



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Farmers, Ranchers, and Consumers Support the LOCAL Food Act

Washington, DC, September 20, 2024 - On September 19, Senators Peter Welch (D-VT), Bernie Sanders (I-VT), and Cory Booker (D-NJ) introduced the [Livestock Owned by Communities to Advance Local \(LOCAL\) Foods Act \(S.5106\)](#) to permanently protect the ability of livestock farmers, consumers, custom processors, and itinerant slaughterers to practice and benefit from on-farm slaughter.

Currently, the Federal Meat Inspection Act (FMIA) only allows farmers to raise, slaughter, and butcher their animals without inspection for their personal use, not sold to customers. The LOCAL Foods Act updates the Federal Meat Inspection Act (FMIA) to reflect modern USDA guidance, clarifying that the slaughtering of livestock that a person owns, in whole or in part, is legal when it happens on the farm where it was raised. **This important clarification uplifts standing USDA guidance and allows non-farmer consumers to buy a share of live animals and then hire someone as their agent to complete on-farm slaughter.**

“Updating the personal-use exemption to be based on ownership aligns with current USDA standards and is needed to protect the rights of livestock owners, producers, and itinerant slaughterers to practice on-farm slaughter in accordance with their state regulations,” said Caroline Sherman-Gordon, a small farmer and Rural Vermont’s Legislative Director. “Protecting farmers from subjective interpretations that are vulnerable to change will protect farmers from unfair sanctions and give them the planning security they need to grow their business.”

The LOCAL Foods Act will reduce both financial and regulatory burdens on small farmers and thereby improve consumers’ access to local foods,” commented Judith McGeary, regenerative farmer, lawyer, and Executive Director of the Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance. “So many consumers want to buy from local farmers instead of massive corporations, but farmers are blocked by regulations written by and for agribusiness.”

“Modernizing the personal-use exception reflects the realities of diverse communities demanding access to local food that honors their traditions”, stated Kenya Abraham, member of the Kentucky Black Farmers Association. “We are observing a growing demand to access local producers like me, but we need legislation that gives us an incentive to continue our operations,” concluded Ms. Abraham.

“The LOCAL Foods Act protects the rights of farmers to sell directly from their farm and the rights of consumers to access the foods of their choice from the source of their choice, achieving the kind of food freedom so many desire for themselves, their families, and their communities,” said Christine Dzujna, Farm-to-Consumer Defense Fund’s Policy Manager.

“Securing the independence of farmers and consumers is key to building a healthy food system,” commented Antonio Tovar, Senior Policy Associate at the National Family Farm Coalition. “The fact that consumers are effectively forced to access their food from corporations has made us vulnerable to a weak and unreliable market. The LOCAL Foods Act offers a real opportunity to start building a food system allowing freedom of choice.”

Farmers and ranchers need to feel confident that they are complying with slaughtering regulations, are secure in planning their business, and are guaranteed the right to continue this long-standing practice that is integral to their livelihoods. The LOCAL Foods Act is an important opportunity for Congressional support of farm viability, food security, and local food markets.

The LOCAL Foods Act has been endorsed by a number of food and farm advocacy groups, including Rural Vermont, Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance, the National Family Farm Coalition, the Farm to Consumer Legal Defense Fund. Additionally, [more than 600 signatories](#) from across the country have supported updating the Federal Meat Inspection Act.

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Since 1986, the **National Family Farm Coalition** has been mobilizing family farmers and ranchers to achieve fair prices, vibrant communities, and healthy foods free of corporate domination. Today, NFFC’s 30 member groups span 44 states and represent family farmers, ranchers, and fishermen across the United States.

Rural Vermont was founded in 1985 and its mission is to lead the resurgence of community-scale agriculture through education, advocacy, and organizing in support of Vermonters living in deep connection to one another and to the land which nourishes us all.

Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance is a national advocacy organization that provides support for the thousands of small to mid-size farmers and ranchers who produce food using sustainable/regenerative methods. Since 2006, FARFA has advocated for independent and family farmers while promoting common sense policies for strong local, diversified agricultural systems. FARFA also works on behalf of millions of American consumers who care about protecting a healthy and productive food supply for their families.

Farm to Consumer Legal Defense Fund is a non-profit organization that works to protect, defend, and broaden the rights and viability of independent farmers, artisanal food producers, and their consumers.

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