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## Australia: Farmers Slam Labor Over US Beef Risk

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Farmers and industry leaders are voicing concern over the Albanese government's decision to ease biosecurity restrictions on beef imports from the United States, warning the move could expose Australia to potentially devastating livestock diseases.

Under the policy change, certain long-standing import controls have been loosened, paving the way for increased volumes of US beef to enter the Australian market. Critics argue this decision undermines Australia's strong biosecurity standards and prioritises political interests over agricultural safety.

Cattle Australia, a peak industry body, described the move as “dangerous,” with several producers suggesting it was politically motivated. According to interviews published by *The Australian*, some in the sector believe Prime Minister Anthony Albanese made the decision to maintain goodwill with US President Joe Biden, particularly following recent international defence and trade discussions.

“The risk of foot-and-mouth disease or other infections entering through relaxed controls is not worth the political gain,” one Queensland cattle producer told the outlet. “It’s a gamble with our industry’s future.”

Australia is known globally for its strict biosecurity protocols, which have helped protect its livestock sector from major outbreaks seen elsewhere. Farmers now worry that relaxing standards for a major exporter like the US could set a precedent, weakening public trust and threatening local food production.

Opposition agriculture spokesperson David Littleproud also weighed in, urging the government to “put Australian farmers first” and review the decision immediately.

“Biosecurity is not something we should compromise on for diplomatic reasons,” he said.

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry has stated that all imported beef would still be subject to testing and oversight. However, many producers remain sceptical, pointing out that changes to enforcement standards or frequency of inspections could still leave Australia vulnerable.

With rural communities still recovering from years of drought, supply chain issues, and inflationary pressures, industry voices argue that now is not the time to add further risk.

Farmers are calling for transparency from the government and demand that any future trade negotiations involving food imports include direct consultation with Australian producers.