

Fact Sheet

Protecting America's Meatpacking Workers Act

S.270/H.R.798



Farm Action Fund



Farm Action

The Protecting America's Meatpacking Workers Act was introduced by Senator Booker (D-NJ) in the Senate (S.270) with co-sponsors Blumenthal (D-CT), Gillibrand (D-NY), Sanders (I-VT), Schatz (D-HI), and Warren (D-MA). It was introduced by Representative Khanna (D-CA-17) in the House (H.R.798) with co-sponsors Grijalva (D-AZ-7), Hayes (D-CT-5), Lee (D-CA-12), Norton (D-DC-At Large), and Payne (D-NJ-10). The legislative package strengthens labor laws to protect workers, increases farmer protections in the Packers and Stockyards Act, and reinstates Mandatory Country of Origin Labeling for beef and pork sold in the United States.

BACKGROUND

Currently, four companies control 85% of the U.S. cattle market and wield their dominance over every aspect of the industry as a license to abuse farmers, workers, and rural communities in their pursuit of excessive profit and political influence. This problem has long been recognized by the people and organizations directly under the thumb of these monopolies, but it wasn't until the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic that the inherent frailties of such a concentrated system gained national attention.

As a matter of national security, the U.S. needs a resilient local and regionally-based food system that safeguards the physical and financial well being of the farmers and workers who power it. To achieve this, we must enact systemic reforms that address the unsafe working conditions faced by meatpacking plant employees, the abusive economic restraints on farmers and ranchers, and the fraudulent labeling practices of multinational corporations.

The Protecting America's Meatpacking Workers Act combats monopoly meatpackers' control across the food system with a multi-pronged approach that protects and empowers workers, farmers, ranchers, and eaters.

WORKER PROTECTIONS:

- > Restricts the Secretary of Agriculture from issuing line speed waivers.
- > Provides greater workplace safety protections and requires the Secretary of Labor to ensure meat and poultry plant workers have basic rights to use the toilet when needed without punishment.
- > Requires meat and poultry processing government grants include labor peace agreements.

FARMER AND RANCHER PROTECTIONS:

- > Increases farmer protections in the Packers and Stockyards Act.
- > Expands market opportunity by providing additional funding for meat and poultry processing and for the Local Agriculture Market Program (LAMP).
- > Restores Mandatory Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) for Beef and Pork and extends COOL to include dairy products.
- > Requires a base price be established in a sale of livestock between a packer and a producer.

TRANSPARENCY IN FOOD LABELING

As long as U.S. regulations permit fraudulent labeling practices, corporations will continue to undercut farmers and lie to consumers. This creates a situation where consumers inadvertently support a consolidated system that harms their own interests and those of their neighbors. Mandatory Country of Origin Labeling protects the consumer from this fraud and gives farmers a more fair market.



GAO REPORTS

The consequences of the current system's fragility and disproportionate impacts on disenfranchised populations are not yet well understood. To ensure that future policies are better informed and aligned with actual conditions, the Protecting America's Meatpacking Workers Act calls on the Government Accountability Office to conduct and submit three reports to Congress: a Review and Report on Fragility and National Security in the Food System, a Review and Report on Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Meat and Poultry Processing, and a Report on Line Speed.

The Protecting America's Meatpacking Workers Act will address the power imbalance that keeps our farmers and food workers toiling in service of corporate profits.

This legislation represents a critical step toward a resilient system that empowers its farmers and workers to safely make a living as they produce the nation's food.

For more information contact: jmaxwell@farmactionfund.us



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