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August 4, 2011

The Honorable Eric H. Holder, Jr.  
Attorney General of the United States  
U.S. Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20530

Dear Attorney General Holder:

In February, the U.S. Cattlemen's Association (USCA) participated in a forum with Assistant Attorney General Christine Varney, head of the U.S. Department of Justice's Antitrust Division. During this forum a USCA representative asked how the Department planned to follow up on its 2010 joint agricultural competition workshops with the United States Department of Agriculture.

America's ranchers were excited when those workshops took place and were hopeful that the meetings signaled a new desire to bring more competition to an industry where concentration has become far too commonplace. Unfortunately, little seems to have happened since the workshops. Competition within the agriculture industry is a top concern for U.S. cattlemen on at least two fronts.

First, the trend toward vertical integration within the beef market skews both price and choice for ranchers and consumers alike. Second, feed costs continue to escalate as corn and soybean supplies are strained. More production is needed. The control of the biotech seed market in the hands of a single supplier is stifling the innovation needed to bring yield enhancing technologies to market and we anticipate that this supplier may very well continue their control of the market through the licensing agreements even after its patent expires in 2014.

As Ms. Varney steps down from her post, I am concerned that there will be continued delays in addressing these important and timely issues. The Departments of Justice and Agriculture were widely applauded in rural America when they took on these issues in 2010. What plans do you have to build upon that excitement and bring these matters to a fair and equitable close in the near future?

Sincerely,

Jon Wooster  
President, U.S. Cattlemen Association

cc: USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack