



Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

February 24, 2020

The Honorable Mindy M. Brashears
Deputy Under Secretary for Food Safety
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Deputy Under Secretary Brashears:

As you know, South Dakota ranchers pride themselves on their product and the consumer confidence in the safety of beef in the meat case. Further, cattlemen in South Dakota know they produce a high-quality beef product that can compete in any foreign or domestic market. However, consumers must be confident that any fresh beef purchased in the U.S. is safe to eat. As such, producers welcomed Secretary Perdue's June 22, 2017, announcement that U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS) would be halting imports of fresh beef from Brazil to the U.S.

In the announcement, USDA noted that although 100% of the imported beef from Brazil was inspected, their rejection rate was substantially higher than the rest of the world. In the same announcement, USDA also cited public health concerns, sanitary conditions, and animal health issues as problematic factors that influenced USDA's decision to halt Brazilian beef imports. Consumers purchase beef without reservation. That confidence is vital to sustain domestic beef demand.

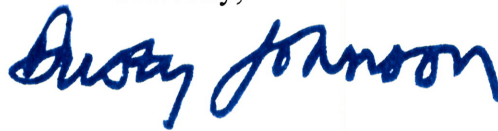
While we must honor trade agreements based on sound-science, I feel compelled to question Brazil's ability to maintain the food safety standards equivalent to USDA FSIS that ensure consumer confidence at the meat case. Additionally, I am concerned about the long-term enforcement and oversight of their processes. I respectfully request answers to the following questions about the decision to lift the Brazilian beef ban:

- As you know, industry views foreign fresh beef as a risk to accidental introduction of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), as well as Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD). How did FSIS coordinate with the Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) to consider the health of the domestic cattle industry with respect to this decision?
- Following USDA FSIS's on-site audit of the US-Brazil equivalency agreement, what commitments has Brazil made to improve its food safety inspection protocols and how will USDA FSIS conduct rigorous oversight of Brazil's beef exports?
- Does USDA FSIS plan to inspect 100% of Brazil's beef imports? If so, for how long?

- If Brazil fails to uphold its commitments to maintain food safety, what mechanisms, if any, does USDA FSIS possess to quickly halt imports to ensure consumer safety in the U.S.?

I appreciate your commitment to providing U.S. consumers the safest and most abundant food supply in the world and appreciate your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dusty Johnson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

DUSTY JOHNSON
Member of Congress