



December 13, 2023

The Honorable Thomas J. Vilsack
Secretary of Agriculture
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

We write to express concern regarding the U.S. Department of Agriculture - Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service's final rule, *Importation of Fresh Beef From Paraguay*. While we are strong proponents of robust trade, we must do so in a manner that does not put our livestock producers at risk. We urge USDA to consider pausing the implementation of this rule until a more reliable risk assessment can be completed based on modern visits in Paraguay.

Foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) is a highly contagious viral disease affecting cattle, pigs, sheep, goats, and other cloven-hooved animals. FMD causes production loss and has serious impacts on international trade. FMD was eradicated in the United States in the 1920s, but it remains a threat. We appreciate the partnership that USDA has with our states and the work that is being done to prevent FMD and other foreign animal diseases from entering the country and negatively impacting the agriculture industry.

Paraguay has been affected by FMD in the past, which is why the importation of beef from Paraguay has historically been prohibited. The last visits USDA conducted to Paraguay were in December 2008 and July 2014. The information relied on is outdated.

The U.S. is the largest, most reliable producer and consumer of beef in the world. We have the reputation of providing the safest and most efficient beef production system in the world. A FMD outbreak in the U.S. would severely impact our nation's economy and the people behind the product: American farmers and ranchers and the businesses that bring beef from pasture to plate.

The U.S. should not open our markets to potentially unsafe actors and jeopardize the herd health and livelihood of American farmers until a more up-to-date risk assessment is conducted in Paraguay.

Thank you for your consideration.

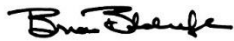
Sincerely,



Mike Naig
Iowa Secretary of Agriculture



Chris Chinn
Missouri Director of Agriculture



Brian Baldrige
Ohio Director of Agriculture



Doug Miyamoto
Wyoming Director of Agriculture



Blayne Arthur
Oklahoma Secretary of Agriculture



Sherry Vinton
Nebraska Director of Agriculture



Sid Miller
Texas Commissioner of Agriculture



Hunter Roberts
South Dakota Secretary of Agriculture