

# Product Labeling



National  
Farmers  
Union

Clear and accurate food labels are an important tool that helps consumers make informed decisions and allows farmers and ranchers to differentiate their products. NFU supports conspicuous, mandatory, and uniform labeling for food products throughout the processing chain and calls for reauthorization and full implementation of mandatory country-of origin labeling (COOL) for agricultural, aquaculture, and wild-caught seafood products.

Surveys show that the vast majority of Americans want to know where their food comes from, and farmers and ranchers want to provide them with that information. Laws should support farmers and consumers in achieving that goal—but multinational meatpackers and foreign competitors have fought fair and accurate labels for decades. This allows companies to import cheaper products from other countries and still make a premium from passing them off as local products which, in turn, depresses prices for local ranchers and undermines consumer confidence in labels.

## **“Product of USA” Label**

In March of 2023, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) released a proposed rule with new regulatory requirements to better align the voluntary “Product of USA” label claim with consumer understanding.

The proposed rule comes from President Biden’s 2021 executive order on competition that directs USDA to clarify what meat may be labeled “Product of USA” or “Made in the USA”—a claim that could now be used on meat, poultry and egg products only when they are derived from animals born, raised, slaughtered, and processed in the U.S.

Under current voluntary labeling rules, meat can be designated a “Product of USA” if it is processed domestically, but born, raised, and/or slaughtered in another country. This misleading claim puts domestic producers at a competitive disadvantage while preventing consumers from making fully informed decisions about the products they buy.

While truthful and accurate voluntary labels are important to producers and helpful for consumers, they are not a replacement or substitute for mandatory Country-of-Origin Labeling (COOL).

## **American Beef Labeling Act of 2023**

Senators John Thune (R-SD), Jon Tester (D-MT), Mike Rounds (R-SD), Cory Booker (D-NJ), Cynthia Lummis (R-WY), and Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) introduced the bipartisan American Beef Labeling Act of 2023 (S.52). This legislation would reinstate mandatory COOL for beef sold in grocery stores by inserting “beef” and “ground beef” back into the existing 2002 law, which continues to require COOL for other foods, such as lamb, chicken, fish, nuts, fruits, and vegetables.

This legislation would promote a fairer, more competitive market for America’s cattle farmers and ranchers and quality family-sustaining jobs for meat processing workers. Consumers have been paying high prices for beef at the grocery store while cattle producers continue receiving artificially depressed prices for their cattle. A consolidated and uncompetitive beef packing industry is exploiting consumers, workers, and ranchers alike. American consumers deserve the right to choose, American cattle farmers and ranchers deserve the right to compete for the consumers’ favor in their domestic market, and meat processing workers deserve quality jobs.

## **What We Can Do:**

- Urge lawmakers to cosponsor the American Beef Labeling Act of 2023 (S.52) in the Senate and introduce legislation in the U.S. House of Representatives to reinstate mandatory country of origin labeling for beef.



**FAIRNESS FOR  
FARMERS**

*A Farmers Union Project*

**90% of  
Americans  
favor requiring  
food sellers to  
label  
“country of  
origin”  
for fresh meat.**

**87% strongly or  
somewhat  
favored requiring  
retailers to  
indicate the  
country where  
animals were  
born, raised, and  
processed on  
meat labels.**

**There are more  
than 100 different  
meat cuts offered  
at any given  
time in a large  
supermarket, and  
hundreds  
more the store  
can make  
available.**