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May 10, 2013

The Honorable Frank Lucas
Chairman, House Committee on Agriculture

The Honorable Collin Peterson
Ranking Member, House Committee on Agriculture

Dear Chairman Lucas and Ranking Member Peterson;

As the Senate and House Committees on Agriculture begin mark-up of the 2012 Farm Bill next week, the United States Cattlemen's Association (USCA) offers the following comments.

As a national association of U.S. cattle producers, USCA strives to effectively voice and accurately represent the interests and priorities of the U.S. cattle industry. USCA's membership includes cow-calf operators, backgrounders, feedlot operators, county and state associations.

We appreciate the two committees' work last year on farm policy. Unfortunately, a final Farm Bill was not passed and signed into law in 2012. Following an extension of the 2008 Farm Bill and associated cuts to funding and program availability, it is of paramount concern that we pass a Farm Bill this year. In the face of a historic drought, livestock producers are still without disaster assistance and the assurances they need to continue their operations in the face of ongoing extreme weather events.

The Farm Bill must be passed this year to provide confidence and security to all sectors of the agriculture industry and the lending institutions supporting these sectors. It is for this reason that we urge you to pass a "clean bill". We urge you to dismiss controversial measures that are of no consequence to the overall bill, specifically any amendments dealing with Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) and the USDA's Grain Inspection Packers and Stockyards Administration (GIPSA).

Since the COOL law was passed by Congress in the 2008 Farm Bill it has undergone a WTO challenge and is currently being addressed by the Administration through the WTO process. COOL does not need any further legislative action and we ask that you refrain from including any language pertaining to this program within the bill.

The proposed revisions to the Packers and Stockyards Act of 1921, known as the GIPSA rule, authorized through the 2008 Farm Bill, have since undergone a contentious and divisive debate. For this reason, we ask that you refrain from including any language pertaining to the GIPSA program and further clarification of the proposed rule within this year's Farm Bill because the ensuing debate will only result in further divisiveness and will further delay much-needed farm policy.

It is with these points in mind that we urge you to pass a comprehensive Farm Bill next week. USCA appreciates the hard work done by committee members and staff on this legislation. We urge you to take a clear and straight path forward on this bill and refrain from including any item that may jeopardize the bill's ultimate success.

Thank you for your consideration, please do not hesitate to contact Jess Peterson in the USCA Washington, D.C. office at 202-870-3867 if you have further questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jon Wooster". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Jon Wooster
President, U.S. Cattlemen's Association

cc: Members of House Committee on Agriculture