



May 26, 2004

Dear Representative:

I write to urge you to oppose efforts that are likely to be offered by Representatives Goodlatte and Stenholm to repeal the mandatory country of origin labeling provision in the 2002 Farm Bill.

Supporters of this legislation will insist that they are simply making the labeling program a voluntary one. However, this change would effectively kill a program that can provide consumers valuable information about the source of their food. Voluntary labeling has been an option for years, yet few processors and packers have been willing to participate. This has led to confusion for consumers, especially during the recent mad cow scare and Hepatitis A outbreak related to scallions. These incidents only reinforce the fact that consumers need to be able to determine where their food comes from. A voluntary program will not provide the level of assurance that a mandatory program can provide.

National Consumers League, Public Citizen and Consumer Federation of America have long supported country-of-origin labeling of meat, poultry, seafood and fresh produce, as a means of providing consumers with additional information about the source of their food. Numerous polls have shown overwhelming consumer support for labeling as well as the willingness to pay extra for such information. In short, consumers want country of origin labeling for their food.

I urge you to oppose efforts to repeal mandatory COOL with a voluntary program that will not be sufficient in providing consumers with the necessary information to make an informed choice in the supermarket.

Thank you very much for considering this important issue.

Sincerely,

Linda Golodner
National Consumers League

Patty Lovera
Public Citizen

Chris Waldrop
Consumer Federation of America