

FACT SHEET

American Beef Labeling Act (S.421)

The American Beef Labeling Act would reinstate mandatory country of origin labeling (MCOOL) for beef. It would restore critical market information for U.S. consumers and allow U.S. farmers and ranchers to differentiate their products in the global marketplace.

This bipartisan legislation is led in the U.S. Senate by Senators John Thune (R-SD) and Cory Booker (D-NJ) and co-sponsored by Senators Mike Rounds (R-SD), Martin Heinrich (D-NM), Cynthia Lummis (R-WY), and John Fetterman (D-PA).

Background

Food labels are a critical component of our food economy. They enable farmers to earn a fair price for their products and give consumers the information they need to support local farmers and ranchers — which is increasingly important to Americans.

However, American farmers and ranchers struggle to compete for the consumer dollar in the highly consolidated cattle market, where just four companies control 85% of processing. Before it was repealed in 2015, MCOOL required all meat labels to disclose the country where the animals were born, raised, and slaughtered. Capitalizing on the absence of country of origin labeling standards, which apply to all other products in the marketplace, these global corporations have gained an even tighter grip on our food system by misusing beef labels to deceive customers and steal market opportunities from American cattle producers. The repeal of MCOOL opened the door for multinational corporations like Brazil's JBS to use deceptive labeling practices to pass off their lower-quality, imported products as U.S.-produced.

If policymakers want to give American producers a fighting chance to compete, they must level the playing field by raising the integrity of beef labeling. America's farmers and ranchers, who work tirelessly to produce some of the highest quality beef in the world, deserve a fair labeling system that provides consumers with basic information on the origin of their beef.

THE AMERICAN BEEF LABELING ACT WOULD:

- Direct the U.S. Trade Representative to partner with the U.S. Department of Agriculture to develop and implement a plan to reinstate MCOOL for beef
- Include a requirement that this plan be in accordance with World Trade Organization regulations
- Give the U.S. Trade Representative one year to implement its MCOOL plan



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Restoring Fair and Competitive Markets

Our cattle and beef markets cannot function properly when consumers are denied basic market information, such as where the beef they purchase for their families was produced, under which country's food production and food safety regime it was produced, and whether their purchase will help strengthen our domestic food supply chains. The American Beef Labeling Act will remedy this situation and bring needed transparency to the marketplace for producers and consumers alike.

Consumers Deserve Better

U.S. consumers, in increasing numbers, are demanding to know where their food comes from and where and how it is processed. A 2022 poll from the U.S. Department of Agriculture found that more than 40% of the shoppers specifically look for a U.S.A. label when buying meat — but currently, that label does not ensure the animal was born, raised, and slaughtered on American soil.

MCOOL would provide consumers with important information for their marketplace choices. It would help guide consumers who want to buy from U.S. farmers and ranchers rather than industrial multinational corporations that comingle meat products from several foreign countries.



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