



State of Oklahoma
Department of Agriculture, Food, and Forestry

J Kevin Stitt
Governor

Blayne Arthur
Secretary of Agriculture

April 6, 2020

Dear Mr. Secretary,

On behalf of Oklahoma's farmers and ranchers, thank you for your continued leadership and efforts in the interests of American agriculture, especially throughout these unprecedented and challenging times.

As you know, the difficult economic situation our nation currently faces is not entirely new to agriculture, though certainly drastically worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic. Farmers and ranchers, especially beef producers, have faced a variety of challenging market factors for some time. However, this most recent hit brought on by the Coronavirus further risks the financial health and continued operation of many of our cattle producers whose operating capital is assuredly already stretched thin. Your leadership and commitment to address the critical needs of the beef industry are integral to helping pull our cattlemen and cattlemen through these trying times.

I encourage you to consider any opportunity to direct resources appropriated in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act to our cattle industry. Relief for cattle producers from the current economic crisis is imperative in order to keep beef operations of all types and sizes operational, as they do not qualify for the traditional safety net programs designed to keep other agriculture sectors in production under emergency circumstances like those we currently face. As USDA implements programs with funding allocated by Congress to address challenges brought about by COVID-19, please consider specifically addressing the great need of our beef cattle industry.

In addition to immediate support through funding resources, I also support USDA's renewed investigation of the beef supply chain. The substantial margins between the live cattle prices our ranchers receive and the retail prices consumers pay at the grocery store are a continuing source of concern and frustration for Oklahoma's beef industry. A close look is necessary to determine if any manipulation, collusion, or other illegal activity may be occurring. I appreciate your recognition of this issue and support further investigation by USDA of the price disparity in the cattle market.

Your work and the effort of your staff and the whole USDA team do not go unnoticed in Oklahoma. We appreciate the partnership and dedication to agriculture producers that our agencies share and look forward to continued cooperation between our state and USDA at any opportunity in the future.

Sincerely,

Blayne Arthur

Blayne Arthur
Oklahoma Secretary of Agriculture