Johnsonville
JOHNSONVILLE SAUSAGE, LLC

March 7, 2003

Country of Origin Labeling Program
Agricultural Marketing Service
USDA 0249
1400 Independence Avenue SW
Washington DC 20250-0249

I am responding to you regarding the pending Country of Origin Labeling Legislation. This is a legislation that will hurt our company as well as the few remaining Packers that still Slaughter in Wisconsin.

I am Procurement Director for Johnsonville Sausage and Chair of the Wisconsin Agribusiness Council in 2001 and 2002. I have been part of the livestock community in Wisconsin for 30 years, as were my father and grandfather. All three of us started in the Milwaukee Stockyards, a place that is just about out of business. This personally saddens me, but professionally, I understand that this is an evolutionary change that has been caused by the needs of increased efficiencies, social agendas, and the family farmers choice year's ago to change and become direct marketers with packers. Many other changes have occurred that have caused me to not only change the way I make a living, but also the way I must do business in this ever-changing world. They all did not appeal to me on a personal level, but are all part of the industry's evolutionary process. Ultimately the industry moved forward due to these changes.

Wisconsin's packing industry has changed dramatically too. Wisconsin's beef industry has lost the Armour's, Swift's, and Donner's. They have all gone away as have the Patrick Cudahy's, Oscar Mayer's, Hillshire's, and Jones Dairy Farms from the hog slaughtering Industry. With these changes the hog production in Wisconsin has been dramatically decreased.

Nonetheless we still have some niche players such as Dairy Beef Packers, Packer land, Green Bay Dressed Beef, and Peck as well as sow slaughters at Abeyland, and Johnsonville that have chosen to continue to slaughter in the State. But, due to the exodus of livestock from the state and our niche type needs, all of our companies utilize Canadian Livestock to fill our procurement needs. Unfortunately, the State of Wisconsin sows fill a very small percentage of our kill. Furthermore, this Canadian livestock fills the exacting requirements of our unique Wisconsin manufacturers. One must remember that our state slaughters mainly sows and cows and due to the small percentage of sows [about 3% of National Hog Slaughter] and dairy cows [about 7.5% of National Cattle Slaughter] and our geographic location our dependence is only magnified. Canada isn't another country to us but rather our next-door neighbor.

We have a concern not only with the obstacles and costs that direct purchases from Canada poses but we have an even bigger concern with the Canadian Livestock that our American livestock brokers purchase that may have been born in Canada. Our ability to segment this livestock and slaughter this livestock in a cost effective fashion is in serious question.

104 DIVISION STREET
WATERTOWN, WI 53094
(920) 261-1053 • FAX: (920) 261-1870

This is bad legislation that will particularly hurt the packing industry of the State of Wisconsin. This is bad legislation that will hurt our American hog industry.

I would be more than willing to visit with you on these issues or to put together a consortium, of at the very least the hog slaughters of Wisconsin, to discuss. It is extremely difficult to express every element of concern in a letter.

We are a very small packer in the big scheme and rely on all sources for livestock. We do not have a prejudice towards any group. Let's allow the market place to choose who does business. My social conscience certainly wants to help farmers in these trying times, but let's not believe we can help them by this legislation. I do not believe it will help them to succeed in the world and domestic market of today.

I would ask that you reconsider this legislation.

Sincerely,

Dan Sutherland
Procurement Director