

July 9, 2012

The Honorable Frank Lucas
Chairman
Committee on Agriculture
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Collin Peterson
Ranking Member
Committee on Agriculture
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

cc: Members of the House Committee on Agriculture

Dear Chairman Lucas and Ranking Member Peterson:

As organizations with a stake in country-of-origin labeling (COOL) for many food products, we urge you not to seek a legislative “fix” to the recent appeals decisions by the World Trade Organization (WTO) until all compliance efforts and remedies are exhausted.

The ruling issued by the appellate body of the WTO found that the United States has the right to apply country-of-origin labels and that the labeling regime itself does not restrict trade. While it found that imported livestock into the United States faces some disadvantage because of segregation and record-keeping requirements, there is no need to change the COOL law.

We consider COOL to be essential to a functioning and competitive market. COOL provides consumers with vital information that they need to make informed choices about their food and allows American farmers and ranchers to differentiate their products from imported food.

We look forward to working with the U.S. Department of Agriculture to find ways to maintain the labeling standards that consumers have enjoyed for the last four years. A statutory change to COOL is not necessary, and we urge you to wait until changes can be made to the regulations that implement COOL.

Sincerely,

Buckeye Quality Beef Association
Campaign for Contract Agriculture Reform
Consumer Federation of America
Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance
Food & Water Watch
Independent Beef Association of North Dakota
Kansas Cattlemen’s Association
Land Stewardship Project
Missouri Rural Crisis Center
National Family Farm Coalition

National Farmers Union
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition
Nebraska Farmers Union
Organization for Competitive Markets
R-CALF USA
Rural Advancement Foundation International – USA
South Dakota Stockgrowers Association
United States Cattlemen’s Association
Western Organization of Resource Councils