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July 15, 2020

The Honorable William Barr
Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20530

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Attorney General Barr and Secretary Perdue:

I write to request that the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) actively coordinate efforts in your ongoing investigations into allegations of market manipulation and anti-competitive behavior by meat packers in the cattle industry. It is essential that these investigations are comprehensive and include all components of the Packers and Stockyards Act (PSA).

As you know, four major meat packing companies control over 80 percent of the cattle industry and limit the capacity of the market to function properly. This has resulted in a significant divergence in prices between fed cattle and boxed beef and has exacerbated the market challenges from the COVID-19 pandemic faced by our ranchers. The PSA prohibits packers from engaging in any unfair, unjustly discriminatory, or deceptive practices, and it is critical that all aspects of that important law are enforced.

I appreciate your ongoing efforts into the matter, but have heard concerns about it being a narrow and limited investigation. It is imperative that DOJ and USDA work closely together and actively coordinate on this issue to ensure that any investigations are thorough and include potential violations of the PSA. Ranchers across the country are struggling with the multiple challenges facing the cattle industry and a prompt, thorough investigation is essential.

Thank you for your consideration and I look forward to continuing to work with DOJ and USDA on this important matter.

Sincerely,



STEVE DAINES
United States Senator