
October 30, 2023

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

Thank you for your time and attention to issues that affect livestock producers. As Western Governors, we see the effect on our constituents on the ground and have concerns about the long-term health of the industry.

Western Governors' Association Policy Resolution 2023-05, Western Agriculture, contains Western Governors' policy supporting agriculture in the West. We encourage trade agreements that maximize benefits for the West's farmers and ranchers, recognizing that western states have experienced severe volatility in farm income and farm prices since their peaks in 2013. Western Governors support a farm safety net that recognizes past deficit reduction contributions of the agricultural sector and maintains funding for other key commodity, conservation, crop insurance, livestock indemnity and emergency assistance, research, energy, and export promotion programs.

Throughout 2022, the sheep industry, especially in the western United States, suffered from deflated lamb prices, and inflated input costs. Imports now make up approximately 75 percent of the U.S. retail market. The United States imported approximately 23,723 metric tons of lamb in 1993. By 2022, imports had increased to 152,646 metric tons.

The strength of the U.S. dollar relative to the Australian and New Zealand dollar give our international competitors the ability to undercut the price of American lamb. Currently, the U.S. is facing increased imports from the United Kingdom and other nations that seek to expand in the U.S. marketplace.

Over the last decade, the amount of lamb consumed in the U.S. has trended sharply upward, and through this time imports have far eclipsed and outpaced the downward trending domestic production. By 2022, imports had captured 74 percent of the U.S. market. The sheep industry is challenged by labor constraints, changing public land grazing policies, inflation, and imports.

Western Governors support efforts to protect and strengthen our domestic sheep industry. We are eager to partner with you and stakeholders to work on solutions to address this critical import issue.

Sincerely,



Mark Gordon
Governor of Wyoming
Chair, WGA



Michelle Lujan Grisham
Governor of New Mexico
Vice Chair, WGA