

# 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 July 2021, President Biden issued an executive order on competition, which included a directive to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to clarify that meat may be labeled “Product of USA” only if the animal spent its entire life within 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 2021**

Senators Jon Tester (D-MT), John Thune (R-SD), and Cory Booker (D-NJ) introduced the bipartisan American Beef Labeling Act of 2021 (S.2716), and in March 2022, Representatives Lance Gooden (R-TX-05) and Ro Khanna (D-CA) introduced a version of the same bill in the House (H.R. 7291). 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.



**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.**

**More than a thousand names are used for these cuts across the U.S. stores to sell meat.**

## **What We Can Do:**

- Urge lawmakers to cosponsor the American Beef Labeling Act of 2021, (S. 2716 and H.R. 7291), to reinstate mandatory country of origin labeling for beef.