What are the details of the recently signed order regarding meat producers being able to process and sell their products locally?

Thought for 28s

President Trump announced on August 28, 2026, that he is authorizing legal documents to give farmers and ranchers the right to process their own food. This was framed as a way to challenge the dominance of the "Big Four" meatpackers (Tyson, JBS, Cargill, and National Beef), which handle roughly 85% of U.S. fed-cattle slaughter. Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins followed up the same day, saying detailed actions would begin rolling out Monday, August 31. cowboystatedaily.com

Under current federal law, ranchers can slaughter and process animals for their own household use (or for guests and employees). Meat intended for commercial sale—especially individual cuts sold to the public or across state lines—generally must come from a USDA-inspected facility. Custom-exempt plants can process an owner's animal, but the resulting meat is marked "Not for Sale" and cannot be sold commercially. State-inspected meat is typically limited to in-state sales unless the plant participates in the Cooperative Interstate Shipment program. newsnationnow.com

What the administration has outlined

Rollins listed these priorities for the Monday announcements and related USDA actions:

- Waiving red tape in meat processing.
- Expanding ranchers' ability to sell across state lines.
- Rescinding outdated guidance.
- Adding technology for faster food-safety data so plants can move product more quickly.
- Increased funding and deregulation for small processors.
- Steps to fight consolidation so smaller plants can compete.
- Expanding "truth in labeling." @SecRollins

On August 31, USDA announced the **Ranchers First Initiative**. Processing-related pieces include:

- A new **SPUR Guaranteed Loan Program** to support regional processing, processor co-ops, expansion of small businesses, and a wider variety of proteins.
- A **Regional Processor Continuity Effort** to strengthen regional capacity and shift available processing slots (from recent large-plant closures) toward independent, American-owned small and mid-sized plants and co-ops.
- Prioritizing federal procurement of *locally processed* American beef for institutions such as prisons, hospitals, and other federal and state facilities (working with HHS, DOJ, VA, and the Department of War). usda.gov

These steps build on earlier 2026 actions, including the Small Processors Action Plan, additional Meat and Poultry Processing Expansion Program funding, and the Strengthening Processing for U.S. Ranchers (SPUR) program that provided up to $500 million for small and mid-sized beef facilities.

Important caveats

Major statutory changes—such as letting custom-slaughtered meat be sold commercially within a state without federal inspection (the goal of the bipartisan PRIME Act)—generally require Congress. Rep. Thomas Massie and others have noted that an executive action or USDA guidance cannot fully rewrite the Federal Meat Inspection Act. Industry groups including the National Cattlemen's Beef Association and the Meat

Institute have warned against weakening federal inspection standards, citing food-safety risks. Details of the specific "legal documents" Trump authorized have not been publicly released as of August 31. thehill.com

In short, the recent moves focus on reducing regulatory burdens, expanding market access for smaller and local processors (including interstate sales where legally possible), providing loans and procurement demand, and supporting co-ops—while the most far-reaching changes to inspection rules remain constrained by existing statute.