

BREAKING THE FOOD MONOPOLY

How Four Companies Control Your Grocery Bill
and How We Break Their Grip

*"I can't control the weather. But I can break up the companies
that use the weather as an excuse to raise your prices
and never bring them back down."*

Xavier Lampkin

Republican Candidate for President, 2028

lampkin2028.com

FEC Committee ID: C00939371 | Candidate ID: P80009020

1. The Problem

Food prices in America have risen roughly 29% since 2020. That is not normal inflation. Grocery prices spiked 11.4% in 2022 alone, the highest single-year increase since 1979. And even as the initial causes of those increases have faded, prices have not come back down. They never do. There is a structural reason for that.

Four companies control your meat supply. JBS, Tyson Foods, Cargill, and National Beef Packing control 85% of the U.S. beef processing market. In 1980, the top four controlled just 36%. Two of these companies, JBS and National Beef, are foreign-owned by Brazilian corporations. These same conglomerates dominate pork (roughly 67% controlled by the top four) and poultry (roughly 45% by the top two).

At the grocery level, four companies -- Walmart, Kroger, Costco, and Albertsons -- control more than two-thirds of the U.S. grocery market. When shoppers think they are choosing between competing brands, most of those brands roll up to the same handful of corporate parents.

This is not capitalism. This is a cartel. When four companies control an entire supply chain from the ranch to the register, they set the price farmers get paid AND the price you pay at the store. Ranchers get squeezed. Consumers get squeezed. The processors in the middle pocket the difference.



The Big Four have been repeatedly accused of colluding to keep prices high. JBS alone paid over \$200 million in settlements tied to price-fixing claims in beef and pork markets. Tyson has faced similar litigation in poultry and meat pricing. In November 2025, President Trump directed the Department of Justice to investigate the Big Four for potential collusion, price fixing, and price manipulation. The problem is recognized at the highest levels. The question is whether anyone will actually fix it.

2. Why Prices Never Come Back Down

Every time there is a crisis -- a pandemic, a drought, a bird flu outbreak, a war -- food prices spike. That part makes sense. Supply tightens, costs rise, prices go up. But when the crisis passes, the prices stay. That is the monopoly at work.

Here is how the cycle works:

- **Crisis hits** -- drought, disease, supply chain disruption. The Big Four raise prices and point to legitimate cost increases.
- **Crisis passes** -- supply recovers, input costs normalize. But the Big Four do not lower prices. With only four buyers, ranchers have no leverage to demand fair prices. With concentrated retail, consumers have no real alternatives.
- **Margins widen** -- the spread between what a rancher gets paid per pound of cattle and what you pay per pound of beef has grown dramatically over 20 years. The processors in the middle keep the difference.
- **Repeat** -- the next crisis arrives and prices go up again, from an already-inflated baseline. They never come back to where they started.

In a competitive market, when one processor raises prices after a crisis ends, another undercuts them to win market share. That is how capitalism is supposed to work. But when four companies control 85% of the market, there is nobody to undercut anyone. They all raise prices together and they all keep them there together. The Department of Justice has the tools to stop this. They have just never used them.

3. The Lampkin Plan: Breaking the Grip

This is not about punishing companies for being successful. This is about restoring competition to a market that has been strangled by concentration. Competition lowers prices. Monopoly raises them. Here is how we restore competition.

A. Enforce the Laws That Already Exist

The Packers and Stockyards Act was written in 1921 specifically to prevent meatpacking monopolies. It has barely been enforced in decades. We do not need new legislation. We need a president who tells the USDA to use the tools they already have.

- Direct the USDA to aggressively enforce the Packers and Stockyards Act against anticompetitive practices in beef, pork, and poultry
- Expand DOJ antitrust investigations beyond the current probe -- pursue structural remedies, not just fines that the Big Four treat as a cost of doing business
- Block future mergers that reduce competition in food processing and retail. When Kroger tried to merge with Albertsons, that was two of the four largest grocers trying to become one. That cannot happen.
- Prosecute price-fixing. Fines are not enough. When companies collude to inflate the price of food for 330 million Americans, there must be criminal accountability.

B. Rebuild Regional Processing Infrastructure

Incentivizing small farmers is not enough if there is nowhere for them to process their cattle. The Big Four dominate because they own the processing plants. A rancher in Nebraska who wants to sell beef independently still has to send his cattle to a JBS or Tyson plant because there is no alternative within 200 miles. We have to rebuild the infrastructure between the farm and the grocery store.

- Fund construction of regional meat processing plants through FDSA savings -- not loans, grants. Give communities the capacity to process beef, pork, and poultry without going through a Big Four facility
- Provide tax credits and reduced regulatory burden for independent processors who create competition in underserved regions
- Support rancher-owned cooperative processing ventures like Sustainable Beef in Nebraska, which is building a 1,500-head-per-day facility to compete directly with the Big Four
- FDSA-built digital marketplace connecting regional farms directly to regional buyers, school lunch programs, and local retailers -- cut out the middlemen entirely

C. Incentivize Smaller Farmers and Ranchers

- Tax credits for farms selling direct to consumers, farmers markets, and local retailers
- Federal procurement reform: require a percentage of military, school lunch, and government cafeteria food purchases to come from independent regional producers, not Big Four subsidiaries
- Expand USDA programs that help small and mid-size operations access capital, equipment, and technical assistance
- Protect beginning farmers and ranchers from predatory contracting practices by the Big Four, who use take-it-or-leave-it contracts to squeeze producers into unprofitable arrangements

D. Price Transparency

When four companies control the market, they operate in the dark. Nobody sees what they pay ranchers versus what they charge retailers. That opacity is how the margin squeeze works. We end it with sunlight.

- Mandatory public reporting of the buy-sell spread: what processors pay ranchers per pound versus what they charge retailers per pound. When that gap is visible to everyone, political and market pressure does the rest.
- FTC authority to investigate sudden, unjustified price spikes in essential food categories
- Public reporting of profit margins by major food companies during periods of claimed supply shortages -- if you claim supply is tight but your margins are growing, something is wrong

E. Lower the Costs That Hit Every Product

Everything on every shelf was shipped there. When energy costs rise, food costs rise. When supply chains break, food costs rise. Fixing the structural costs that flow into every product is part of the food cost solution.

- Expand domestic energy production -- oil, gas, nuclear, and renewables. Energy independence means price stability for everything, including food.
- FDSA-built modernization of port systems, freight logistics, and customs processing to reduce supply chain bottlenecks
- Streamline permitting for energy infrastructure so pipelines, refineries, and transmission lines stop sitting in regulatory limbo for years while Americans pay higher prices

4. How This Is Funded

Regional processing plant grants, farmer incentives, digital marketplace infrastructure, and enhanced enforcement are funded through the Federal Digital Systems Administration (FDSA). The FDSA saves \$35-40 billion per year by replacing wasteful government IT contractor spending with in-house federal engineering. A fraction of those savings funds the food competition infrastructure that breaks the Big Four's grip on American food.

Antitrust enforcement and price transparency measures require no new spending. The DOJ and USDA already have the legal authority. They just need a president who tells them to use it.

5. The Honest Truth

No president can promise you cheap groceries by January. Some food prices are driven by global commodity markets, weather events, drought cycles, disease outbreaks, and forces no single administration fully controls. Beef prices in 2025-2026 are elevated partly because the U.S. cattle herd has shrunk to its smallest level in over 70 years after prolonged drought forced ranchers to reduce herd sizes. That takes years to recover regardless of policy.

What a president can do is break the structural monopoly power that prevents prices from ever coming back down after a crisis passes. That is this plan. It is a 2-4 year structural shift as regional processing capacity comes online and real competition forces the Big Four to stop coordinating prices. It is not a quick fix. It is a permanent fix.

Any candidate who tells you they will lower your grocery bill in their first hundred days is lying to you. I am telling you the truth: this takes time, this takes enforcement, and this takes building infrastructure that should have been built decades ago. But when it is done, the food market works the way a free market is supposed to work -- with real competition, real choices, and real

accountability.

"Four companies control your beef. Four companies control your pork. That's not capitalism -- that's a cartel. And I'm coming for it."

Xavier Lampkin

Republican Candidate for President, 2028

lampkin2028.com

Sources: White House Executive Order on Meatpacking Investigation (November 2025), USDA Economic Research Service Food Price Outlook, Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Price Index, Farm Action, USDA Packers and Stockyards Division, Department of Justice antitrust filings, Congressional Research Service reports on agricultural concentration.

Paid for by Lampkin for President. Not authorized by any other candidate or candidate's committee.