

-Sample Letter for Beef Producers-

Your Name
Address
Phone/Email

Senator/Representative Name
Address

Dear Sen./Rep.

Thank you for your continued service and commitment to livestock and meat producers. As a cattle producer, I am concerned about the impact that mandatory country-of-origin labeling (COOL) requirements included in the 2002 Farm Bill will have on my business.

As you and your colleagues debate potential revisions to the law for possible inclusion in the 2007 Farm Bill, please consider how COOL, as currently written, will affect my business and the businesses of thousands of other cattle producers.

The fact is, the U.S. already has country-of-origin labeling requirements for all finished meat and poultry products entering the U.S. from another country. That's why we see hams identified as "Product of Denmark" and lamb declared to be from New Zealand. COOL proponents don't want to discuss these requirements, however, or why additional country-of-origin labeling requirements in the 2002 Farm Bill would layer on top of them and add new burdens.

Unlike the existing requirements already in effect, the COOL language in the 2002 Farm Bill affects only some products (covers meat but not poultry) sold in some venues (covers retail stores but not restaurants). This selective application of these complex new rules shows that country-of-origin labeling is not for the consumer – it's for those misguided few who believe that building a wall to imports is good long-term strategy. They are wrong.

Not only will COOL disrupt a successful, cooperative North American meat industry, it will drive up the cost of meat to consumers and invite trade complaints under the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

It is crucial to my business that final COOL provisions be cost-effective, reasonable to implement and consistent with current WTO and NAFTA guidelines. In its current form, mandatory COOL stands to erode the profitability of cattle producers nationwide. Here's why:

- Cattle will need to be clearly segregated through production, processing, packing and retailing. These segregation costs will be large for producers, packers and processors.

- COOL increases cattle production costs at a time when we are facing rising inputs in the form of record feed costs. Yet it doesn't offer off-setting increases in producer-level revenues.
- There is no evidence that consumers want these labels or are willing to pay more for beef that bears these labels. At the same time, this mandate will make beef less competitive relative to other products exempted from the law – like chicken.

You know the important role the beef industry plays in the economy. As your constituent, I ask that you carefully consider all the implications that next year's implementation of mandatory COOL will bring and repeal it and replace it with a law that builds on existing requirements.

Sincerely,

Name