



TEXAS AND SOUTHWESTERN CATTLE RAISERS ASSOCIATION

...protecting the stewards of land and livestock in the Southwest

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**Testimony
Mr. Joe Parker, Jr.
United States House of Representatives
Committee on Agriculture
May 17, 2010
Lubbock, Texas**

Chairman Peterson, Ranking Member Lucas, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to present the Texas cattle industry's perspective on the 2012 Farm Bill. My name is Joe Parker, Jr. and I am a beef cattle producer from Byers, Texas. I also serve as First Vice President of the Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association (TSCRA).

TSCRA is the largest and oldest livestock association in Texas. With more than 15,000 beef cattle producers, ranching families and businesses that manage approximately 4 million head of cattle on 51.5 million acres of range and pasture land, TSCRA members have a vested stake in the outcome of this legislation.

Texas ranchers are dependent upon this nation's agricultural system and infrastructure to raise, feed, transport, and market our cattle in order to provide safe and affordable beef for America's table; and as such, we are interested in seeing the cattle industry remain healthy and viable. It is not in ranchers' best interest for the government to implement policy that sets prices; underwrites inefficient production; or manipulates domestic supply, demand, cost, or price.

Natural Resource and Conservation Policy

TSCRA supports a Farm Bill that will enhance the individual's right of free choice in land use, soil conservation, water conservation, energy use, and development utilizing working lands conservation methods that are based on sound science and economics. State laws and individual rights should be preeminent in the use of water and other natural resources.

To accomplish our priorities we strongly support eliminating overlap and/or redundancy in current programs and improving efficiency of existing programs. We also support the technical assistance ranchers receive on the ground from Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

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Marketing Policy

Federal agricultural policy should be based on a free, private enterprise, competitive market system. We support a rancher's ability to market cattle however, whenever, and to whomever.

Federal agricultural policy should not be changed to guarantee a profit, restrict the operation of the competitive marketplace, or dictate who can or cannot own cattle.

Private enterprise alternatives in marketing and risk management should be developed and encouraged as the preferred alternative to government programs.

Commodity Programs Policy

While the long term goal of federal agricultural policy should be to promote a free market and enterprise and maintain a viable agricultural industry and economy in the United States, it is essential to recognize that U.S. ranchers compete in a global marketplace. In this global market, U.S. ranchers face competition from foreign producers who benefit from an incredibly complex mix of subsidies, tariffs, and state trading enterprises, as well as a broad range of other devices to deny market access to U.S. goods. In addition, many of these ranchers are not held to the same standards of regulatory compliance as U.S. ranchers and, thus, enjoy a significant cost advantage.

Any government programs which would have a substantial negative effect on cattlemen need to be opposed and prevented.

Any commodity program must include thorough consideration of the impact of subsidies and guarantees for given commodities on other commodity sectors and on domestic and foreign markets before the program is adopted. Recognizing the high degree of government intervention in agriculture and the potential economic disruption of an immediate end to commodity programs, TSCRA will support a transition or phase-out period for programs that may be eliminated.

It is not in the best interest of U.S. ranchers for government to set prices, underwrite inefficient production, or manipulate domestic supply, demand, cost and/or price.

TSCRA will strongly oppose direct cash payments to any segment of the livestock industry for the purpose of offsetting low market prices.

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Nutrition Programs

USDA should maintain the role of establishing the human nutrition policy for the federal government and providing proper human nutrition, food security, research, and education for America.

Credit Programs

Federal agricultural policy should encourage the availability of capital to ranchers at competitive rates in order to maintain a healthy business environment. This will result in the continued viability of U.S. ranching operations.

Trade Policy

Ninety-six percent of the world's consumers reside outside U.S. borders. We recognize that the growth and profitability of the U.S. cattle and beef industry is closely tied to our ability to market our products to those consumers. We support international trade policies that aggressively pursue expanded market access for U.S. beef, enforce trade agreements that are based on internationally recognized standards and guidelines, and hold our trading partners accountable for their international trade commitments.

We support the modification of market promotion programs to meet current and future marketing trends and opportunities in worldwide beef trade.

Research Funding

Research on animal diseases and pests, economics, production practices, nutrition, food safety, environmental impacts, and the impact of environmentally sensitive lands and species on agricultural operations is a critical component in advancing animal agriculture. Increased investment in this type of research is vital to the security and viability of our agricultural industry and food supply.

Energy Policy

Ranchers recognize the value and need for growth of conventional and renewable energy. However, many of these expanded and new energy sources impact the market, land, water, and profitability of ranchers. Ranchers would like the ability to monitor and evaluate any energy source that impacts the cattle industry and/or is based on agricultural commodities, waste, and/or byproducts to determine their effects on the industry. Energy policies should be supported by market demand, not federal subsidies. In addition, the cattle industry will continue to oppose putting food and fuel in competition with each other.

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Animal Activism

Animal agriculture is based on the humane care for cattle, horses, and other livestock. The Farm Bill should not be a platform for extremist organizations to push their anti-meat and/or anti-agriculture agendas.

Animal Health

As the U.S. imports and exports more agricultural commodities, the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) should be more robust in its activities to protect U.S. agricultural producers from foreign animal diseases and pests. All APHIS activities and responsibilities should remain under USDA oversight and not other federal agencies.

We appreciate the opportunity to work together on a comprehensive Farm Bill and appreciate your work on these issues. Please contact us if we can assist you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joe Parker, Jr.", with a stylized, cursive script.

Joe Parker, Jr.
First Vice President