

Campaign for Contract Agriculture Reform, Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance, Food & Water Watch, Land Stewardship Project, Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement, Missouri Rural Crisis Center, National Family Farm Coalition, Organization of Competitive Markets, Ranchers Cattlemen Action Legal Fund – United Stockgrowers of America, Rural Advancement Foundation International-USA, Western Organization of Resource Councils

Our organizations are promoting interrelated reforms to restore competitive livestock markets and fair contracts based on a platform supported by over 200 organizations that represent independent farmers and ranchers, contract growers, and consumers (available at <http://tinyurl.com/3gcty2>).

Agricultural Competition Issue Brief 13 of 18: **Eliminate Loopholes in Country-of-Origin Labeling**

Obama-Biden Position: “Implement Country of Origin Labeling so that American producers can distinguish their products from imported ones.”

Relevant Program: Agricultural Marketing Act

Relevant Agency: USDA Agricultural Marketing Service

Policy Recommendation – Administration Action Request:

- 1) Correct deficiencies in the IFR to ensure proper labeling of meat produced exclusively in the United States and to broaden the volume of commodities subject to the COOL law.
- 2) Remove livestock from the U.S. Department of the Treasury’s list of imported products (J-List) that are exempt from the United States general requirement that all imported products be permanently marked with their respective mark of origin as a condition of importation into the United States.
- 3) Amend the COOL law to expand both the scope of commodities subject to the COOL law and the establishments that are required to label commodities

Background: Increased globalization relegates U.S. farmers and ranchers as suppliers of generic commodities, rather than producers of superior products produced under superior conditions. Consumers are unable to exercise choice regarding the origin of their food.

The solution is to distinguish food products according to their origin with country-of-origin label (COOL). COOL facilitates competition by allowing U.S. farmers and ranchers to differentiating their products based on U.S. attributes and it empowers consumers to exercise choice in the marketplace.

A broad-based coalition of consumer, farmer/rancher, commodity, faith-based and rural groups successfully passed a mandatory COOL law in the 2002 Farm Bill. However, COOL was outwardly opposed by the Administration and by food-processing industries.

The 2008 Farm Bill requires labeling for beef, pork, lamb, goat meat, chicken, ginseng, pecans and macadamia nuts, fish, fresh fruits and vegetables. The law includes labels for commodities with mixed origins; by simplifying and reducing record keeping requirements, including allowing producer affidavits for verification of live animals and restricting records to only those maintained in the normal conduct of business; by

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establishing a presumption of U.S. origin for all livestock already in the United States;
and, by reducing penalties to no more than \$1,000 per violation.