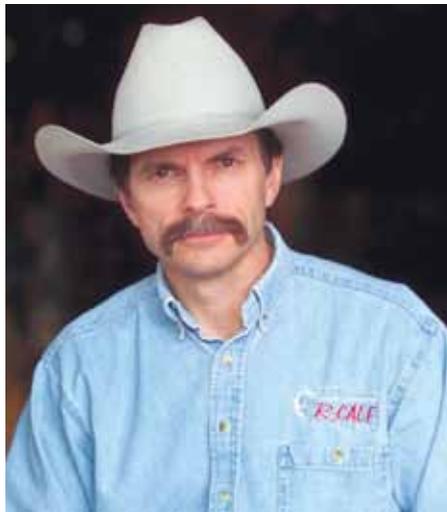


Defend Food Supply and Independent Cattlemen Against ‘Green’ Globalist Attack

This is the edited transcript of an interview conducted by telephone on July 18, by EIR’s Robert Baker, a member of R-CALF USA, with Bill Bullard, CEO of R-CALF USA (Ranchers-Cattlemen Legal Fund United Stockgrowers of America) from R-CALF’s headquarters in Billings, Montana.



Bill Bullard, CEO of R-CALF USA.



Robert Baker: Today is the 50th anniversary of the Apollo-11 launch to the Moon. Today, the American System policies upon which our nation was founded are being challenged on many fronts. We, and the communities in which we live, are in a real crisis, in farming and manufacturing. R-CALF USA is on the front lines in defending independent cattlemen. Would you report on your latest key initiatives?

Bill Bullard: For two decades, we have been working to restore competition in the marketplace for independent producers. We have followed traditional lobbying techniques, travelling to Washington, D.C., and talking to our members of Congress—trying to persuade members of Congress and Administration officials to

R-CALF USA (Ranchers-Cattlemen Legal Fund United Stock Growers of America) is the largest producer-only cattle trade association in the United States. Headquartered in Billings, Montana, it was founded 20 years ago, and is dedicated to ensuring the continued profitability and viability of stock producers. R-CALF USA has some 5,000 members in 46 states. Bill Bullard has been CEO since 2001.

make changes to the current direction of policies that affect cattle producers. The policies that are in place today are the legal framework in which our markets function, and our members raise and sell cattle. But decades ago, the multi-national meatpackers began to shape public policy, and thereby shape the legal framework in which we operate, to their benefit, at the expense of producers. We presently have regulations, laws, and policies that are designed to increase the profitability of multi-national meatpackers—globalists, if you will.

We found that we were beating our head against the wall in talking to government at the national level. And then we realized that there were organiza-

tions that have been doing the same things for over a century, and their success had been no better than ours.

Instead of trying to reform the policies by passing new laws, we decided, let’s first examine whether or not we are properly enforcing the laws we already have. With respect to the consolidation of the marketplace, today we have only four packers controlling 85% of the U.S. fed-cattle market—one of the most highly-concentrated sectors in our economy. We have suspected that the four meatpackers were engaged in practices to manipulate prices.

Investigations of the Big Meatpackers

We asked for thorough investigations of the operations of those big meatpackers in the marketplace at the federal level—the impact they’re having on competition, and whether or not the meatpackers were engaged in unlawful conduct by violating anti-trust laws. Investi-

gations were initiated, first in 2009, and then we asked again in 2016, after we saw unprecedented collapse in our market prices, and then again in September in 2018, when we saw anomalies in the cattle futures market.

As a result of those investigations, we gathered more information suggesting to us that, in fact, the meatpackers were *not* following existing law. We think that they are violating the U.S. anti-trust laws of the Packers and Stockyards Act of 1921, an Act that incorporated anti-trust issues, prohibiting monopolies and prohibiting specific conduct that financially harms and disadvantages independent producers.

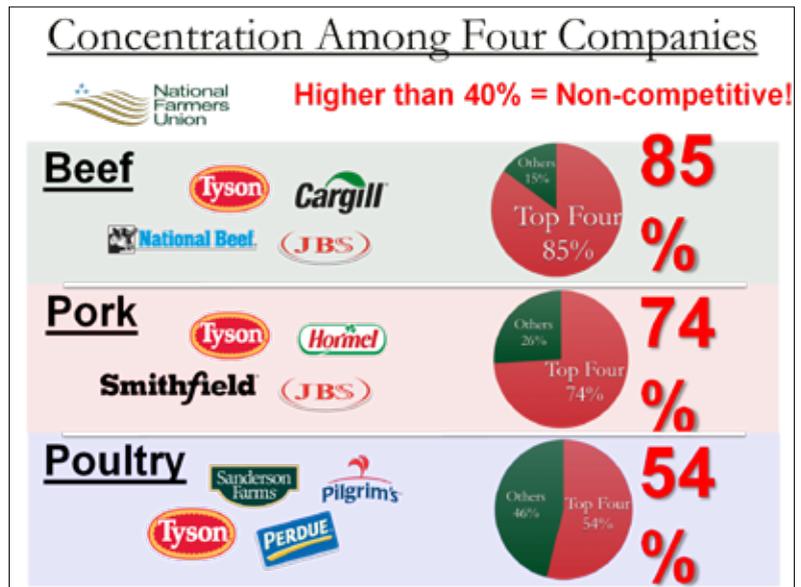
With that new-found information resulting from these investigations, we sought out a law firm to represent us in enforcing U.S. anti-trust laws, and in bringing competitive markets back for independent producers.

Our sister poultry and hog industries have already gone down that road, and both of those industries are now completely captured by the meatpackers from birth to plate, or egg to plate, in the case of the poultry industry. We call that process, “chickenization.” The process eliminates competition and substitutes a command and control regime administered by the meatpackers. We did not want our cattle industry to go there and were not about to allow the meatpackers to chickenize the largest segment of American agriculture, the live cattle industry.

In April 2019, we filed an historic anti-trust class-action lawsuit alleging that the Big Four packers in the United States—Tyson, JBS, Cargill and National Beef, now owned by the Brazilian firm Marfrig—are engaged in unlawful conduct, artificially depressing prices paid to independent cattle producers, and to increase their profit margins as a result. This case is in its early throes, and will probably go on for three to four years.

We now have the opportunity to create awareness of the devastating impact that this violation of U.S. anti-trust laws causes to an entire industry, and in this case, to the largest agricultural industry—so this is big, it’s monumental. We hope that it can help us re-shape a competitive marketplace, where independent producers can choose for themselves, where and how to produce their cattle. And then we will afford them a competitive marketplace, in which to market those cattle.

Baker: On July 12, *EIR* published a [special issue](#) called, “The Bitter Truth About the U.S. Economy.” We



reported on the terrible situations in different sectors of the economy of the country—the crisis in the farm belt, the de-industrialization, the drugs, the homelessness. The spirit of how we can mobilize for a bright future, is shown in this week’s 50th anniversary of the landing on the Moon. President Trump has called for a new Moon-Mars mission.

Would you recount what you have seen happening in the livestock sector in the past few decades in your part of the world?

Status of the Livestock Industry

Bullard: The livestock industry has long provided the economic cornerstone for rural America. Cattle and livestock production have been mentioned in every State of the Union address by the President. It is vitally important to the economic well-being of all of America, particularly rural America. In the 1960s and 1970s, the meatpackers decided to capture the poultry supply chain away from independent producers, and vertically integrate that industry so that became completely controlled by the packers. As a result, where once we had tens of thousands of poultry producers, we now have about 25,000 that now produce the majority of all the poultry consumed in America.

And then in the ’80s and ’90s, those same meatpackers deployed the model they had perfected in the poultry industry to the hog industry. And in the course of less than half a lifetime, beginning in the 1980s, they wiped out 90% of all the hog producers in this country. And, of course, that helped to hollow out rural communities all across America. They vertically integrated the hog in-

dustry, and so now control it, eliminating over 600,000 hog producers in the process during this period. From the packers' perspective, they simply eliminated all those pesky farmers who were too numerous to effectively manage and control. And now we're down to about 65,000 hog farmers whom they can control.

The cattle industry is the last frontier. Two decades ago, the meatpackers began in earnest to vertically integrate the cattle industry, using the same model they have now perfected in both the poultry and hog industries. Half a lifetime ago, in 1980, we

had about 1.3 million cattle producers. Today, we're down to 729,000. That means we've lost 43% of all the cattle producers that were in business just a short time ago. They are gone today. That has truly been the death knell for rural communities in many areas. And has certainly hollowed out rural America.

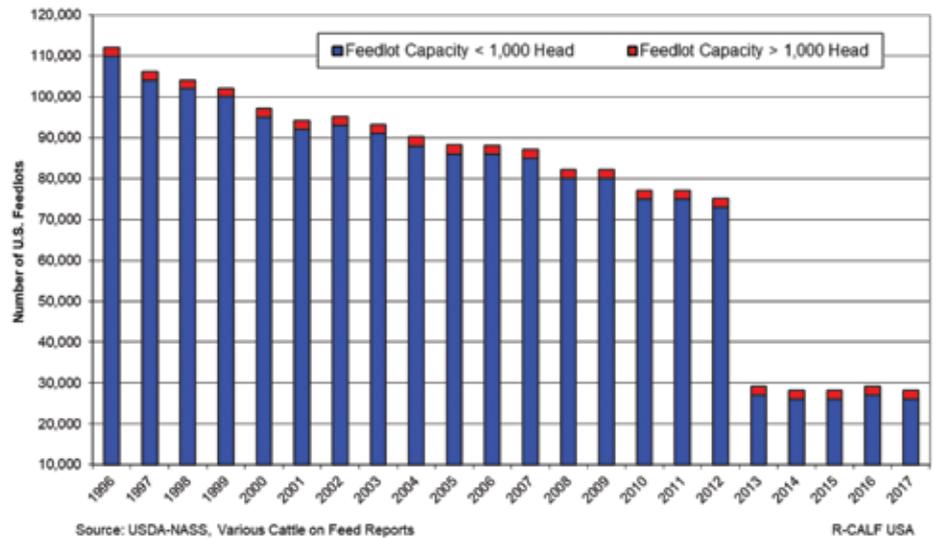
We're on a course where young entrants are almost non-existent. Young, aspiring farmers and ranchers that want to raise cattle, find that the profitability is lacking. They've watched their parents struggle. In many instances, they've watched their parents lose their ranches. We have a real problem in that the average age of a rancher today is up in the late 60s. We have few entrants entering the industry.

At the same time that we have growing beef demand, we have shrunk the size of our domestic cattle herd. We have become more and more reliant on imported beef to satisfy the demand of the number one beef consuming market in the world, which is the United States of America. Narrowing down to some of the details, we see that the competitiveness of our industry is being dismantled and destroyed. We're destroying the competitive marketing channels, the infrastructure that can sustain and maintain a competitive marketplace.

For example, the most numerous participants in the cattle industry, are those who raise and maintain a mother cow herd, raise calves every year, and so on. We call them cow-calf operators. They market their cattle in the feed lots. Even in just the last two decades, we've seen a 75% reduction in the number of feedlots in America. We have restricted access to the marketplace,

Decline in Number of U.S. Feedlots, 1996-2017

(loss of 83,900 feedlots in past 22 years)



because now there are only a relatively few markets left in which to market cattle. And once the marketing side of this is consolidated and access to the marketplace is restricted, a huge opportunity is provided for the gatekeepers—the multinational packers leverage prices downward in order to essentially coerce producers into entering production contracts with the packer, just in order to have a timely market for their livestock.

Over the course of the last 40 years, we have seen a significant and substantial reduction in the competitiveness of our industry, and the dismantling and destruction of our competitive marketing channels. Once that infrastructure is lost, it's game over. Because then, our industry, like the poultry industry, will have no other means to continue other operations, unless the industry itself vertically integrates under this chickenized model.

Baker: The speed at which all of this has taken place, especially since the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and World Trade Organization (WTO), is incredible. It's like the 17th century British East India Company imposing a worldwide monopoly. What will happen if this is allowed to continue?

The Multinationals Take Over

Bullard: The ongoing trend, which is alarming—because it's a trend of an exodus of independent farmers and ranchers—will continue, unless we make substantial progress in reversing course. That is, industries that are subjected to immense market power by the dominant companies that control the marketplace. And it's true in

the livestock sector, and the grain sector.

These multinational corporations have moved from the United States to other countries onto a global platform in order to impart that legal framework that they desire, upon every country. That's where the World Trade Organization fits into this model. And it's where these trade agreements have actually facilitated the meatpackers' desire to vertically integrate industries, because it gave them access to unlimited supplies. And they were able to source cheaper, undifferentiated products in foreign countries, and use those products as direct substitutes for the production of U.S. farmers and ranchers.

These products are then sold to unsuspecting consumers, who believed that they were produced by American farmers, when in fact, they are being imported in large volumes from foreign countries where the health, safety and environmental standards are far less stringent than they are in the United States. As a result of bringing in this cheaper product, that is undifferentiated, they've used these imports to depress prices, with the result of displacing domestic production.

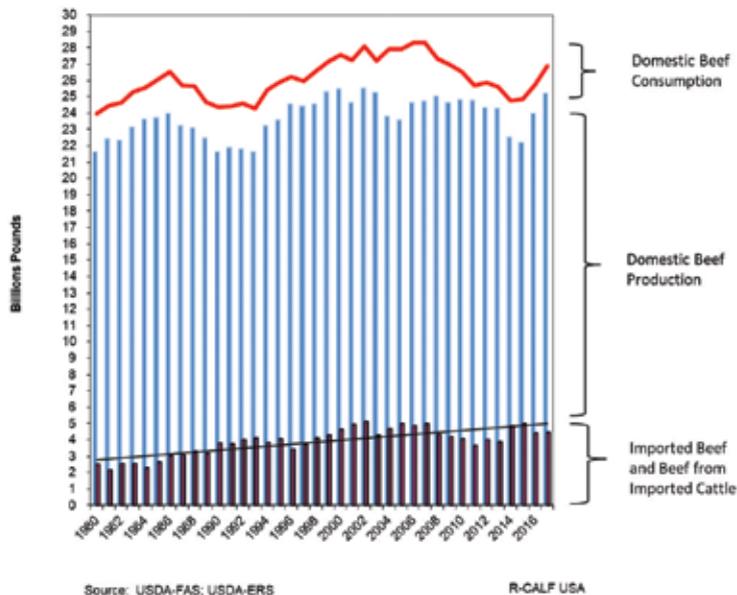
We're losing our supply chains in the United States. They are being outsourced to foreign countries. Under the new Trump Administration, there have been efforts to return those supply chains to the United States. But as of this point in time, there has been no effort whatsoever, on the part of the Administration, to restore the viability of the live cattle supply chain in the United States of America.

That's disconcerting—government has been facilitating all of this. This is all part of the effort by the multinationals and globalists to persuade governments to pursue this global economic model that benefits the multinational meatpackers. We found that our government here in the United States is disinterested in doing what our members have asked them to do. Instead, they continue to follow the globalist agenda, and it's devastating our domestic supply chains, and in particular, our U.S. live cattle supply chain.

You mention the North American Free Trade Agreement—we've lost 20% of our farmers and ranchers that raise cattle, just in the past 25 years. When we entered the North American Free Trade Agreement, the promise was, that it would provide us with more market access, and that it would increase trade. It did increase trade. It did increase exports. But at the same time, it increased imports at a much faster pace, so it actually accelerated

U.S. Beef Imports

2015 Imports Doubled Since '80s,
Are Now About 20% of Domestic Production



the globalist efforts to grant the multinational meatpackers unlimited access to cheaper, undifferentiated produce, with which to displace domestic production and domestic producers.

Baker: Ranchers are told a myth that exports will save the day. Consumers don't know what they're actually eating.

'Product of USA' Fraud

Bullard: The big myth out there, is that the beef that is being consumed by Americans is all produced by American farmers and ranchers, and it's all produced under the highest health and safety standards of the world, and that's U.S. production and safety standards. That is, in fact, a myth.

In our industry, three billion pounds of beef are imported from more than 20 countries, and we import millions of head of live cattle. All of the meat imported into the United States, is eligible to receive a "Product of USA" label if it is run through a U.S. processing plant. So all an importer has to do is import large volumes of beef from Uruguay, Nicaragua, Argentina, Brazil, Australia, New Zealand, Canada or Mexico, bring it into the United States, unwrap it in a U.S. processing plant, and then it can be sold to the retail sector, and to consumers, with a "Product of USA" label on it.

There are live animals imported from Canada and Mexico—about two million head a year. All of the beef that is derived from those animals is eligible for a

“Product of the USA” label. Consumers are being hoodwinked, in that they are being misled as to the origins of the food that they are feeding their families.

That is why, back at the turn of this century, in 2002, we were instrumental in passing a mandatory “Country of Origin” Labelling (COOL) law, that required consumers to be informed as to the origins of their chicken, beef, pork, lamb, fruits, vegetables, fish, and seafood, and certain nuts like macadamia nuts and peanuts. The mandatory COOL law was passed in 2002.

But the globalists regrouped. They convinced Congress not to implement that law with respect to beef and hogs. So we had a period from 2002, when the law was passed, and, for many of these other commodities—fruits and vegetables, and fish and seafood, for example, and nuts—they were required to be labelled very quickly, relatively, but beef and pork were held up, because the beef packers convinced Congress to deprive the U.S. Department of Agriculture of any funds with which to implement that law.

So it’s been a huge battle ever since 2002. In the first phase, when “Country of Origin” labelling for beef and pork was first implemented in 2009, it was only partially implemented. It wasn’t until 2013 that we had full implementation of the law. All of that three billion pounds of imported beef had to retain its foreign label all the way through retail sale to the consumer. Beginning May 2013, all beef derived from animals slaughtered in the United States had to be labelled as to where the animal was born, where it was raised, and where it was harvested.

For the first time in history, consumers had accurate information as to the origins of some of their basic foodstuffs. But the multinationals regrouped, partnering with the World Trade Organization, in order to convince our weak-kneed Congress, to repeal the law for beef and pork because the meatpackers were losing their windfall profits that they gained from selling this undifferentiated product.

In 2015, in its infinite wisdom, Congress repealed



Robert L. Baker

The top package in this supermarket meat case, shows the “Beyond Beef” brand of meat substitute. The “Grass Fed” label on the other beef, though marked “Product of U.S.A.,” is likely foreign-produced, since nearly 80 percent of grass-fed beef by value is imported. “Grass fed” can also mean anything at all, including livestock raised in pens, fed extruded grass pellets.

the mandatory COOL law for beef and pork. So now, beef and pork are outliers. All those other commodities continue to be subject to the mandatory Country of Origin Labelling law. But consumers no longer have the information as to the origins of their beef or their pork, as of today. The label only denotes where that product went through the last stage of processing.

Global Roundtable for Sustainable Beef

Baker: Now we see the globalist food, financial, and commodity crowd operating under the banner of “green” sustainability. The Global Roundtable for Sustainable Beef is one of the organizations that is really a wolf in sheep’s clothing against ranchers, and eaters. What do you see in this greenie onslaught?

Bullard: We have to go back to where the efforts of globalization first began with the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) that transformed into the World

Trade Organization and many other satellite global organizations like the World Animal Health Organization. There was so much push-back from independent citizens against these efforts, that the multinational meatpackers and other globalists that you mentioned were frustrated in their inability to have already achieved their goal of complete control of the supply chains.

The new move is this Global Roundtable for Sustainable Beef, as the means by which the globalists themselves will no longer completely rely on any kind of a (national) government structure, but instead, their command of access to the marketplace is now unveiled in this global initiative to gain more control over the supply chains—production supply chains—by limiting access to the marketplace.

This is all about control, using the term “sustainability” as a means of causing producers to acquiesce into this command-and-control regime. It is essentially an effort to ensure that everywhere in the globe, food is produced the same. So that the meatpackers can choose

from anywhere in the world to source their inputs, and then sell it, in the largest consumer market in the world—right here in the United States. And so they begin the process of convincing producers, that they must follow certain dictates in order to have access to the marketplace. And they start with dictates that producers might readily agree on, in terms of sustainability, and in fact, what many producers are already practicing.

Then suddenly, the Global Roundtable agrees that only if you become certified under these certain production practices, will you have access to the marketplace that they control. And in order to assure that producers are, in fact, doing that, they require individual identification of private property—the livestock owned by producers. And require producers to register their premises, where they maintain their operations. And require producers to report whenever they move their livestock from one premises to another.

In other words, it's to give the multinationals information as to every aspect of the supply chain, both in terms of production and in timing. And then, they would impose upon producers the cost of obtaining a third party auditor to ensure that the production has met the standards that the meatpackers have demanded.

This is a very, very dangerous road that we're presently on. For a governmental structure, the globalists have substituted their own market control and market access structure, in order to impart upon the entire industry the standards they themselves want to apply. We have been fighting this Global Roundtable for Sustainable Beef, recognizing that it is simply an extension of the work of the governmental structures in Geneva, the World Trade Organization. The impact on the producers and the citizens is the same. It's a loss of liberty. It's a loss of independence. And it is in fact, subjecting producers and consumers to daily control on the part of those multinational meatpackers and others that are involved in this.

Baker: Do you see the Global Roundtable activating in other parts of the world?

Bullard: It already is. There are Global Roundtables for Australia, Brazil, Canada. I think virtually everywhere in the world is now in the process of being organized under the Global Roundtable for Sustainable Beef structure. And this all traces back to the World Trade Organization. This is all part and parcel of the overall effort to globalize economics and regulatory structures, by the multinational meatpackers—since they have a seamless supply of inputs, as well as a seamless access

to consumers. It is a dangerous road to go on.

Baker: Well, there's a lot of joy in seeking the truth, and fighting for what is right. What excitement do you and your associates have in what R-CALF has set in motion for the right policies?

Hope in the Judicial System

Bullard: We're finally seeing some push-back through this Administration on some of these policies. But we continue to have a huge number of old-guard free traders who really do represent the self-interest of the multi-national companies that have benefitted the most from the skewed trade policies. It's going to take us a while to work through that, and to reverse it. It must be reversed, because the current track that we're on is leading to a lower gross domestic product, leading to hollowing out of our economic sectors, and creating huge financial problems for the United States and all the industries that operate here. The myth behind free trade, and the push by the globalists are with us today, and only recently have we seen any effort to restore the viability and credibility and strength of the United States, with respect to these failed trade policies.

History tells where we've been, and the trends tell us where we're going. We recognize that we have to change policy. I guess the excitement will come when we achieve success in those policy changes, and when we see a growing awareness among citizens for the inappropriate path that we're presently on. We're seeing that more and more today. We're seeing, for example, our own organization becoming stronger, with more people joining the organization, more people are recognizing on a daily basis, that they've been fed a false bill of goods, and that their interests have not been represented for decades.

By changing our strategy now, as we've begun to use the judicial system, in order to accomplish objectives that neither Congress nor the Administration had any interest whatsoever in addressing—that has become very exciting for us, because we have found a new means to do what is right, for our members and for all of America. It gives us hope, that while there is corruption in Congress and within the administrations and a disinterest in what's happening to men and women who are workers, and manufacturers, and farmers, we are finding that in the judicial system, it is less biased. It is not subject to the huge lobbying dollars that are flowing into Congress and the Administration. We are very hopeful that this this will be the forum in which to effect lasting and beneficial changes for the working people in the United States.