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February 25, 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 Undersecretary Brashears:

North Dakota's ranchers produce some of the best beef in the world. From pasture to plate, consumers should have confidence in knowing that their beef has passed rigorous inspection and met various health standards.

On June 22, 2017, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) suspended the import of fresh beef from Brazil due to repeated concerns about product safety. Prior to the suspension, FSIS was inspecting 100 percent of all Brazilian meat imports and refused entry to 11 percent of beef products, which was a substantially higher rate of rejection compared to other countries. While I support international trade, our partners must meet the same standards as domestic producers. Anything less is unacceptable.

Consumers should have confidence that the beef products they are feeding their families come from healthy animals that are processed in a sanitary facility. I have concerns that Brazilian beef imports cannot meet that standard and that Brazil will not be able to monitor and enforce adequate food standards. Lifting the ban on Brazilian beef imports would unfairly undermine the integrity of our domestic beef market and the safety of our food supply. With low cattle prices threatening the livelihood of our ranchers, now is not the time to further undermine these American producers with the import of questionable Brazilian beef.

Brazilian beef imports have routinely failed to meet acceptable standards in the United States. What substantive justification can FSIS provide as to why it lifted the ban on imported beef and how will inspectors conduct oversight of Brazil's beef imports?

I appreciate your attention to this issue.

Sincerely,



Kelly Armstrong,
Member of Congress