

**Chairman David Scott**  
**Ranking Member GT Thompson**  
**Full Committee on Agriculture**

**Tuesday, May 18, 2021 – 10:00AM**  
**Hybrid Hearing – 1300 Longworth and via Zoom**  
**Washington, D.C.**  
**Full Committee Hybrid Hearing**

**Testimony of Rep. Dusty Johnson for the full committee hearing RE: “Member Day”**

Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Thompson, thank you for holding this Member Day hearing to highlight priorities important to our constituents back home. As a member of this Committee I often get the opportunity to address policy concerns at a national level, but today I would like to highlight some issues that are especially impacting citizens in South Dakota.

***Farm Service Agency (FSA) Offices:***

The pandemic has put enormous strain on our local FSA offices. Between disaster programs such as the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP), signup for standing programs like the Agriculture Risk Coverage and Price Loss Coverage (ARC/PLC, and the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), there is an unprecedented amount of work that needs to be done.

In May 2020 the Trump administration detailed a pandemic reopening plan for FSA offices that was based on science and dictated the ability of offices to reopen depending on conditions in their respective counties.

While more restrictive than some may have liked, this was at least dependent on a metric that made some sort of sense.

This is why it is so confusing to me that after many county offices were on a path to reopen in areas where the pandemic was under control, Secretary Vilsack dictated that ALL offices should shut back down and quit taking appointments.

Mr. Chairman, this is just one of the numerous issues that this Committee has a responsibility to conduct thorough oversight. However to date we have not had a single hearing with Administration officials to discuss important issues like these. I hope that changes soon and the Agriculture Committee gets back to focusing on issues that matter to farmers, ranchers, and rural America.

***Cattle Markets:***

While many commodities have rebounded since the beginning of the pandemic, driven by increased export demand, cattlemen in South Dakota have been left out as processing capacity and labor to run at full force remain an issue.

Compounding these struggles are a developing drought that will likely cut into growing season and push cow herd liquidations.

These black swan events have taken their toll on ranchers and feeders. USDA's Boxed Beef & Fed Cattle Price Spread Investigation Report from last summer showed that in the aftermath of the pandemic fed cattle prices declined 18% and beef processing capacity utilization by roughly 40%. At the same time, boxed beef prices rose almost 80%.

That's why I urge this Committee to continue to examine these important issues and not leave cattlemen behind in discussions. That's why last Congress I introduced the PRICE Act that would focus on greater transparency, increased risk management solutions, and open up opportunities for new and expanding meat processors.

Last Congress, this Committee was successful in passing several things that moved us forward, including my bill to provide a level playing field for small processors seeking overtime inspection.

I look forward to working with the Committee and this Congress to address these important issues to South Dakota.