



## Fair Trade Practices Program



# Country of Origin Labeling (COOL)

## Consumer Information

### What is COOL?

Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) is a labeling law that requires retailers to provide information to consumers regarding the origin of certain foods, referred to as “covered commodities.” There are two regulations: 7 CFR Part 60 for fish and shellfish, and 7 CFR Part 65 for all other covered commodities.

### What are COOL covered commodities?

The Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946 was amended to define the commodities required to display origin information when sold by retailers. These "covered commodities" are fresh and frozen fruits and vegetables; wild & farm-raised fish and shellfish; muscle cuts and ground chicken, lamb, and goat meat; raw peanuts, pecans, and macadamia nuts; and ginseng.

### Processed foods are excluded from COOL

Processed foods are excluded from COOL requirements. A processed food item is a covered commodity that has: Undergone a specific process resulting in a change of character (i.e., cooking, curing, smoking, restructuring); or has been combined with another food component. Examples include but are not limited to: Canned Tuna, Roasted Peanuts, Salad Mix, Teriyaki Flavored Chicken, Orange Juice, and Dried Fruit.

### Who must comply with COOL?

Retail establishments such as full-line grocery stores, supermarkets, and warehouse club stores, who are subject to the licensing requirements under the Perishable Agricultural Commodities Act (PACA), are required to provide COOL information to consumers at the point of sale. Point of sale means the area surrounding where the item is displayed for examination and purchase by the ultimate customer. Hotels,

restaurants, bars, taverns, delicatessens, salad bars, farmers markets, or other similar institutions that provide ready-to-eat foods are EXEMPT from the COOL requirements.

### **How do I find COOL information in the grocery store?**

The origin of a covered commodity can be listed on a placard, sign, label, sticker, band, twist tie, pin tag, or other display on the package itself. The COOL declaration must be legible and placed in a conspicuous location where you are likely to read and understand it under normal grocery shopping conditions.

### **Labeling Requirements**

#### **Muscle Cuts of Meat: Chicken, Lamb, & Goat**

For U.S. origin muscle cut products of chicken, lamb, and goat meat, the label must state, "Born (or 'Hatched'), Raised, and Slaughtered (or 'Harvested') in the U.S." COOL declarations for imported muscle cuts of meat are determined by U.S. Customs and Border Protection. Imported muscle cuts of chicken, lamb or goat meat may simply state, "Product of Country X" (the name of the exporting country).

#### **Ground Meat: Chicken, Lamb, & Goat**

COOL requirements for ground chicken, lamb, or goat meat products must list all possible countries included or that may be reasonably included.

#### **Perishable Agricultural Commodities: Fruits, Vegetables, Peanuts, Pecans, Macadamia Nuts, & Ginseng**

The COOL declaration is the location where the product was harvested. State, regional, or distinct locality designations may be used to identify the origin of perishable agricultural commodities.

#### **Fish & Shellfish**

Fish and shellfish must include both origin and method of production at the point of sale. The "method of production" describes whether the fish or shellfish was farm-raised or wild-caught.

### **COOL Confidence**

The Food Disclosure and Labeling Division conducts surveillance reviews at retail establishments that are subject to COOL each year. Every covered commodity is reviewed for labeling compliance at the point of sale. If you suspect a retail store is in violation of COOL, you may file a complaint by going to the COOL complaint portal at: <https://www.ams.usda.gov/rules-regulations/cool/compliance-enforcement>

### **Have additional questions?**

Please submit your questions to our COOL inbox at [cool@usda.gov](mailto:cool@usda.gov)

### **Contact Information**

Food Disclosure and Labeling Division

USDA-AMS, Fair Trade Practices Program Room 2069-S, Stop 0216

1400 Independence Avenue, SW Washington, DC 20250-0216

Phone: (202) 720-4486; Fax: (202) 260-8369