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PRESS RELEASE

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Maryland Partners with USDA to Help Reduce Anticompetitive Barriers Across Food and Agriculture Supply Chains

BALTIMORE, MD (July 24, 2023) – Maryland Attorney General Anthony G. Brown joined the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and a bipartisan coalition of Attorneys General from 31 states and the District of Columbia to enhance competition and protect consumers in food and agricultural markets, including in grocery, meat, and poultry processing.

The new partnership will assist the coalition of Attorneys General in tackling anticompetitive market structures in agriculture and related industries that are raising prices and limiting choices for consumers and producers.

Specifically, this initiative will enhance the capacity of Attorneys General to conduct assessments of competition and consumer issues at the state-level, enhance coordination between federal and state agriculture and competition authorities, create new and more independent research programs, and ultimately result in fairer and more competitive markets and more resilient supply chains.

“Food security is not a luxury, and for many Maryland families the rising costs of groceries creates considerable insecurity,” **said Attorney General Brown**. “In joining this collaborative effort, we are increasing our capacity to investigate and tackle anti-consumer behavior that drives up food prices, limits options, and disrupts a key supply chain. Every Marylander, no matter their income or location, should have access to affordable and healthy food options, and I’m committed to making that a reality for all.”

Focus areas of the new Agricultural Competition Partnership include:

- Anticompetitive market structures and practices, as well as price-gouging and other anti- consumer practices, in food, retail, meat, and poultry processing, and other agriculture industries;
- Lack of choices for consumers and producers; and

- Conflicts of interest, misuse of intellectual property, and anticompetitive barriers across the food and agriculture supply chains, such as in seed markets.

At the request of the states, USDA is partnering with the Center for State Enforcement of Antitrust and Consumer Protection Laws, a neutral, nonpartisan organization that provides similar support to the states. The State Center is creating an oversight committee to establish the project governance and transparency standards for the partnership, and a project selection advisory committee that will review project requests and recommend approval. Both committees will be composed of participating state Attorney General offices.

<https://www.marylandattorneygeneral.gov/press/2023/072223.pdf>