

09/07/2003 Entry: "LMA Demands TCFA President to Apologize"

NEWS FROM LIVESTOCK MARKETING ASSOCIATION
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LMA demands TCFA president to apologize for saying markets see COOL as a way to make money

KANSAS CITY, MO. – Livestock Marketing Association is demanding an apology from the president of the Texas Cattle Feeders Association for his recent comment that market operators may be supporting country-of-origin labeling (COOL) because it will put more money into their pockets.

LMA President Billy Perrin, in a letter to TCFA President Richard McDonald, called those comments “completely unfounded and uncalled for...nothing could be further from the truth, and you know it.”

Perrin commented on remarks McDonald made in a July speech before the International Beef Industry Congress in Calgary, Alberta. In its August issue, “Canadian Cattlemen” magazine reported that, “McDonald suspects auction market operators may be backing (COOL) because they stand to gain by tacking on service charges to verify country of origin on calves as they pass through their yards.”

Perrin wrote that LMA and the markets supporting COOL take that position “because we support U.S. producers, and a great number of those producers, who are our customers, support COOL.” The law, he said, “will establish a brand for our superior meat products with U.S. consumers...(and) provide the American consumer with the information they want and need about the source of their food.”

McDonald’s claim that markets see COOL as a moneymaker “not only is baseless in the extreme, but it literally defies common sense,” Perrin said. It is, however, part of a continuing campaign by opponents of COOL, he said.

“For months now, you and the other opponents of COOL have used every scare tactic possible to move producers and market operators away from their support

of COOL. One particularly scary scenario that you have cast about is the huge recordkeeping burden that COOL will place on U.S. producers and livestock markets,” he continued.

So if “your recordkeeping concerns prove true,” Perrin wrote McDonald, “then we can hardly understand how COOL becomes a moneymaker for the markets. Moreover, Richard, you are perfectly aware that livestock markets are highly sensitive to placing any new costs on their consignors, for fear of driving them off.”

Despite his efforts to discredit markets’ motives in supporting COOL, McDonald “did an excellent job of making LMA’s argument, that COOL would be very simple to implement, and the regulatory burden on producers and marketers considerably reduced, if USDA would simply require all imported animals to retain their country of origin through to slaughter.”

McDonald made that point when he said, according to the magazine, that Canada “already ha(s) a source verification system in place...(and) when your feeder cattle come across the line it’s pretty easy to ID them as being from Canada...and the fed cattle coming south for immediate slaughter, it’s easy to keep track of them and, of course, any beef you ship to the U.S. today is already labeled as imported.”

“The TCFA and LMA have had policy differences in the past, but we have always been able to disagree without being disagreeable. Your comments in Canada were completely unfounded and uncalled for,” Perrin wrote. “An apology to LMA and livestock market operators supporting COOL is in order.”