

Kansas Cattlemen Urge Congress to Withhold Changing COOL Law

Kansas Cattlemen's Association, along with other industry stakeholders, sent a letter to both the chairman and the ranking member of the House Agriculture Committee to urge them to withhold seeking any legislative changes to the country-of-origin law. The WTO made it clear, in its COOL ruling, that the changes needed were technical, and KCA would like Congress to know that the modifications do not require legislation but can be administratively addressed with swiftness and efficiency.

"The ruling issued by the appellate body of the WTO found that the United States has the right to apply country-of-origin labels and that the labeling regime itself does not restrict trade. While it found that imported livestock into the United States faces some disadvantage because of segregation and record-keeping requirements, there is no need to change the COOL law."

"We consider COOL to be essential to a functioning and competitive market. COOL provides consumers with vital information that they need to make informed choices about their food and allows American farmers and ranchers to differentiate their products from imported food."

KCA vows to proceed with supporting the COOL law and its implementation. By providing country-of-origin information, COOL allows consumers to make educated and informed decisions regarding their food purchases. It also allows U.S. cattle producers to distinguish their products from imported products.

"So many products today have a tag stating the country in which it is produced. Some consumers do not mind buying products that are made in China or other foreign countries, but consumers also have the ability to make an informed decision. KCA also wants consumers to be informed about where, of all things, their food is produced. There are many countries, including Japan, that have mandatory country-of-origin retail labeling requirements for agricultural products that principally affect fruits, vegetables and animal products. Labeling is effective, and KCA is moving forward to maintain COOL. Urging Congress to withhold any attempts to curtail the COOL law is just the first step in the process," stated KCA Executive Director Brandy Carter.

"I am glad to see that the WTO gave us permission to enforce our own laws of country-of-origin labeling. Yet, the way it would have us implement the law, by not segregating by country-of-origin at the plant, would lose the reason for why the law was implemented to begin with. I find it interesting that the ruling was announced a few days prior to the anniversary of our independence, and I hate to tell them this, but we are not a North American trade group. We are the United States of America. Next the WTO will be telling us if we can even have branded beef and how many cows we can have in each pen or pasture. I fail to see why we even recognize the WTO as having the authority to dictate to us how we conduct our business within our own borders. According to past studies that I have read, 90% of consumers want to know where their food comes from. In case people do not know, this is a very powerful movement in today's society," remarked KCA President and Minneapolis cattleman Perry Owens.

KCA has also contacted our state and national legislators to urge their support for the COOL law and its implementation.