

July 20, 2023

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
Chairwoman
U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture,
Nutrition, & Forestry
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable John Boozman
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture,
Nutrition, & Forestry
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Glenn "GT" Thompson
Chairman
U.S. House Committee on Agriculture
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable David Scott
Ranking Member
U.S. House Committee on Agriculture
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairwoman Stabenow, Chairman Thompson, and Ranking Members Boozman and Scott:

We, the undersigned farm organizations, urge you to oppose the Ending Agricultural Trade Suppression (EATS) Act (S.2019 and H.R.4417) and preserve local and state governments' right to make policies that create market opportunity and protect rural communities.

By blocking voters and local or state governments from establishing safeguards around the production or manufacture of agricultural products, the EATS Act would sacrifice market opportunities for family farmers, accelerate market concentration only to benefit a handful of corporate agribusinesses, and eliminate the ability of local governments to protect their citizens.

Food and farm markets are highly consolidated, providing farmers with few opportunities to earn fair returns on their products. Product differentiation is an important avenue for keeping family farmers on the land and ensuring food security. Voters — and policymakers acting on their behalf — voluntarily choosing to adopt certain standards for their local and regional food production can decentralize the market and ensure communities' food production systems are flourishing and therefore resilient to disasters. By making almost any production standard subject to a court challenge, the EATS Act would eliminate a state or community's ability to support local producers.

Farming practices and environmental conditions vary widely throughout the United States and are governed mainly by those at the local level who best understand their communities. The EATS Act would empower giant corporations with stables of attorneys to file lawsuits across the country, costing communities millions to defend their local authority. This would trigger a nationwide "race to the bottom" of agriculture production standards, fueled by the fear of being dragged into federal court by a billion-dollar company — or its trade association front group.

Multinational agribusinesses frequently wield their immense market power to deceive consumers. The EATS Act would strip voters and governments of the ability to mandate production standards and conditions that ensure products are safe, healthy, and responsibly produced. This action would disregard a long-held U.S. Constitutional principle that states maintain broad power to protect the health, safety, and welfare of their citizens by regulating the sale of goods and services within their borders — affirmed by the Supreme Court only a few months ago.

This bill is simply a power grab by a tiny group of mega-farms and agribusinesses to the detriment of family farmers, ranchers, and rural communities. We urge you to reject the EATS Act's attempt to override the right of all U.S. citizens to maintain local control over their food and farming systems.

Respectfully,

Alabama Contract Poultry Growers Association
American Agriculture Movement
American Grassfed Association
Campaign for Family Farms and the Environment
Carolina Farm Stewardship Association
Competitive Markets Action
Contract Poultry Growers Association of the Virginias
Dakota Rural Action
Farm Action Fund
Farm Aid
Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance
Independent Cattlemen of Wyoming
Jefferson County Farmers & Neighbors, Inc.
Latino Farmers & Ranchers International, Inc.
Missouri Rural Crisis Center
Missouri's Food for America
National Family Farm Coalition
National Organic Coalition
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition
National Women Involved in Farm Economics
Nebraska Women Involved in Farm Economics
Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance
Northeast Organic Farming Association of Connecticut
Northeast Organic Farming Association of New Hampshire
Northeast Organic Farming Association of New Jersey
Northeast Organic Farming Association of New York
Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont
Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association
Organic Seed Alliance
Organization for Competitive Markets
Pennsylvania Farmers Union
R-CALF USA
Rural Coalition
Socially Responsible Agriculture Project
Southern Colorado Livestock Association
Virginia Association for Biological Farming
West Virginia Food and Farm Coalition
Women, Food and Agriculture Network