

06/24/2003 Entry: "Call Congress to Protect Country of Origin Labeling"

Congress adopted a new law earlier this year requiring that fresh meat, fish and produce be labeled by country of origin in grocery stores beginning in September 2004. This would mean that consumers would have the ability for the first time to make decisions about where their food comes from—from the United States or from foreign importers. Farmers would have a tool for educating consumers about the importance of keeping U. S. family farmers on the land.

On June 17, the House Agricultural Appropriations Subcommittee reopened the Farm Bill by passing an amendment that bars USDA from spending money to implement COOL on red meat. This action is a slap in the face to US livestock producers who worked hard to pass this law to provide US consumers with a choice about where their meat comes from and develop important international markets like Japan who are asking origin labeling on the meat they import.

Tyson/IBP, Cargill, Smithfield, National Cattlemen's Beef Association, National Pork Producers Council, the American Meat Institute and others have joined forces to stop COOL in its tracks. Now it's up to us. Do we want to allow corporate agribusiness to derail our rights to know where our food comes from? Do we want to let USDA and the meatpackers take away another victory for family farmers?

We need calls today to key members of the full House Appropriations Committee to reinstate COOL funding for red meat. The Appropriations Committee will likely decide this week whether or not to full fund COOL. They need to hear from YOU!

What You Can Do:

1. Call your US Representative at 202-224-3121 and tell him or her to reinstate full funding for COOL. Also, if you're from the home state of one of the following US Representatives on the House Appropriations Committee call them too, even if you don't live in their district.

Rep. Martin Olav Sabo (D-MN)
Rep. Ray LaHood (R-IL)
Rep. David Obey (D-WI)
Rep. Jo Ann Emerson (R-MO)
Rep. Jesse Jackson Jr. (D-IL)
Rep. Tom Latham (R-IA)
Rep. Mark Steven Kirk (R-IL)

2. Call both the Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, Rep. Bill Young (R-FL), and the ranking Democrat, David Obey (D-WI), and urge them to oppose the Representative Bonilla's amendment.

- Rep. Young: 202-225-5961, 202-225-9764 (fax)
- Rep. Obey, 202-225-3365, 202-225-3240 (fax)