



Written by [Veronika Kyrylenko](#) on October 22, 2025

Ag Secretary Confirms That Trump Is Eyeing Argentina's Beef; U.S. Ranchers See Red

The U.S. government is negotiating imports of Argentine beef, Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins confirmed Tuesday. Just days earlier, President Donald Trump told reporters his administration might bring in Argentine beef to help the country that is "fighting for its life." He added that the move would also bring domestic prices down. The developments triggered immediate backlash from American ranchers and farm groups. It also raised alarm among Republican lawmakers in key cattle states such as Nebraska, South Dakota, and Texas.



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Brooke Rollins

[Speaking with CNBC](#), Rollins confirmed that even though the deal with Argentina is indeed in the works, the quantities will be limited. "It won't be much," she said:

Yes, the president has said he's in discussions with Argentina. I think we'll be hearing more about that in the next day or two. But ... it will not very much.

Rollins explained that the United States consumes roughly 12 million metric tons of beef each year, producing about 10 million of that at home. The remaining two "we've been offshoring," she said.

The secretary then added an unsettling detail:

Argentina's also facing a foot-and-mouth-disease issue, which we at USDA [U.S. Department of Agriculture] have to ensure that our livestock industry is secure.

She reminded viewers that the U.S. cattle industry has already been battling another malady — the screwworm infestation spreading north from Mexico.

Argentina's disease situation poses more risk to the U.S. According to the [USDA](#):

Foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) is a severe, fast-spreading viral disease that primarily affects cloven-hoofed animals, including cows, pigs, sheep, goats, and deer.

While "FMD is not a human health or food safety threat," it is serious for animals, causing fever and blistering on the mouth and feet and leading to lameness, weight loss and a host of other health issues. The farmers often resort to mass culling to contain outbreaks. In other words, it's the kind of problem no agriculture secretary would normally want anywhere near the words "import deal."



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Trump's "Help"

While speaking with reporters aboard Air Force One on Sunday, President Trump [was asked](#):

What do you have to say to U.S. farmers who feel that the deal is benefiting Argentina more than it is [Americans]?

The president, visibly irritated, launched into one of his characteristic digressions:

Argentina is fighting for its life.... Nothing is benefiting Argentina — they are fighting for their life. You understand what that means? They have no money, they have no anything, they are fighting so hard to survive. ... I happen to like the president of Argentina, I think he's trying to do the best he can. But don't make it sound like they are doing great. They are dying, all right?

The comment, while dramatic, was an obvious exaggeration. It's true that Argentina's economy is struggling with high inflation and harsh austerity, but it is [hardly "dying."](#) And even if it were, fiscal conservatives at home would note the irony: Rescuing another nation's economy at the expense of the American producers Trump so often vows to defend is not exactly the cornerstone of his own trade philosophy.

Pressed to clarify what exactly the deal would mean, Trump added:

We would buy some beef from Argentina. If we do that, that would bring our beef prices down.... If we buy some beef — I'm not talking about that much — from Argentina, it would help Argentina, which we consider a very country, a very good ally.

The remarks followed last Thursday's reports saying that the president had already struck a beef deal. According to [AgWeb](#):

"We are working on beef, and I think we have a deal on beef," Trump told reporters at the White House. The price of beef is "higher than we want it, and that's going to be coming down pretty soon too. We did something," Trump added, without elaborating.

The outlet added:

One idea that is being floated is the possibility of the U.S. buying Argentina beef or at least lowering the ... tariffs to allow more product to move into the U.S.

Beefed Up Backlash

Almost immediately after the crunch-time import message from the White House, producers across the country began voicing their anger and alarm. The response from ranchers, farm groups, and agricultural economists was sharp.

The National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA) responded with a [statement](#) saying:



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This plan only creates chaos at a critical time of the year for American cattle producers, while doing nothing to lower grocery store prices.

It added:

Argentina also has a history of foot-and-mouth disease, which if brought to the United States, could decimate our domestic livestock production.

The American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) [took a similar line](#):

We urge the administration to carefully consider the damage importing more beef and cattle from other countries will have as cattle farmers decide whether to invest in rebuilding America's herds.

Meanwhile, the National Farmers Union (NFU) [argued](#):

Lowering beef prices for consumers starts with restoring fairness in the marketplace, not by importing beef from Argentina and undercutting American ranchers.

Farm Action, a nonpartisan watchdog group led by farmers, [blasted](#) the plan for "rewarding foreign competitors," seeing it as "a betrayal of the American rancher."

Even Trump's long-time ally, Texas Agriculture Commissioner Sid Miller, [expressed worry](#).

Ranchers, of course, aren't the first to be blindsided by the administration's trade maneuvers. American soy farmers have been [reeling for months](#), as Trump's tariff policies redirected massive Chinese purchases to — where else — Argentina. That drove U.S. soybean exports to China down to zero in September.

GOP Wary

Republican lawmakers are beginning to show visible discomfort with the administration's plan.

Senator Deb Fischer of Nebraska, herself a cattle rancher, [stated](#):

Nebraska's ranchers cannot afford to have the rug pulled out from under them when they're just getting ahead or simply breaking even.

She urged the administration to "focus on trade deals that benefit our ag producers — not imports that will do more harm than good."

Senator Mike Rounds of South Dakota also [raised concerns](#) after speaking directly with Trump and Rollins. He said he emphasized the need for "an America First game plan that prioritizes American ranchers."

Their reservations reflect a broader unease across Republican farm states. On Tuesday, Congresswoman Julie Fedorchak of North Dakota and seven other House Republicans [sent a letter](#) to Trump expressing concern about the import plan and asking for clarification on its scope and intent.

"Prioritizing America's food producers is essential to an American-First agenda, which I will continue to



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support,” said Rep. Michelle Fischbach of Minnesota.

Beef isn’t just another commodity — it’s one of the pillars of American agriculture. [Estimates](#) suggest the industry generates more than \$160 billion in economic activity each year and supports over two million jobs. Cattle are raised in every state, making beef not just a staple on the dinner table, but a backbone of rural economies nationwide.

All in all, the government’s habitual — and usually unconstitutional — meddling in markets remains as reckless as ever, often doing more harm than good. Trump’s long-forgotten “Buy American” promise loops back in ironic form. He now buys foreign beef to ease sticker shock for consumers, while leaving American ranchers squeezed between rising costs and falling prices.

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