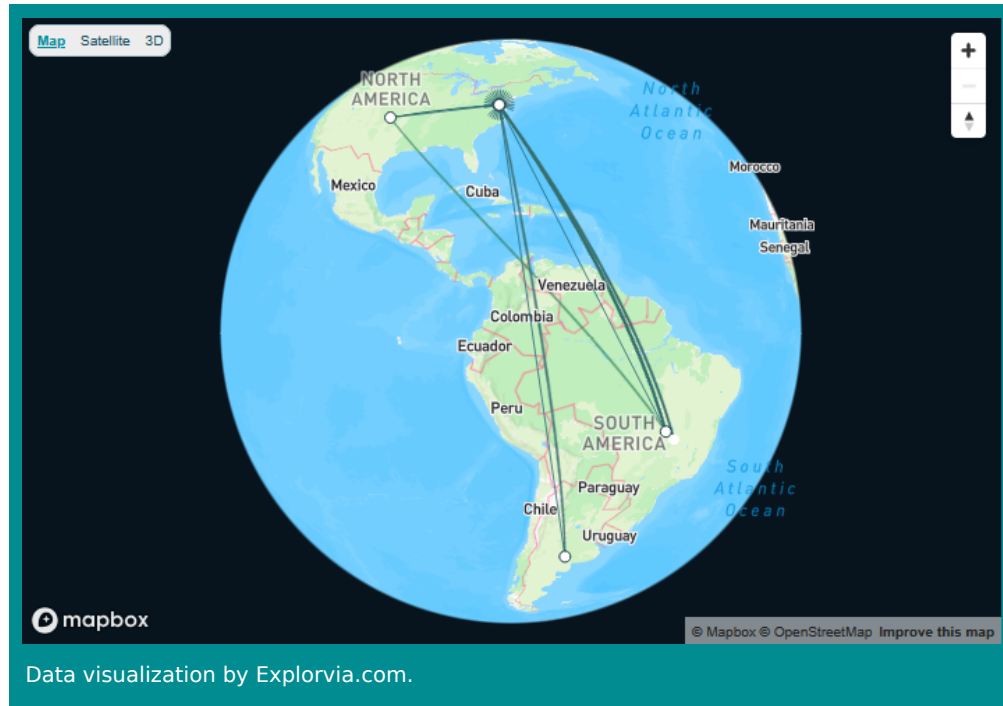




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Trump's Beef Import Plan: The Batista Brothers, Bribery Cases and a \$5 Million Donation

Their family holding company pleaded guilty in a U.S. bribery case. Their poultry subsidiary gave \$5 million to Trump's inauguration. Trump disclosed shares in that subsidiary. Then Joesley Batista reportedly met the president a day before he announced expanded beef imports.

Joesley Batista, one of the billionaire brothers who control meatpacking giant JBS, reportedly met President Donald Trump in the Oval Office on August 20, 2026, to discuss bringing more Brazilian beef into the United States. The following day, Trump announced plans to expand beef imports. On August 26, he signed a proclamation increasing the import quota for specified lean beef trimmings by 300,000 metric tons. [\[1\]](#) [\[2\]](#)

The meeting was reported by The Wall Street Journal, citing people familiar with the discussion. Reuters repeated the account while stating that it could not immediately verify it. The Journal said it had not established who arranged the appointment. [\[3\]](#) [\[1\]](#)

Batista and his brother Wesley control a multinational business whose history includes admitted bribery, a U.S. corporate criminal conviction and securities-enforcement findings against both brothers. Their U.S. poultry subsidiary, Pilgrim's Pride, contributed \$5 million to Trump's inaugural committee. Trump's own financial disclosure also lists Pilgrim's Pride stock and dividend income. [\[4\]](#) [\[5\]](#) [\[6\]](#) [\[7\]](#)

The family and the business

JBS's corporate history says José Batista Sobrinho began the business in Anápolis, Goiás, in 1953 with a small slaughterhouse. The company later grew through acquisitions. A 2026 company filing describes the 2007 Swift & Company acquisition as approximately \$1.5 billion overall, while Swift's transaction announcement described \$225 million in cash for shares held by two sellers and J&F's assumption of approximately \$1.2 billion in Swift debt, plus expenses. The May 29, 2007 transaction announcement described an enterprise value of approximately \$1.4 billion. [8] [9] [10]

Wesley and Joesley Batista jointly control JBS through J&F entities. Pilgrim's Pride's 2024 filing says the brothers joined its board on February 8, 2024, after Wesley Batista Filho resigned from the board. JBS announced on April 27, 2023, that Wesley Batista Filho would become chief executive of JBS USA effective May 1, following Tim Schellpeper's retirement. [11] [12] [13]

JBS owns approximately 82% of Pilgrim's Pride. In August 2026, it proposed acquiring the remaining shares in exchange for 2.086 JBS shares per Pilgrim's share. An independent committee was still reviewing that proposal in October. [14] [15]

The bribery admissions and U.S. cases

In May 2017, Reuters reported that Wesley and Joesley Batista testified that they had spent 600 million reais bribing nearly 1,900 politicians. J&F announced a 10.3-billion-real corporate leniency penalty, approximately \$3.2 billion at the time, payable over 25 years with inflation adjustments. [16] [17]

J&F Investimentos entered a corporate leniency agreement with Brazil's Federal Prosecution Office in June 2017. Pilgrim's Pride's 2024 filing says J&F agreed in June 2017 to an 8-billion-real fine and 2.3 billion reais for social projects over 25 years, subject to inflation adjustments. The filing says the total fine was later reduced to 3.5 billion reais and Brazil's Supreme Federal Court suspended J&F's obligation to make additional installment payments in December 2023 after J&F petitioned over alleged misconduct by enforcement authorities. The company filing says the agreement otherwise remained in effect. [11] [18]

1. U.S. law: 18 U.S.C. § 371 - conspiracy; charged object: FCPA, 15 U.S.C. § 78dd-3
If two or more persons conspire either to commit any offense against the United States, or to defraud the United States, or any agency thereof in any manner or for any purpose, and one or more of such persons do any act to effect the object of the conspiracy, each shall be fined under this title or imprisoned not more than five years, or both. [19] [20]

On October 14, 2020, J&F Investimentos pleaded guilty in federal court in Brooklyn to conspiring to violate the U.S. Foreign Corrupt Practices Act. Its admitted scheme ran from 2005 through 2017. J&F agreed to a \$256.5 million criminal penalty; U.S. authorities allowed credit of up to half that amount for qualifying payments under the Brazilian resolution. [4]

J&F admitted promising or paying more than \$148 million for Brazilian officials' benefit to obtain BNDES financing, more than \$4.6 million for a Petros pension-fund executive's benefit to secure merger approval, and approximately \$25 million to a senior legislative official to obtain Caixa financing. The scheme used New York bank accounts and included a Manhattan apartment transferred as a bribe. [4]

The SEC's October 2020 order found that Wesley and Joesley Batista and their companies paid approximately \$150 million in bribes during 2009-2015. The payments helped obtain and maintain \$2 billion in BNDES financing used in part for JBS's 2009 acquisition of Pilgrim's Pride. The order describes shell companies, accounts held for a Brazilian minister's benefit, fake invoices, cash and payments routed as official election donations. Some funds passed through JBS accounts containing money

transferred from Pilgrim's Pride. These payments overlap with the conduct addressed in J&F's criminal case. [5] [4]

2. U.S. law: 15 U.S.C. § 78m(b)(5) - Exchange Act § 13(b)(5)
No person shall knowingly circumvent or knowingly fail to implement a system of internal accounting controls or knowingly falsify any book, record, or account described in paragraph (2). [21] [5]

The SEC found that Wesley and Joesley Batista concealed the bribery arrangements from Pilgrim's Pride's accountants and auditors, knowingly caused inaccurate books and records, and violated Exchange Act Section 13(b)(5) and Rules 13b2-1 and 13b2-2. J&F and JBS also caused Pilgrim's accounting and internal-control violations. In the settled administrative proceeding, JBS agreed to approximately \$26.9 million in disgorgement and interest, and each brother agreed to a \$550,000 civil penalty. The resolution required compliance improvements and three years of reporting. [5] [22]

The criminal guilty plea was J&F's; the brothers' U.S. resolutions were civil securities proceedings. [4] [5]

Reuters reported that Federal Police arrested Wesley Batista in São Paulo on September 13, 2017, amid an investigation into suspected use of nonpublic information in market transactions before the public disclosure of J&F executives' cooperation agreement. His lawyer called the detention unjust and said the Batistas had cooperated with authorities. [23] [24]

In February 2018, Brazil's Superior Court of Justice ordered Wesley Batista released after nearly six months in detention, subject to restrictions, according to Bloomberg and Folha reporting. [25] [26]

In October 2023, Brazil's securities regulator acquitted Wesley and Joesley Batista of specified administrative allegations involving JBS share transactions and currency transactions involving JBS, Seara and Eldorado. Some votes were divided. J&F received a 500,000-real fine for trading JBS shares during a restricted period. Those decisions concerned separate Brazilian securities proceedings, distinct from the 2017 criminal investigation and the U.S. resolutions. [24]

Access to Trump preceded the beef announcement

CNN Brasil reported that Joesley met Trump at the White House in early September 2025 to discuss beef tariffs and pulp, another J&F business interest through Eldorado. The outlet said two industry sources confirmed the meeting and that Batista was not attending as a Brazilian government representative. [27]

That month, UOL documented Batista's Washington contacts with Representative Byron Donalds, José Felix of lobbying firm Ballard Partners and former Trump National Security Council official Mauricio Claver-Carone. Its reporting included a photograph identifying the participants. [28]

By May 2026, Reuters reported that Batista had helped arrange a meeting between Trump and Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, citing a person directly familiar with the talks. [29]

The \$5 million contribution

Federal Election Commission records list Pilgrim's Pride's \$5 million inaugural contribution on January 2, 2025, with Donald Trump and J.D. Vance as the committee's honorees. JBS owns approximately 82% of Pilgrim's Pride; Wesley and Joesley Batista are JBS's ultimate controlling shareholders. [30] [31] [6] [32]

On May 19, 2025, Senator Elizabeth Warren asked company executives who authorized the contribution, whether their boards approved it, what communications occurred with Trump's transition team and whether favorable treatment was expected. Her inquiry also raised JBS's U.S. listing approval

and federal policies affecting the companies. These were questions posed by a senator, not findings that the donation was unlawful. [32]

Pilgrim’s Pride said its contribution reflected participation in the civic process. [33]

Federal rule 11 CFR 110.20(j) prohibits foreign nationals from directly or indirectly donating to inaugural committees and prohibits knowingly accepting such donations. Pilgrim’s Pride is a U.S. corporation with foreign controlling ownership. The records reviewed do not establish the source of the donated funds or who made the decision sufficiently to determine a violation. [34] [32]

A separate political organization, JBS USA Food Company PAC, reported \$225,429.40 in receipts and \$271,903.10 in disbursements from January 1, 2025, through August 31, 2026. Contributions to other committees totaled \$267,000; ending cash was \$158,949.32, and no independent expenditures were reported. Receipts were categorized as individual contributions. For 2023-2024, the PAC reported \$300,562.39 in individual contributions received and \$206,709.34 in disbursements. These PAC figures are separate from the inaugural donation. [35] [36]

An itemized-data review lists JBS USA Food Company PAC contributions to federal candidates including Blake Moore, Gabe Evans and Morgan McGarvey (\$10,000 each), and Zachary Nunn (\$8,500). That review totals \$192,500 in direct candidate contributions for its itemized snapshot, while the FEC’s official summary reports \$267,000 in contributions to other committees through August 31, 2026. [37] [35]

Trump’s stock and dividend income

Trump’s annual disclosure filed in June 2026, covering 2025, lists Pilgrim’s Pride in investment account 7: a holding valued at \$1,001-\$15,000 and dividend income of \$201-\$1,000. The entry appears on page 81, row 76. [7]

Pilgrim’s Pride paid two special dividends in 2025: \$6.30 per share on April 17 to shareholders of record April 3, and \$2.10 per share on September 3 to shareholders of record August 20. Trump’s disclosure does not identify which payment he received. [38]

Transaction date	Action	Reported amount
May 22, 2026	Purchase	\$15,001-\$50,000
July 8, 2026	Sale	\$1,001-\$15,000
July 27, 2026	Sale	\$1,001-\$15,000

The July sales occurred 49 days and 30 days before the August 26 proclamation. They became public in September. [39] [40]

A transaction tracker additionally lists a June 3 purchase and June 24 sale; those entries remain unverified against the scanned original. The records reviewed do not establish the remaining share balance on August 26 or today. [41]

The White House says independent financial institutions manage Trump’s investment portfolio. [42]

What the import order changed

Trump announced on August 21, 2026, a plan for up to 300,000 metric tons of imported beef for ground-beef production over 90 days, with the stated aim of lowering prices and giving the U.S. cattle herd room to grow. He declined to name the countries; the White House expected an implementing order within two weeks. On August 26, Trump signed a proclamation. On September 4, he named Argentina and Brazil as sources. [43] [2] [44]

The proclamation's scope was narrower and its timing more specific than the initial social-media description. It increased the in-quota allowance for specified fresh or frozen lean beef trimmings used for ground beef by 300,000 metric tons for calendar year 2026. The added quantity was divided into three first-come, first-served monthly tranches of 100,000 metric tons: September 1-30, October 1-30, and October 31-November 30. It was allocated to "other countries or areas," excluding countries with country-specific quotas; the White House fact sheet also said it did not modify commitments for free-trade partners. The added quota used the lower in-quota tariff rate. [2] [45] [46] [47]

The president cited supply disruption, high demand, drought and wildfire pressures, and restrictions on Mexican cattle imports related to New World screwworm as reasons for the action. He invoked section 404 of the Uruguay Round Agreements Act, which allows a temporary increase in tariff-rate quota quantities when the President determines that supply will be inadequate because of a natural disaster, disease, or major national market disruption. The proclamation also cited section 604 of the Trade Act of 1974 for changes to the Harmonized Tariff Schedule. [2] [48]

U.S. requirement: August 26 proclamation, clause 6(b). The Agriculture Secretary and U.S. Trade Representative must monitor whether qualifying imported lean beef trimmings sell 25% below the market price for those trimmings. This is a monitoring requirement; no breach is established here. [48]

The proclamation instructed the Agriculture Secretary and U.S. Trade Representative to monitor whether imported lean beef trimmings were sold at 25% below the market price for those trimmings. If they determined the condition was not met, they were to notify Trump, who could eliminate the remaining added quota. The White House described the discount relative to the going import price; Trump's original post, as reported by the article, described it relative to current market prices. [2] [45]

How the meat reaches buyers

JBS sells protein products to supermarkets, club stores, other retail distributors, restaurants, hotels, foodservice distributors and further processors. Its corporate reporting describes more than 330,000 customers worldwide. Products may carry company brands or store brands, so the label may not identify the processor. JBS USA also describes wholesale and further-processor customers for imported meat. Its U.S. Cattle Buyers directory identifies company personnel who buy cattle by location. [49] [50]

Imported lean trimmings enter a commercial chain that includes further processing, grinding, packaging, distribution and retail or foodservice sales. The research reviewed does not yet identify a shipment-by-shipment chain linking the additional Brazilian quota to particular supermarkets or restaurant brands. [49] [50]

Pilgrim's Pride's 2025 annual report states that its two largest U.S. customers together accounted for approximately 16.8% of consolidated net sales. [51] [52] [38]

That poultry-company concentration figure does not identify buyers of the Brazilian beef. [51] [52] [38]

What the first month showed

A Texas A&M AgriLife Extension analysis published October 6 reported that 37,486 metric tons - about 37.5% of the first 100,000-ton tranche - had entered by September 28, leaving approximately 62,514 metric tons unused in that tranche. Comparing the entries with USDA's July and September import forecasts, the analysis estimated about 8,054 metric tons may have been additional to expected imports. Comparing entries with eligible countries' September 2022-2025 average produced a higher estimate of about 21,936 metric tons. The authors emphasized that both estimates depend on assumptions and that quota entries are not automatically all-new supply. [53] [54]

The first-month analysis found no noticeable retail beef-price change in September and explained that imported trimmings still need further processing and marketing before reaching consumers. The National Cattlemen's Beef Association said on August 21 that cattle markets had already turned sharply lower and warned that below-market imports could discourage herd expansion. The United States Cattlemen's Association questioned whether the policy would reduce retail prices. [53] [55] [56]

The Federal Election Commission lists NCBA-PAC as an active trade-association political action committee. From January 1, 2025, through September 30, 2026, it reported \$1,253,234.16 in receipts and \$1,196,100 in disbursements, of which \$1,196,000 was reported as contributions to other committees. [57]

3. U.S. law: 9 CFR 327.6(a)(1)

Except as provided in §§ 327.16 and 327.17, all products offered for entry from any foreign country shall be reinspected by a Program inspector before they shall be allowed entry into the United States. [58]

CBS reported Corte Argentino recalled Argentine beef distributed in Florida and Texas after the products entered without required import reinspection. [59]

That recall concerned Argentine products, not an identified JBS shipment. [59]

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