Country-of-Origin Labeling (COOL) Fact Sheet

**Issue Summary:** The Country-of-Origin Labeling (COOL) law, first passed in 2002 and then refined in 2008, mandates that muscle cuts of meat and some vegetables, nuts and fruits sold at retail must contain a label informing consumers about the country where the product was sourced.

- COOL provides consumers with information they care about. In July 2001, 86% of consumers rated U.S. beef superior to imported beef and more than 92% favored COOL requirements in grocery stores. Over a decade later, that favorable percentage remains just as high – a [May 2013 public opinion poll](#) showed more than 90 percent of consumers support COOL.

- A 2002 study proved that the majority of consumers were willing to pay up to a 24% premium on beef that was guaranteed to be Born, Raised, and Harvested in the U.S.A.

- A recent study by the University of Arkansas shows that consumers use COOL to draw inferences related to a food product’s safety, taste and freshness. It also found consumers prefer meat labeled from the U.S.

- The 2003 USDA audit estimated a total cost of $1.9 billion in the first year to implement COOL. Five nationally known and respected agricultural economists working with the International Agricultural Trade and Policy Center at the University of Florida conducted their own independent study and found that the cost would be "90 to 95 percent less" than USDA’s figures.

- COOL does not restrict imports in any way. Instead, it informs consumers about where certain products were sourced and allows consumers to make informed decisions about the food they eat.

- COOL does NOT present a trade barrier that will hinder exports of U.S. beef. A study completed by the [Government Accountability Office (GAO)](#) found, "most of the USDA attaches for 57 U.S. trading partners surveyed reported their host countries require country of origin labeling for one or more of the commodities covered by the new law. Most countries with programs conduct routine inspections and impose fines for labeling violations." Nations utilizing country of origin labeling included some of America’s largest trading partners - Canada, Mexico and Japan.

- According to a report by Robert Taylor, Ph.D., COOL has not had a significant negative effect on the price basis for imported cattle relative to domestic cattle.

- Despite strong public support, the U.S. meat industry has tried to stop implementation of COOL, but those efforts have been rejected by U.S. courts on four separate occasions.

- The World Trade Organization [granted approval for Canada and Mexico](#) to move forward with $1.01 billion worth of retaliatory tariffs, because the two countries claimed that COOL resulted in higher segregation costs and would incentivize producers to utilize domestic cattle.

- Those retaliatory tariffs would not be permissible if there were a new origin labeling program that the U.S. adopted, so long as that program was not adopted by the U.S. as a replacement for COOL.