

June 8, 2015

The Honorable K. Michael Conaway
Chairman, House Agriculture Committee
1301 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Collin Peterson
Ranking Member, House Agriculture Committee
1301 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Conaway and Ranking Member Peterson:

The undersigned 283 farm, rural, faith, environmental, labor, farmworker, manufacturer and consumer organizations respectfully urge you to reject the repeal of the Country-of-Origin Labeling (COOL) law and support commonsense food labeling. Polls show that nine out of ten Americans support COOL. Consumers continue to demand more information about their food and producers want to share that information.

Although the World Trade Organization (WTO) Appellate Body has issued its decision on COOL, the United States has a sovereign right to allow the dispute process to proceed to its completion and then decide how and whether to implement the adverse ruling. Our organizations remain steadfast in their opposition to any efforts to undermine COOL through repeal or any other measures.

It is premature for the Congress to unilaterally surrender to saber-rattling from our trading partners in the midst of a long-standing dispute. COOL opponents have highlighted Mexico and Canada's threats of retaliation as if their aspiration to seek billions of dollars in penalties were already approved by the WTO. But these unapproved, unrealistically high retaliation claims are merely aggressive litigation tactics designed to frighten the United States — a standard practice in WTO disputes. Congress should not fall for it.

The WTO can only authorize penalties based on the extent to which COOL caused a reduction in the volume and price of livestock imports. But the economic recession was the driving factor behind declining livestock imports, not the application of a simple label.

Cattle imports are higher today than when COOL went into effect and hog imports are rapidly rebounding, even with COOL in place. This straightforward logic is buttressed by a recent economic report from Auburn University that demonstrates that COOL has not impacted the livestock trade and that any harm to our trading partners has in fact been negligible at most.

Moreover, retaliation is only relevant if the United States, Canada and Mexico cannot reach an agreement after the parties have undergone the full WTO arbitration process. In past WTO disputes that the United States has lost, the United States has waited for the process to conclude and then has successfully avoided WTO-authorized trade sanctions by negotiating a settlement with the other country in the dispute.

Finally, the proposed COOL repeal legislation is particularly extreme in that it would roll back commonsense labels that the WTO actually supported or that never even were raised in the WTO dispute. The legislation would repeal COOL for ground beef and ground pork as well as for chicken, but the WTO explicitly ruled that the COOL label on ground meat was WTO-legal, and the dispute never addressed chicken or other covered commodities (including seafood, fresh and frozen fruits and vegetables, goat, venison and some nuts).

COOL is extremely important to our organizations and to the American public. We oppose any legislation that would repeal any portion of the COOL law. We urge Congress to stand up for America's consumers, farmers and ranchers by rejecting any effort to unilaterally repeal a popular food label even before the WTO process has concluded. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

AFL-CIO of Nebraska
Alabama Contract Poultry Growers Association
Alabama State Association of Cooperatives
Alaska Farmers Union
Alianza Nacional de Campesinas
Alternative Energy Resources Organization (AERO) (MT)
American Agriculture Movement
American Corn Growers Institute for Public Policy
American Federation of Government Employees (AFL-CIO),
Local 3354, USDA-St. Louis
American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial
Organizations (AFL-CIO)
American Federation of State, County and Municipal
Employees Local 2748 (WI)
American Grassfed Association
American Indian Mothers, Inc. (NC)
American Raw Milk Producers Pricing Association
Angelic Organics Learning Center and Farm (IL)
Arkansas Farmers Union
Ashtabula, Geauga, Lake County (OH) Farmers' Union
Berks (PA) Gas Truth
Berkshire Organics (MA)
BioRegional Strategies
Bold Nebraska
Boots on the Ground, LLC
Boston Food & Farm PBC (MA)
Buckeye Quality Beef Association (OH)
Buffalo Mountain Coop (VT)
California Dairy Campaign

California Farmers Union
Campaign for Contract Agriculture Reform
Campaign for Family Farms and the Environment
Caney Fork Headwaters Association (TN)
Carbon County Resource Council (MT)
Carolina Farm Stewardship Association (NC)
Catholic Charities of Central and Northern Missouri-Social
Services Office/Diocese of Jefferson City
National Catholic Rural Life Conference
Cattle Producers of Louisiana
Cattle Producers of Washington
Center for Earth Spirituality and Rural Ministry (MN)
Center for Family Farm Development (GA)
Center for Food Safety
Center for Foodborne Illness Research & Prevention
Center for Media and Democracy's Food Rights Network
Center for Rural Affairs
Central Co-op (WA)
Chicago Consumer Coalition
Church Women United in New York State
Citizen Action Coalition of Indiana
Citizens for Sanity.Com, Inc. (FL)
City Market Onion River Co-op (VT)
Cleanwater Action Council of Northeast Wisconsin
Coalition for a Prosperous America
Colorado Independent CattleGrowers Association
Communication Workers of America
Communication Workers of America Nebraska State Council
Community Alliance for Global Justice (WA)

Community Farm Alliance (KY)
 Community Food and Justice Coalition (CA)
 Connecticut Families Against Chemical Trespass
 Consumer Action
 Consumer Assistance Council, Inc.
 Consumer Federation of America
 Consumer Federation of California
 Consumers Union
 Contract Poultry Growers Association of the Virginias
 Cooperative Grocer Network
 The Cornucopia Institute
 Cornucopia Network NJ/TN Chapter
 Cottonwood Resource Council (MT)
 Crawford Stewardship Project (WI)
 Cumberland Countians for Ecojustice (TN)
 Dakota Resource Council
 Dakota Rural Action of SD
 Dawson Resource Council (MT)
 Detroit Coalition Against Tar Sands
 East New York Farms!/United Community Centers
 EcoHermanas
 Ecological Farming Association (CA)
 The Ecology Center (CA)
 The Ecology Party of Florida
 Endangered Habitats League (CA)
 Equal Exchange
 Fair World Project (OR)
 Family Farm Defenders (WI)
 Farm Aid
 Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance
 Farmworker Association of Florida
 Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund
 Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Rural Training and
 Research Center (AL)
 Fiddleheads Natural Food Cooperative (CT)
 Florida Alliance for Consumer Protection
 Food & Water Watch
 Food Chain Workers Alliance
 Food Democracy Now!
 Food for Maine's Future
 Friends of the Earth U.S.
 Global Justice Ecology Project
 GMO Free New Jersey
 GMO Free Pennsylvania
 GMO-Free Florida
 Grand Forks County Citizens Coalition (ND)
 Grassroots International
 Grow Youngstown (OH)
 Hanover Consumer Cooperative Society, Inc. (NH)
 Hawaii Farmers Union United
 Hmong National Development, Inc.
 Hunger Action Los Angeles
 Idaho Organization of Resource Councils
 Illinois Farmers Union
 Illinois Stewardship Alliance
 Independent Beef Association of North Dakota (I-BAND)
 Independent Cattlemen of Nebraska
 Independent Cattlemen of Wyoming
 Independent Cattlemen's Association of Texas
 Indian Nations Conservation Alliance
 Indiana Farmers Union
 Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy
 Institute for Rural America (IA)
 Interchurch Ministries of Nebraska
 International Brotherhood of Teamsters
 Intertribal Agriculture Council
 Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement
 Iowa Farmers Union
 Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future (MD)
 Kansas Cattlemen's Association
 Kansas Farmers Union
 Kansas National Farmers Organization
 Kansas Rural Center
 LabelGMOS.org
 Land Stewardship Project (MN)
 Leverett Village Coop (MA)
 Local Futures/International Society for Ecology and Culture
 Long Beach Food Policy Council (CA)
 Lowcountry Local First (SC)
 MA Right to Know GMOs
 Maine Fair Trade Campaign
 Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association
 (MOFGA)
 The Manufacturers Association of Central New York
 Massachusetts Consumers' Council, Inc.
 Michael Fields Agricultural Institute (WI)
 Michigan Farmers Union
 Michigan Food & Farming Systems
 Michigan Organic Food and Farm Alliance
 Middlebury Natural Foods Co-op (VT)
 Midwest Organic Dairy Producers Association
 Midwest Environmental Advocates, Inc. (WI)
 Milwaukee Fair Trade Coalition (WI)
 Minnesota Farmers Union
 Minnesota National Farmers Organization
 Mississippi Assoc. of Cooperatives
 Missouri Farmers Union
 Missouri National Farmers Organization
 Missouri Rural Crisis Center
 Missouri's Best Beef Cooperative
 Monadnock Food Co-op (NH)
 Montana Farmers Union
 Montana Women Involved in Farm Economics
 Montgomery Countryside Alliance
 Murray County (OK) Independent Cattlemen's Association
 National Center for Appropriate Technology
 National Co-op Grocers
 National Consumers League
 National Family Farm Coalition
 National Farmers Organization
 National Farmers Union
 National Hmong American Farmers, Inc.
 National Latino Farmers & Ranchers Trade Association
 National Organic Coalition
 National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition
 National Young Farmers Coalition
 Nature Abounds
 Near East Side Cooperative Market (OH)
 Nebraska Alliance for Retired Americans
 Nebraska Easement Action Team
 Nebraska Farmers Union
 Nebraska League of Conservation Voters
 Nebraska Sierra Club
 Nebraska State Grange

Nebraska Sustainable Agriculture Society
 Nebraska Wildlife Federation
 Nebraska Women Involved in Farm Economics
 Nebraskans for Peace
 Neighboring Food Co-op Association (MA)
 Network for Environmental & Economic Responsibility of
 United Church of Christ
 Nevada Live Stock Association
 New England Farmers Union (CT, MA, ME, NH, RI, VT)
 New York National Farmers Organization
 New York Women Involved in Farm Economics
 NH Right to Know GMO
 North Carolina Consumers Council
 North Dakota AFL-CIO
 North Dakota Farmers Union
 Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance
 Northeast Organic Farming Assoc. - MA
 Northeast Organic Farming Assoc. - NH
 Northeast Organic Farming Assoc. - NJ
 Northeast Organic Farming Assoc. - NY
 Northern New Mexico Stockman's Association
 Northern Plains Resource Council (MT)
 Northern Wisconsin Beef Producers Assoc.
 Northwest Atlantic Marine Alliance (MA)
 Northwest Farmers Union
 Oglala Sioux Livestock and Land Owners Association (SD)
 Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association
 Ohio Environmental Council
 Ohio Environmental Stewardship Alliance
 Ohio Farmers Union
 Oklahoma Black Historical Research Project
 Operation Spring Plant, Inc. (NC)
 Oregon Rural Action
 Oregon Rural Action Blue Mountain Chapter Food & Ag
 Policy Team
 Oregonians for Safe Farms and Families
 Organic Consumers Association
 Organic Farmers' Agency for Relationship Marketing
 (OFARM)
 Organic Seed Alliance
 Organic Seed Growers & Trade Association (OSGATA)
 Organizacion en California de Lideres Campesinas, Inc.
 Organization for Competitive Markets
 PCC Natural Markets (WA)
 Peach Bottom Concerned Citizens Group (PBCCG) (PA)
 Pennsylvania Farmers Union
 Pennypack Farm and Education Center (PA)
 Pesticide Action Network North America
 Powder River Basin Resource Council (WY)
 Progressive Agriculture Organization (PA)
 Provender Alliance (OR)
 Public Citizen
 R-CALF United Stockgrowers of America
 Raritan Headwaters Association (NJ)
 Real Food Challenge (MA)
 Real Food for Kids - Montgomery (MD)
 Real Pickles Cooperative, Inc. (MA)
 Right to Know Minnesota
 River Valley Market (MA)
 Rocky Mountain Farmers Union
 Roots of Change (CA)
 Rosebud Protective Association (MT)
 Rural & Agricultural Council of America
 Rural Advancement Foundation International - USA (RAFI-
 USA)
 Rural Coalition/Coalición Rural
 Rural Development Leadership Network (NY)
 Rural Vermont
 Rutland Area Food Co-op (VT)
 Sacramento Natural Foods Co-op (CA)
 Seacoast Eat Local (NH)
 Slow Food Nebraska
 Slow Food USA
 Small Planet Institute
 Socially Responsible Agricultural Project
 Society of Professional Engineering Employees in
 Aerospace, IFPTE Local 2001 (WA, KS)
 South Agassiz Resource Council (ND)
 The South County Food Co-op (RI)
 South Dakota Farmers Union
 South Dakota Livestock Auction Markets Association
 South Dakota Stockgrowers Association
 South Dakota Women Involved in Farm Economics
 Southwest Nebraska Women Involved in Farm Economics
 Springfield Food Co-op (VT)
 Stone Valley Coop & Café (VT)
 Texas Farmers Union
 Tilth Producers of Washington
 Tooling, Manufacturing and Technologies Assoc. (MI)
 Toxics Information Project
 U.S. Cattlemen's Association
 U.S. Public Interest Research Group (USPIRG)
 United Church of Christ Justice and Witness Ministries
 United Steel Workers Local 1188 (ME)
 United Steel Workers Local 900 (ME)
 Vermont National Farmers Organization
 Virginia Association for Biological Farming
 Virginia Citizens Consumer Council
 Walter's Signs (NJ)
 Waterkeeper Alliance
 Western Colorado Congress
 Western Organization of Resource Councils (WORC)
 Western Sustainable Agriculture Working Group
 Western Wisconsin AFL-CIO
 Wild Oats Market (MA)
 Willimantic Food Coop (CT)
 Wisconsin Fair Trade Coalition
 Wisconsin Farmers Union
 Women Involved in Farm Economics
 Women's Environmental Institute
 World Farmers
 Yellowstone Valley Citizens Council (MT)