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Senator Thom Tillis
113 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Tillis,

In just six years 800 million trees have been cut down in the Amazon, and it is all due to Brazilian beef production. The Pulitzer Center article "Over 800 Million Trees Felled To Feed Appetite for Brazilian Beef" by Elisângela Mendonça, Andrew Wasley, Youssr Youssef, and Rob Soutar, follows an investigation driven by TBIJ (The Bureau of Investigative Journalism) about deforestation caused by Brazilian beef production. According to TBIJ 1700 sq km of the Amazon has been destroyed due to beef production, this was after the beef industry in Brazil pledged to avoid farms linked to deforestation. According to the article a senior director at the NGO Mighty Earth, Alex Wijeratna, said, "The Amazon is very close to a tipping point. So these types of figures are very alarming because the Amazon can't afford to be losing this number of trees ... This has planetary implications." The Amazon plays a critical role in stabilizing the climate. Deforestation in the Amazon affects the whole world, including your constituents right here in North Carolina.

The EU, one of the major beef importers for Brazil, does have a law stating no beef can be imported if it contributes to deforestation after the year 2020. This is a start, but it is still relying on the word of the beef exporters. According to the article, Tönnies, (a Brazilian beef company) said, "These Brazilian companies process many thousands of animals per year for export," and claimed it was unclear whether the company had received products from plants linked to deforestation". The biggest beef exporters in Brazil, (Marfrig, JBS, and Minerva) all say they monitor the ranches supplying the beef, and make sure the land does not contribute to deforestation. However, this is still a problem because of a phenomenon known as cattle laundering. Cattle laundering is when cattle from a dirty farm is moved to a clean farm, with no history of fines or sanctions for deforestation, even if its owner has deforested on other ranches. This is also a problem because there is no third-party oversight of the farms, so there is no way to know if what the exporters say is true. According to the CSIS, (Center for Strategic and International Studies) Government influence is prevented by interest groups seeking to protect the ranchers. The interest groups in Brazil are paying the politicians so they don't get involved.

A more reliable solution would be for the US to stop importing beef from Brazil altogether, and keep it that way, at least until the problem of cattle laundering is resolved, and/or third-party oversight is applied. This would decrease deforestation in the Amazon and, something that I know you care about would boost local Beef companies. According to the USDA, or the U.S. Department Of Agriculture, in the last two years, due to the increased demand for processing-grade beef, imports of beef from Brazil have spiked. In January 2022 alone, imports hit nearly 100 million pounds of Beef, which is a more than 500 percent increase compared to exactly one year earlier.

In 2018 senators, Mike Rounds and Jon Tester introduced a bill stating that imports of beef from Brazil would be suspended until experts can conduct a systematic review of the commodity's impact on food

safety and animal health. I think a bill like this should be reintroduced, to protect our safety, and so the US is not contributing to deforestation in the Amazon.

This problem needs to be addressed, and the U.S. can be the first to take action, setting a good example for other countries that import beef from Brazil. The National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA) also wants immediate action, "For too long, American cattlemen and women have honored the laws governing international trade, promoting fair and equitable standards, only to have nations like Brazil ignore those same standards. Brazil cannot be allowed to benefit from the investments we have made to build a massive demand for beef around the globe." Senator Tillis, you should stand with the NCBA, help suspend the imports of beef, and support local U.S. cattlemen and women. I hope you recognize this problem and do something, for the sake of this planet and the American people.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Nari Volpe