



NATIONAL AFFAIRS

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President Trump Announces Intentions to Increase Beef Imports While USDA Releases Plan to Fortify the Beef Industry

Over the weekend, President Trump signaled his intention to move forward with increasing beef imports. This news was followed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) release of a white paper on Wednesday detailing plans to "fortify the beef industry." Those plans include: opening more lands for grazing; increasing the number of processing plants and locating them around the country rather than being centralized in one region; and building domestic and international demand in an effort to ensure long-term profitability for cattlemen and lower prices for consumers. The plan released by USDA did not mention increasing imports. When word of the intention to increase imports came over the weekend, it was met with concern among many in the cattle industry. Given the current farm economy with low crop prices, decreased yields in many parts of the country, increased labor and input prices, beef cattle prices are one of the few bright spots for farmers, especially Kentucky farmers.

Kentucky Farm Bureau President Eddie Melton made the following statement: "Kentucky farmers, like many farmers across the country, are facing one of the most challenging agriculture economies in recent memory. Inflation has hit every industry and household in America. We understand the difficulties facing American consumers in grocery stores because we, too, are consumers. With ongoing health concerns, such as foot and mouth disease (FMD) and New World screwworm, we are concerned about the potential impact increased imports could have on U.S. herds. In a time when beef cattle prices are one of the few things that will allow many farmers to break even this year, increased imports could cause long-term damage to the U.S. cattle market while not solving the problem inflation created."

On Wednesday, American Farm Bureau Federation President Zippy Duvall issued a statement concerning the Administration's intent to increase beef imports. In President Duvall's statement, he acknowledged the costs faced by consumers, while also emphasizing the stark reality faced by farmers. Further, he urged the administration to consider the impact increasing imports could have on the American market – noting that while the move might help consumer prices in the short-term, it could have a negative impact on the U.S. cattlemen's ability to rebuild a resilient American herd.

To read USDA's beef industry plan, click [here](#).

To read President Duvall's full statement, click [here](#).