

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	Campaign for Contract Agriculture Reform
AFL-CIO of Nebraska	Campaign for Family Farms and the Environment
Alabama Contract Poultry Growers Association	Caney Fork Headwaters Association (TN)
Alabama State Association of Cooperatives	Carbon County Resource Council (MT)
Alaska Farmers Union	Carolina Farm Stewardship Association (NC)
Alianza Nacional de Campesinas	Catholic Charities of Central and Northern Missouri-Social Services Office/Diocese of Jefferson City
Alternative Energy Resources Organization (AERO) (MT)	National Catholic Rural Life Conference
American Agriculture Movement	Cattle Producers of Louisiana
American Corn Growers Institute for Public Policy	Cattle Producers of Washington
American Federation of Government Employees (AFL-CIO), Local 3354, USDA-St. Louis	Center for Earth Spirituality and Rural Ministry (MN)
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Local 2748 (WI)	Center for Family Farm Development (GA)
American Grassfed Association	Center for Food Safety
American Indian Mothers, Inc. (NC)	Center for Foodborne Illness Research & Prevention
American Raw Milk Producers Pricing Association	Center for Media and Democracy's Food Rights Network
Angelic Organics Learning Center and Farm (IL)	Center for Rural Affairs
Arkansas Farmers Union	Central Co-op (WA)
Ashtabula, Geauga, Lake County (OH) Farmers' Union	Chicago Consumer Coalition
Berks (PA) Gas Truth	Church Women United in New York State
Berkshire Organics (MA)	Citizen Action Coalition of Indiana
BioRegional Strategies	Citizens for Sanity.Com, Inc. (FL)
Bold Nebraska	City Market Onion River Co-op (VT)
Boots on the Ground, LLC	Cleanwater Action Council of Northeast Wisconsin
Boston Food & Farm PBC (MA)	Coalition for a Prosperous America
Buckeye Quality Beef Association (OH)	Colorado Independent CattleGrowers Association
Buffalo Mountain Coop (VT)	Communication Workers of America
California Dairy Campaign	Communication Workers of America Nebraska State Council
California Farmers Union	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)