

2021 Rocky Mountain Farmers Union Proposed Special Order of Business

Consolidation in the Meat Industry

Whereas: the meat processing industry in the United States has been dramatically consolidated in the hands of a small number of large corporations over the past several decades. The onset of COVID-19 has elevated this serious issue to the level of national emergency with dire stakes for many producers, consumers, and frontline workers in meat processing plants. Access to equitable meat processing is a serious problem for American farmers and ranchers and has been for decades.

Whereas: concentration results in the potential for price-fixing and the exploitation of farmers and ranchers throughout the country. This leaves producers and U.S. consumers extremely vulnerable to disruptions in the supply chain resulting from meat packing plant closures. It also threatens national food security by allowing foreign corporations often backed by foreign governments, to control a large portion of our nation's meat supply.

Whereas: many small and mid-sized processors have closed because of regulatory and market pressures, limiting market competition, consumers access to local meats, resulting in concentration of the meat packing industry, which allows the few meat processors to control over 80 percent of the market.

Whereas: concentration of the meat packing industry has led to serious workforce problems (amplified by COVID-19) and the endangerment of workers. This disproportionately impacts already marginalized groups of immigrants, refugees, and people of color. This includes lack of personal protective equipment, adequate spacing for line workers, qualified labor pool, access to healthcare, and absence of whistleblower protection.

Therefore, be it Resolved: we call on Congress and the Executive Branch, including DOJ, USDA, ETC., to take immediate and appropriate action to enforce anti-trust laws, break up the large meat packing industry, and put the interests of American consumers, farmers and ranchers first, while protecting the people we depend upon to process our meat.

Therefore, be it Further Resolved: we support all efforts to immediately expand processing options for the benefit of America's consumers, farmer, and ranchers. This includes:

- Options for State Inspected meats for interstate and intrastate commerce.
- Support of the RAMP UP Act and Strengthening Local Processing Act.
- Support to expand the Talmadge-Aiken Act.
- Scaling of federal and state regulations based on company size.
- Support for expanding meat processing programs to include marginalized communities.