D'AGOSTINO SUPERMARKETS 1385 BOSTON POST ROAD • LARCHMONT, NEW YORK 10538
TELEPHONE 914-833-4000

April 4, 2003

The Honorable Ann Veneman
Secretary, U. S. Department of Agriculture
Country of Origin Labeling Program
Agricultural Marketing Service
Stop 0249 Room 2092-S
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250-0249

Re: Comments on Guidelines for Voluntary Country of Origin Labeling Program

Dear Secretary Veneman:

I am the manager of a D'Agostino Supermarket in New York City. I am very concerned about the country of origin labeling guidelines that you have issued.

D'Agostino offers to their customers over 250 types of fresh fruit and vegetables from all over the world on a daily basis. Our meat department carries over 150 types of whole muscle and ground beef, pork and lamb products daily. And each day our seafood section brings a wide variety of seafood products to consumers. The task of identifying the country of origin for each of these products is enormous.

In order to provide our customers with accurate information we must rely on our suppliers. **You must require our suppliers to provide us with that information and to implement systems to ensure that the information we receive is accurate.** Moreover, labeling each of these items for retail sale is challenging so we need to be able to use a "labeling method" that we know will work the best for us and our customers.

As you develop regulations, please consider the following:

- Hold suppliers responsible for providing accurate information on the countries in which produce, meat and seafood is grown, raised and/or processed.
- Provide for flexible means of informing consumers of the country of origin of meat, produce and seafood.
- Implement reasonable record keeping requirements.

Please issue regulations that will be simple to follow and put in place in our stores.

Sincerely,

Carlos Hidalgo, Store Manager
633 Columbus Avenue
New York, New York 10024