



Consumer Federation of America

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 30, 2013

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Consumer, Farm Groups Urge Farm Bill Conferees to Defend Country of Origin Labeling Law

Consumer and farm groups yesterday urged Farm Bill conferees to defend the 2008 law which requires country of origin labeling for beef, pork, poultry, fresh and frozen fruits and vegetables and some nuts. The groups were writing in response to a letter by agribusiness and packer-producer groups which encouraged Congress to make changes to the popular law.

Consumer Federation of America joined the National Farmers Union, the U.S. Cattleman's Association and the American Sheep Industry Association in urging Congress to ignore the agribusiness industry letter and protect the COOL law from any changes. A copy of the letter is available [here](#).

"Ninety percent of Americans strongly support mandatory country of origin labeling for fresh meat and, in fact, want even more information about the meat they purchase," said Chris Waldrop, Director of the Food Policy Institute at Consumer Federation of America. "There is no reason for Congress to change this popular law."

The groups noted that a recent World Trade Organization (WTO) decision on COOL affirmed the right of the United States to require country of origin labeling for meat products, but said that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) had to adjust some provisions in order to be fully compliant with WTO requirements. USDA's changes complied with the WTO ruling by providing consumers with additional information on where each of the production steps for cattle -- born, raised and slaughtered -- occurs.

The groups also pointed out that USDA's changes to the COOL rule are currently being evaluated in two forums: the WTO, based on an appeal by Canada and Mexico, and the courts, based on a lawsuit brought against USDA by many of the same packer-producer organizations, agribusinesses, and foreign competitors who wrote Congress to change the law.

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Consumer Federation of America is an association of nearly 300 nonprofit consumer organizations that was established in 1968 to advance the consumer interest through research, advocacy and education.