

STRENGTHENING LOCAL **PROCESSING ACT**

"The Strengthening Local Processing Act would assist and encourage small local processors in rural areas to expand processing capacity," **said Scott VanderWal, president of South Dakota Farm Bureau.** "In recent years, we have seen increased consumer demand for locally sourced and processed meat products, and livestock producers are just as anxious to have access to additional local markets."

"Many of us in cattle country, producers, and consumers alike, have felt the frustration of having an ample supply of market ready cattle but a lack of local processing capacity to process them," **said Eric Jennings, president of the South Dakota Cattlemen's Association.** "We have seen a good amount of interest from entrepreneurs to start new or expand existing processing plants only to be discouraged by the challenges they face. The Strengthening Local Processing Act addresses many of those challenges by providing assistance in developing a HACCP plan, providing a larger federal cost share for inspection and CIS approval, providing additional grants for expansion and grants to address the critical shortage of able, trained workers. We appreciate Senator Thune for listening to the industry leaders and taking steps to address the factors that lead to a shortage for South Dakota processing plants."

"The South Dakota Stockgrowers Association supports all livestock producers and their ability to market safe and locally raised products," **said Vaughn Meyer, president of the South Dakota Stockgrowers Association.** "Embracing the tools provided to our small processors should be of utmost importance and another way we can support small independent rural main-street businesses. Currently a huge backlog is found in most small processing plants waiting months and sometimes up to a year to process beef. Without the federal support, consumers will sacrifice purchasing safe locally raised beef and return to mass-slaughtered meat from the corporate giants. Consumers seek to find a new supply of meat and cattle producers want to find new avenues to distribute their product. It's a win for everyone. The SDSGA continue to support this legislation."

"The National Bison Association fully supports the Strengthening Local Processing Act, as the bison industry needs more small processor capacity to meet the needs of our growing sector of American agriculture," **said Chad Kremer, president of the National Bison Association.** "The bison industry processes just 0.02 percent of what the beef industry processes annually in the United States, and our largest bison processing plant, by far, has less than 270 employees. This legislation is critically important as bison producers across the United States are more and more connecting directly to consumers seeking clean, naturally raised local bison meat."

"Independent processors play an important role in a competitive marketplace," **said Justin Tupper, president of the U.S. Cattlemen's Association.** "The Strengthening Local Processing Act would provide independent processors with both funding programs and technical assistance to help build a successful business. It creates an Institutional Career Training Program to work towards building a pipeline of talented individuals interested in making a career out of providing a high-quality and nutritious food source for their fellow Americans. Finally, the bill would also require the U.S. Department of Agriculture to encourage state participation in the Cooperative Interstate Shipment program, which would open access for interstate shipment of meat and poultry, something that isn't always currently allowed. We look forward to working with Senators Thune and Brown and Representatives Baird and Pingree to advance this legislation through Congress."