

FACT SHEET

American Beef Labeling Act (S.421)

Country of Origin Labeling Enforcement Act (H.R.5818)

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

These bipartisan bills are led by Senators John Thune (R-SD) and Cory Booker (D-NJ) in the U.S. Senate, and by Representatives Harriet Hageman (R-WY) and Ro Khanna (D-CA) in the U.S. House of Representatives.



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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 Before it was repealed in 2015, MCOOL required all meat labels to disclose the country where the animals were born, raised, and slaughtered.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, 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 deserve a fair labeling system that provides consumers with basic information on the origin of their beef.

THIS LEGISLATION WOULD:

- Amend the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946 to require country of origin labeling for beef
- Direct the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) to partner with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to implement a plan to reinstate MCOOL for beef within one year (Senate version)
- Include a requirement that this plan be in accordance with World Trade Organization (WTO) regulations (Senate version)
- Require the USDA to enact MCOOL regardless of WTO rules (House version)
- Enforce fines for beef not in compliance with MCOOL requirements (House version)



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. MCOOL 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 USDA found that more than 40% of shoppers specifically look for a U.S.A. label when buying meat.

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 multinational corporations that commingle meat products from several foreign countries.



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