

Title: A Reflection on the Historical Bond Between Purebred Breeders and Commercial Producers — and the Brahman Breed’s Role in Building the Future

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In the long and storied history of the American cattle industry, the relationship between purebred breeders and commercial cattle producers has been one of mutual dependence. At times, it’s been cast as “real world” versus “seedstock,” or show world, but the truth is, all segments need each other. It takes all parts—purebred and commercial, registered and crossbred—to make this business work.

Historically, purebred breeders have driven the engine of genetic progress. The Brahman breed in particular has played a foundational role in that story—providing the muscle behind hybrid vigor, the durability needed for harsh environments, and maternal strength that holds cow herds together from Florida to the Gulf Coast and far beyond.

Commercial cattle producers have served as the proving ground, where cattle must perform under pressure—through drought, fluctuating markets, and limited resources. And Brahman genetics have proven time and again that they thrive in these environments. Whether it’s in coastal humidity, Southwestern heat, or across the tropics, Brahman cattle continue to demonstrate unmatched adaptability, longevity, and economic return.

Together, this relationship has always been rooted in a shared goal: strengthening the cattle industry from the ground up.

But today, we find ourselves at a crossroads. The dynamics of the beef industry—and the definition of what it means to be a cattle producer—are evolving quickly.

The latest USDA census offers a sobering reminder of that. In just five years, we’ve lost **107,000 independent beef cattle producers**—more than **21,000 per year**—and **2.5 million mother cows**, an **8% decline in the national herd**. Over the past 42 years, we’ve lost **665,000 producers**, with only **622,000** left today.

This isn’t just about drought or bad luck—it’s a long-term trend driven by industry consolidation, trade pressures, regulatory burdens, and generational turnover. Young people face mounting challenges in returning to family operations, and urban sprawl continues to claim land once dedicated to production.

Despite these challenges, I remain optimistic—because we are not without tools or opportunity. Brahman cattle are a prime example of how adaptability, efficiency, and smart breeding can overcome adversity. Their contributions are not limited to the Southeast or tropical regions. Brahman influence is seen in **F1 programs**, **terminal crosses**, and **maternal base herds** that continue to outperform in tough conditions.

In fact, the Brahman breed has quietly underpinned many of the industry’s most successful commercial programs. Our genetics offer hybrid vigor unmatched by any other, with calves that

are vigorous at birth, cows that breed back under pressure, and steers that convert with efficiency in the feedyard when managed properly. In international markets, Brahman cattle are prized for their hardiness, disease resistance, and ability to produce in climates where other breeds fail.

This is a moment where we, as purebred breeders, must step forward—not just to promote our genetics, but to protect and support the broader cattle industry that relies on them.

The future of the Brahman breed is directly tied to the success of the commercial cattleman. If independent producers continue to exit the business, the demand for improved genetics declines. Innovation, data, and progress depend on a thriving commercial segment.

That's why we must advocate for policies that level the playing field. It also means telling our story better. We need to highlight the Brahman breed's contributions—not just to the U.S. herd, but to global beef production.

At ABBA, we are committed to standing with our commercial customers through programs like **F1 Advantage**, expanded genomic tools, and efforts to connect producers with premium markets. We're also investing in international partnerships, youth development, and breed education to ensure Brahman cattle continue to play a vital role in the future of the beef industry.

We have a proud past—but our future depends on proactive leadership, shared purpose, and a clear message that Brahman cattle aren't just part of the industry—they're a cornerstone of its resilience.

The numbers are serious—but so is our resolve. Let's be the generation that not only honors the history of the Brahman breed and the cattle industry—but charts a stronger, more unified path forward.