upgrades, a cattle producer who loses money year after year because the only packer in their market can manipulate the price of beef, or a livestock producer who experiences retaliation after they

speak up against a corporation's unfair practices, farmers and ranchers are being driven out of business and off their land across this nation."

The groups conclude by calling on members of the Committee to "stand with American farmers and ranchers" by rejecting the rider, which they describe as "an unacceptable attack on the ability of the Department of Agriculture to do its job: protecting American farmers and ranchers and ensuring fair and competitive markets."

Led by the Campaign for Contract Agriculture Reform, Campaign for Family Farms and the Environment, Farm Action, National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, Rural Advancement Foundation International-USA, National Farmers Union, and the Western Organization of Resource Councils, the [letter](#) lists 102 signing organizations.

"This is a simple test for any member of this Congressional committee. Either you stand with America's family farmers and ranchers or you throw us under the bus to prop up a corrupt system that is rigged to generate more power for a cabal of multinational corporations," **said Gilles Stockton, a Grass Range, MT rancher and spokesperson for Northern Plains Resource Council.** "In 1921, Congress had the courage to address a monopoly that was exploiting consumers and producers alike. Today's cartel is more concentrated and more corrupt. We need to reform this broken system, and we need leaders with the courage and integrity to stand up for America's ranchers and consumers."

"As a cattle producer It's really frustrating when DC plays games like this. The Packers and Stockyards Act explicitly states that the USDA has the authority to enforce the law and to protect the producers. Packer lobbyists and their allies are trying to kneecap the progress we've made by using congress to defund the USDA and evade accountability for their non competitive business practices." **Said Donald Nelson from Keene North Dakota, A rancher and spokesperson for Dakota Resource Council.** "Packers need to be held accountable and the USDA needs to be properly funded and given the power to enforce the laws we have in place."

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[The Western Organization of Resource Councils \(WORC\)](#) is a network of nine grassroots organizations in seven Western states with 19,935 members, many of them ranchers and farmers committed to common-sense reform in agriculture, oil and gas development, coal mine reclamation, and rural economic development. Headquartered in Billings, Mont., WORC also has an office in Washington, D.C.

The Campaign for Contract Agriculture Reform (CCAR) is a national alliance of organizations working to provide a voice for farmers and ranchers involved in contract agriculture, as well as the communities in which they live.

The Campaign for Family Farms and the Environment is a coalition of state and national organizations working to change policies that promote consolidation in animal agriculture.

[Farm Action](#) is a farmer-led organization fighting corporate monopolies in agriculture. We envision a fair, sustainable, and healthy food system that empowers farmers, ranchers, and rural communities to feed their neighbors

[National Farmers Union](#) advocates on behalf of more than 220,000 American farm families and their communities. We envision a world in which farm families and their communities are respected, valued, and enjoy economic prosperity and social justice.

The [National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition](#) (NSAC) is a grassroots alliance that advocates for federal policy reform supporting the long-term social, economic, and environmental sustainability of agriculture, natural resources, and rural communities.

For the past 30 years, the [Rural Advancement Foundation International-USA](#) (RAFI-USA) challenges the root causes of unjust food systems, supporting and advocating for economically, racially, and ecologically just farm communities.