

12/18/2003 Entry: "Members of the Senate will Work to Restore COOL—Grassley"

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Although supporters of Country of Origin Labeling have expressed hope that the Senate will stop a two-year delay in mandatory country of origin labeling when it votes on a spending bill next January, that's not likely to happen, the Chair of the Senate Finance Committee said Tuesday.

"It will not be stopped in the Senate on January 20, but I would not preclude activity in the next appropriations process," said Senator Chuck Grassley (R-IA).

A spending bill already approved by the House of Representatives delays COOL for two years. The Senate hasn't approved the spending measure yet but is expected to vote on it after its holiday break ends on January 20.

Grassley said he believes there will be more pressure to label the origin of meats next year because the US is now starting to allow Canadian meat into this country and is expected to allow some Canadian live cattle into this country early next year.

"We're going to have to certify to the Japanese that meat coming from the United States originated in the United States and not in Canada," Grassley said. It's ironic, he added, that processors object to labeling meat for US consumers but not for Japanese buyers.

Grassley said he won't be personally involved in the appropriations process but that he would do all he could to support other senators who are likely to try to attach legislation to restore COOL to a spending bill. He said that other members of Congress may also be working at the same time to kill COOL permanently.

Meanwhile, he said he doesn't expect USDA to do anything to advance country of origin labeling while this is going on. "I expect them to be doing nothing. They've been dragging their feet for a long period of time," he said.