

Fighting for the U.S. Cattle Producer!



R-CALF

USA

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November 3, 2009

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
United States Secretary of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250

The Honorable Ron Kirk
United States Trade Representative
600 17th Street NW
Washington, DC 20208

**Re: USTR's Oct. 23, 2009, Action of Blocking Canada's WTO Complaint
Against U.S. COOL Law**

Dear Secretary Vilsack and Ambassador Kirk:

R-CALF USA wishes to thank you for your action of Oct. 23, 2009, that blocked both Canada's and Mexico's complaints filed with the World Trade Organization (WTO) against the United States' country-of-origin labeling (COOL) law.

Though it is unfortunate that Canada and Mexico have chosen to interfere with our nation's sovereign right to provide U.S. consumers with accurate information that identifies the origins of their food, it should not be forgotten that the COOL regulations still contain unacceptable loopholes, including the loophole that allows whole muscle cuts of meat from animals exclusively born, raised and slaughtered in the United States to be effectively mislabeled with a mixed-country label.

We hope the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will quickly initiate rulemaking to close this and other inappropriate loopholes. A rulemaking to address the specific concerns outlined in the joint letter sent by 32 U.S. Senators to former Agriculture Secretary Ed Schafer on Sept. 25, 2008, may negate the WTO's insistence that it has jurisdiction over this matter. Such rulemaking would effectively provide both Canada and Mexico a more appropriate forum – one on par with the citizens of the United States – to express their concerns and recommendations regarding the COOL law within our domestic rulemaking process.

Again, we appreciate your ongoing defense of the U.S. COOL law and pledge to work with you, in any way possible, to ensure that both livestock producers and consumers alike are accorded the benefits of accurate food labeling as Congress directed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'R. M. Thornsberry D.V.M.' with a stylized flourish at the end.

R.M. Thornsberry, D.V.M.
President, R-CALF USA Board of Directors