

September 9, 2013

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow  
Chairwoman  
Senate Agriculture Committee  
Washington D.C. 20510

The Honorable Frank Lucas  
Chairman  
House Agriculture Committee  
Washington D.C. 20515

The Honorable Thad Cochran  
Ranking Member  
Senate Agriculture Committee  
Washington D.C. 20510

The Honorable Collin Peterson  
Ranking Member  
House Agriculture Committee  
Washington D.C. 20515

Dear Agriculture Committee Leaders:

The undersigned farm, consumer, faith and rural organizations are writing to raise our strong objections to efforts to undermine the authority of the Secretary of Agriculture to enforce the Packers and Stockyards Act.

Section 11102 of the House version of the 2013 Farm Bill would greatly limit the authority of the Secretary to address deceptive, fraudulent, retaliatory, and anti-competitive practices by meatpackers and poultry companies in their dealings with livestock and poultry farmers and ranchers.

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 to address the most egregious of these practices and to define certain terms in the statute. Section 11102 of the House version of the 2013 Farm Bill would repeal the 2008 Farm Bill provision that addressed these concerns and place a broad limitation on USDA's authority to enforce many aspects of the Packers and Stockyards Act of 1921.

The impetus for Section 11102 is that the livestock and poultry companies whose practices were examined by the 2008 Farm Bill provisions and/or USDA's implementing regulations don't appreciate that scrutiny. Such practices include forcing poultry growers to make expensive upgrades to their chicken houses, at the same time as the companies controlling their contracts are secretly planning to shut down plants and cancel their contracts, leaving the farmers with massive stranded investments and facing bankruptcy, and leaving the taxpayers to pick up the tab.

These practices also include retaliating against farmers and ranchers for exercising their legal rights to communicate with their Members of Congress or USDA officials about the realities of certain livestock procurement practices as well as what is

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happening in their contract relationships with these companies. Section 11102 insulates, and prohibits USDA from addressing, these and other egregious practices in the livestock and poultry sectors.

Please reject Section 11102 of the House bill during the 2013 Farm Bill Conference and allow farmers and ranchers to prosper in a business environment based on mutual cooperation and fair business standards, not fear, coercion and retaliation.

Sincerely,

Agricultural Missions, Inc. (NY)	Cornucopia Network NJ/TN Chapter
Alabama Contract Poultry Growers Association	Cumberland Countians for Peace & Justice (TN)
Alabama Sustainable Agriculture Network	Dakota Resource Council
Alternative Energy Resources Organization (MT)	Dakota Rural Action
American Agriculture Movement	East New York Farms!/United Community Centers
American Federation of Government Employees (AFL-CIO), Local 3354, USDA-St. Louis	Ecological Farming Association (CA)
American Grassfed Association	Endangered Habitats League (CA)
Ashtabula, Geauga, Lake County (OH) Farmers' Union	Equal Exchange
Berks (PA) Gas Truth	Family Farm Defenders (WI)
Brooklyn Food Coalition (NY)	Farm Aid
Buckeye Quality Beef Association (OH)	Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance
California Dairy Campaign	Farmworker Association of Florida
California Farmers Union	Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund
California Institute for Rural Studies	Florida Certified Organic Growers and Consumers, Inc.
Campaign for Contract Agriculture Reform	Food & Water Watch
Campaign for Family Farms and the Environment	Food Chain Workers Alliance
Caney Fork Headwaters Association (TN)	Food Democracy Now!
Carolina Farm Stewardship Association (NC)	Food First
Catholic Charities of Central and Northern Missouri - Rural Life	Georgia Organics
Cattle Producers of Louisiana	Grassroots International
Cattle Producers of Washington	Hmong National Development, Inc.
Center for Food Safety	Idaho Organization of Resource Councils
Center for Media and Democracy's Food Rights Network	Illinois Stewardship Alliance
Center for Rural Affairs	Independent Beef Association of North Dakota (I-BAND)
Central Co-op (WA)	Independent Cattlemen of Nebraska
Church Women United of New York State	Independent Cattlemen of Wyoming
Citizen Action Coalition of Indiana	Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy
Citizens for Sanity.Com, Inc. (FL)	International Texas Longhorn Association
Colorado Independent CattleGrowers Association	Intertribal Agriculture Council
Community Alliance for Global Justice (WA)	Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement
Community Food & Agriculture Coalition (MT)	Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future (MD)
Community Food and Justice Coalition (CA)	Kansas Cattlemen's Association
Contract Poultry Growers Association of the Virginias	Kansas Rural Center
Cornucopia Institute	Land Loss Prevention Project
	Land Stewardship Project (MN)
	Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (MOFGA)
	Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

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Michigan Farmers Union	Northern Wisconsin Beef Producers
Michigan Land Trustees	Northwest Atlantic Marine Alliance (MA)
Midwest Environmental Advocates (WI)	Northwest Farm Bill Action Group
Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service	Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association
Mississippi Assoc. of Cooperatives	Ohio Environmental Stewardship Alliance
Missouri Farmers Union	Ohio 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	Pesticide Action Network North America
National Cooperative Grocers Association (NCGA)	Poultry Partners (AR)
National Family Farm Coalition	Powder River Basin Resource Council (WY)
National Farmers Organization	Provender Alliance (OR)
National Farmers Union	R-CALF USA
National Grange	Rocky Mountain Farmers Union
National Organic Coalition	Roots of Change
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition	Rural Advancement Foundation International - USA
National Women Involved in Farm Economics	Rural Coalition/Coalición Rural
National Young Farmers Coalition	Rural Development Leadership Network (NY)
Nature Abounds (PA)	Slow Food California
Nebraska Farmers Union	Slow Food USA
Nebraska Sustainable Agriculture Society	South Dakota Farmers Union
Nebraska Women Involved in Farm Economics	South Dakota Stockgrowers Association
Network for Environmental & Economic Responsibility of United Church of Christ	Southern Sustainable Agriculture Working Group
Nevada Live Stock Association	Tilth Producers of Washington
New England Farmers Union	Virginia Association for Biological Farming
North Dakota Farmers Union	Weiser River Resource Council (ID)
Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance	Western Colorado Congress
Northeast Organic Farming Assoc. - MA	Western Organization of Resource Councils (WORC)
Northeast Organic Farming Assoc. - NH	Western Sustainable Agriculture Working Group
Northeast Organic Farming Assoc. - VT	WhyHunger
Northeast Organic Farming Association, Interstate Council Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Working Group	Williams County Alliance (OH)
Northern Plains Resource Council (MT)	Women Involved in Farm Economics (WIFE)
	Women, Food and Agriculture Network