My comments as a beef U.S. producer regarding USDA regulations for Country Of Origin Labeling.

In an effort to undercut the Country-Of-Origin-Labeling law passed by Congress last year, big beef packers, retailers and some cattle feeders are backing efforts to get the USDA to adopt complicated regulations that would require U. S. cattle producers to keep extensive records and documentation and have third party verification to prove their cattle are "USA born and raised".

Why would packers, retailers and feeders oppose COOL? Because identifying the origin of cattle and beef they are importing into the country might not be good business.

A recent survey completed by North Carolina State University confirms what producers have long suspected. "Americans trust and want U. S. grown meat, and they do not trust meat from other countries very much."

The survey concluded that 68 percent of Americans say they would pay more for food grown in the U. S. rather than abroad and a solid majority of Americans say they do not want to relinquish our food production to other countries even if these countries could provide food more cheaply. The problem today is, consumers don't know where their food is coming from.

American agriculture including beef producers see Country-of-Origin-Labeling as possibly the best hope to counter the effects of increasing imports of beef and other food products.

As a beef producer I strongly support COOL and I want effective regulations that will make implementation of Country-of-Origin-Labeling work.

In 2004 mandatory Country-of-Origin-Labeling goes into effect and as a beef producer I ask that the following comment guide USDA in creating it's rules for Mandatory Country Of Origin Labeling of Beef.

"The United States should use its authority to either require that imported animals be marked with their country of origin, or that existing import documentation be kept with all imported animals until slaughter.

The rules adopted by USDA should establish that an animal not marked with foreign markings (ear tag, tattoo, or brand), or not accompanied by required import documentation is declared to be an animal born and raised in the United States and eligible for the USA label.

This rule would remove any burden upon United States cattle producers who do not handle imported cattle; and it would keep the cost of COOL to a minimum for producers, processors, retailers, and ultimately the consumers.

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