

03/14/2003 Entry: "Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) - Points to consider, March 11, 2003"

1. Consumers have a right to know where their food comes from.
2. Markets need information to work properly. Consumers are paying record high prices for beef – producers are going broke.
3. Do U.S. producers want to lose their markets to imports? U.S. herd is in decline – Imports are rising.
Live Cattle from Canada and Mexico - Dissenting Views of Chairman Lynn M. Bragg:
"...relatively small volume of imports can have a significant effect on domestic prices."
"The concentration of packers increases the packers' leverage relative to cattle producers, thus providing packers the ability to use imports to reduce domestic live cattle prices and/or prevent price increases."
"I find that the domestic industry producing live cattle is materially injured by reason of imports of the subject merchandise from Canada sold into the United States at less than-fair-value."
4. Imports are currently sold under the guise of U.S. product – considered safer and better.
5. Food safety and security - What is the source of foreign products in the event of contamination, Mad Cow, or Hoof and Mouth disease?
6. Many other countries require COOL: Japan, EU, Korea, Argentina, Bosnia, Canada, Chile, Egypt, El Salvador, Estonia, Honduras, Dominican Republic, Czech Republic, Hungary, Indonesia, Israel, Latvia, Malaysia, Russia, Switzerland, Thailand, United Arab Emirates, Venezuela.
7. How many U.S. producers import livestock? (Almost no one - packers and processors are the primary importers. They benefit, they should pay for labeling of imports)
8. Under the new COOL law, covered commodities that are imported are required to be labeled to the end consumer. Imported live cattle are already identified, branded, tagged, etc., so tracking to the end consumer must be implemented only on imported cattle by the importer.
9. Under the new COOL law, U.S. born, raised, and processed doesn't need special labeling, it is U.S. by default, but under current labeling law probably cannot carry the born, raised, and slaughtered label unless the origin can be verified (Should be clarified in rule making).

10. The new COOL law under section 282, Notice of Country of Origin, No. 2 states the retailer "may" designate the covered commodity as having a United States country of origin label only if the covered commodity is born, raised, and slaughtered in the USA. Current law provides a simple and inexpensive method for the retailer to make an "animal production claim" to label meat, born and raised in the USA. http://www.fsis.usda.gov/OPPDE/larc/Claims_Process.htm

11. This current labeling law allows for labeling of meat designating country of origin. A simple producer affidavit (not a third party verification system) is required by the USDA. This retail label is currently being used successfully by Carolyn Carey in her "Born and Raised in the USA" program.
www.bornandraisedintheusa.com

12. If labeling is such a bad idea, why is Tyson now spending \$100 million to promote their Tyson brand? Why is Cargill-Excel/Kroger promoting their brand, Cattlemen's Choice? Why is ConAgra promoting Healthy Choice?

13. The coordinated attack on COOL is clear evidence that the big packers are talking to each other (Of course they know better than to discuss cattle and meat prices?). Do they feel their power and profits will be reduced by providing the consumer with more information? Like ADM, do they consider their competitors their friends and their customers (producers and consumers) their enemy?