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AG NEWS RELEASE: HAWAI'I ATTORNEY GENERAL SHIKADA URGES USDA TO STRENGTHEN COMPETITION IN MEATPACKING INDUSTRY

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HONOLULU – Attorney General Holly T. Shikada joined a bipartisan coalition of 16 attorneys general in making recommendations to U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack to improve competition in the meat processing industry, which will help Hawai'i's farmers, ranchers, and consumers.

In a letter to Secretary Vilsack — which was led by Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison and Wyoming Attorney General Bridget Hill, in close coordination with Iowa Attorney General Tom Miller — Attorney General Shikada joins the coalition in raising concerns about the increasing market concentration in meatpacking and offers solutions to aid the USDA in efforts to strengthen enforcement under the Packers and Stockyards Act.

“The Packers and Stockyards Act should help ensure fairness and integrity for Hawaii's farmers and ranchers,” AG Shikada said. “This in turn will benefit Hawai'i's consumers by making prices more affordable and providing producers' with the ability to get the best price for their product.”

The Packers and Stockyards Act, which dates to 1921, was intended to address unfair, deceptive, and anti-competitive practices in meat markets. Over time, however, corporate consolidation has led to less competition for producers' livestock and poultry.

In the letter, Attorney General Shikada and the bipartisan coalition offer recommendations to Secretary Vilsack. Those recommendations include asking the USDA to:

- Consider how increased concentration and related mergers have resulted in meat packers' ability to charge higher prices to consumers, while paying producers less for their livestock and poultry;
- Consider using funds appropriated through the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 to establish a grant that state antitrust enforcers could use to investigate and bring actions in agricultural markets;
- Move forward with an investment of more than \$500 million to support and incentivize new competitive entrants in meat and poultry processing, as well as smaller facilities;
- Update regulations governing what information companies are allowed to collect and share for profit;
- Consider establishing an Agricultural Markets Integrity Working Group, bringing together leaders from the various agencies to discuss issues in the market.

Attorney General Shikada was joined in the letter to Secretary Vilsack by the attorneys general of California, Delaware, Idaho, Illinois, Maryland, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Dakota, and Utah, in addition to Minnesota Attorney General Ellison, Wyoming Attorney General Hill, and Iowa Attorney General Miller.

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