



POLICY & ACTION FROM CONSUMER REPORTS

October 31, 2013

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Frank Lucas
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Thad Cochran
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Collin Peterson
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Reject Efforts to Weaken COOL During Farm Bill Conference

Dear Chairmen Stabenow and Lucas, and Ranking Members Cochran and Peterson:

As you and the other conferees meet to negotiate the final 2013 Farm Bill, Consumers Union (CU), the policy and advocacy division of *Consumer Reports*®, strongly urges you to **reject any attempts to weaken or change country of origin labeling (COOL) in the Farm Bill**. Consumer Reports polling shows that Americans overwhelmingly support country of origin labeling. Changing or weakening COOL is unnecessary, and would negatively impact consumers.

A ruling by the appellate body of the World Trade Organization (WTO) affirmed that the United States has the right to apply country-of-origin labels and that the labeling regime itself does not restrict trade. The appellate body did say that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) had to adjust some provisions in order to be fully compliant with WTO requirements. USDA followed a carefully considered, open and transparent process as it crafted changes to the rule, which provides consumers with additional information on where each of the production steps for cattle -- born, raised and slaughtered -- occurs. The final rule complies with the WTO ruling and is consistent with U.S. law. We strongly support it and urge you to defend COOL.

Country-of-origin labeling provides consumers with vital information that allows them to make informed choices about the food they eat. Results from a nationally representative, telephone poll of more than 1,000 U.S. adults, conducted by the Consumer Reports National Research Center in October 2010, indicated that consumers overwhelmingly (93%) would prefer to have a country of origin label on the meat that they buy. These results underscore our previous poll findings from 2008, which indicated that 95% of U.S. adults agree that country-of-origin labeling for products should always be available at the point of purchase.

Sincerely,



Jean Halloran
Director, Food Policy Initiatives



Ami V. Gadhia
Senior Policy Counsel

Cc:

Sen. Max Baucus
Sen. Michael Bennet
Sen. John Boozman
Sen. Sherrod Brown
Sen. Saxby Chambliss
Sen. Tom Harkin
Sen. John Hoeven
Sen. Amy Klobuchar
Sen. Patrick Leahy
Sen. Pat Roberts

Rep. Dave Camp
Rep. K. Michael Conaway
Rep. Jim Costa
Rep. Rick Crawford
Rep. Rodney Davis
Rep. Suzan DelBene
Rep. Jeff Denham
Rep. Eliot Engel
Rep. Marcia Fudge
Rep. Sam Johnson
Rep. Steve King
Rep. Sandy Levin
Rep. Tom Marino
Rep. Jim McGovern
Rep. Mike McIntyre
Rep. Gloria Negrete McLeod
Rep. Randy Neugebauer
Rep. Kristi Noem
Rep. Martha Roby
Rep. Mike Rogers
Rep. Ed Royce
Rep. Kurt Schrader
Rep. Austin Scott
Rep. Steve Southerland
Rep. Glenn 'GT' Thompson
Rep. Filemon Vela
Rep. Tim Walz