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PRESS RELEASE

**USDA Announces New Rules to Protect Farmers and Ranchers**

*USDA's new Packers and Stockyards Act proposal clarifies that individual farmers and ranchers are not required to prove that actions by powerful meatpackers harm the whole livestock industry.*

WASHINGTON, D.C. June 25, 2024 - The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) is taking a significant step towards ensuring fair markets for farmers and ranchers. Today, the USDA announced a proposed rule entitled "Fair and Competitive Livestock and Poultry Markets" which would provide much-needed clarity for courts nationwide, addressing the onerous "proof of harm to competition" standard if finalized. This standard imposed by some courts creates a burden on individual farmers and ranchers to prove that an anti-competitive practice that harmed them also harmed the whole industry, in order to hold meat packers accountable for violating the Packers and Stockyards Act. If finalized this new rule will help ensure fair treatment for independent cattle producers who have been harmed by multinational meatpacking corporations.

Members of the Western Organization of Resource Councils (WORC) support this action by the USDA. These new rules mark a pivotal moment in the fight for justice and fairness in the agricultural industry. For far too long, independent farmers and ranchers have faced burdensome barriers when seeking justice for harms caused by violations under the Packers and Stockyards Act.

"The USDA's announcement is a significant victory for independent farmers and ranchers," **said Liza Cuthbert-Millet, a rancher in Weston County, Wyoming, and a board member of Powder River Basin Resource Council.** "These rules will level the playing field and ensure that hardworking producers have a fair shot at justice when they've been wronged."

The new rules address a barrier to justice that has plagued the independent ranchers for years. Previously, farmers and ranchers were required to provide proof that any individual violation of the P&S Act by meatpacking corporations resulted in "market-wide harm to competition", making it nearly impossible to hold these companies accountable for their actions.

"No one wants to go to court. But when farmers and ranchers are wronged, they deserve a justice system that doesn't require them to jump through impossible hoops to be heard," **added Corey Hart, a rancher in Well County, North Dakota, and member of Dakota Resource**

**Council.** "These rules will provide the necessary clarity and support to ensure that our producers are treated fairly and that anti-competitive behavior is stamped out before it can cause further harm."

Ranchers and advocates are eager to review the proposed rule in full and participate in the comment period which will begin when the rule is added to the federal register and is expected to remain open for sixty days.

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*[The Western Organization of Resource Councils \(WORC\)](#) is a network of nine grassroots organizations in seven Western states with 22,750 members, many of them ranchers and farmers committed to common-sense reform in agriculture, oil and gas development, coal mine reclamation, and rural economic development. Headquartered in Billings, Montana, WORC also has an office in Washington, D.C.*

*[The Powder River Basin Resource Council](#), founded in 1973, is a family agriculture and conservation organization in Wyoming. Resource Council members are family farmers and ranchers and concerned citizens who are committed to conservation of our unique land, mineral, water, and clean air resources.*

*[Dakota Resource Council's](#) mission is to promote sustainable use of North Dakota's natural resources and family-owned and operated agriculture by building member-led local groups that empower people to influence the decision-making processes that affect their lives and communities.*