



June 19, 2007

The Honorable Max Baucus  
Chairman  
U.S. Senate Finance Committee  
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Baucus,

As President of the U.S. Cattlemen's Association, I write today to express our sincere gratitude for your efforts and request your assistance with a problematic issue. As a long-time champion of the United States cattle industry, the U.S. Cattlemen's Association urges you to continue to keep the domestic cattle industry strong and competitive.

As you know, Argentina is one of the world's largest beef producing countries, and its trade distorting activities are an issue of deep concern to U.S. ranchers. Argentina not only subsidizes its cattle producers, resulting in an unfair trade advantage, but the nation also has animal disease issues. With respect to these problematic issues, it is disconcerting to U.S. cattle producers that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is on track to liberalize its high health and safety standards.

At this time, USDA is considering changing its policies to recognize Argentina's plan to regionalize cattle and beef production, allowing beef to be imported into the U.S. from certain regions of Argentina. Currently, Argentina, along with neighboring Brazil, is rightfully blocked from exporting beef to the United States due to restrictions associated with foot and mouth disease (FMD).

Argentina has experienced continued issues with disease problems because it does not properly regulate cattle being brought into the country. Regionalization would enable Argentina to export beef to the United States despite its failures with disease eradication.

The U.S. Cattlemen's Association opposes this policy change, and I can assure you this is one of our top member-driven policy issues. It is interesting to note that out of the 44 comments submitted to the Administration on this topic, only two of those comments were supportive of the policy change.

With this in mind, the U.S. Cattlemen's Association has adopted the following policy initiative:

Whereas, the health of the U.S. cattle herd is vital to the profitability of independent cattle producers; and whereas, APHIS/USDA has proposed to declare regions of foreign countries with animal disease problems as "disease free"; Be it resolved, that the U.S. Cattlemen's Association opposes efforts by the government of the United States to allow regionalization of foreign countries with animal disease problems if such regionalization weakens animal health or food safety standards concerning importation of cattle or beef into the United States.

This policy addresses USDA's intent to liberalize health and safety standards, and is aimed at driving home the message to USDA that U.S. ranchers are unrelenting in their effort to protect the health of the domestic herd and we expect the agency to carry out that mission.

The U.S. Cattlemen's Association appreciates your work to defend and protect the domestic cattle industry, and ask that in your capacity as Chairman of the Senate Finance Committee that you strongly oppose any attempt to weaken oversight or regulation of trade with Argentina.

The U.S. Cattlemen's Association looks forward to working with you on this issue of critical importance.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jon Wooster". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Jon Wooster  
President