

May 19, 2014

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Chairwoman
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate

Cc: Members of the U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations

Dear Chairwoman Mikulski and Ranking Member Shelby:

The undersigned 179 farm, rural, faith, environmental, labor, farmworker and consumer organizations respectfully urge you to support basic food labeling and to reject any attempts to defund or undermine Country-of-Origin Labeling (COOL) law and regulations. Consumers want to know more, not less, about the origins of their food and using an appropriations rider to deny them that knowledge is unacceptable.

Efforts will likely be made to weaken COOL regulations and enforcement during Senate consideration of the fiscal year 2015 appropriations bill. Our organizations remain steadfast in their opposition to any legislative changes to COOL or attempts to prevent consumers from knowing the origins of their food.

There is no need to halt enforcement of COOL. Congress intended to maintain the current COOL labels when it refused to accept a provision that would have hamstrung COOL as part of the 2014 Farm Bill. We ask that you follow the leadership of the Senate Agriculture Committee in opposing any changes to COOL at this juncture. Furthermore, both the ongoing proceedings at the World Trade Organization and in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia have found that the goal of the COOL statute and current regulations uphold a legitimate public interest and the 2013 improvements to the rules brought COOL into compliance with our trade and domestic legal obligations.

Additionally, we ask that you speak favorably of COOL during Appropriations Committee hearings and markups. Farmers and ranchers are proud of what they produce and should be allowed to promote their products. Consumers deserve clear, direct and informative labels. Providing more accurate labels with more information is a win-win situation for producers and consumers.

COOL is extremely important to our organizations, and we oppose any appropriations language that would harm the integrity of the label. Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

Alabama Contract Poultry Growers Association
Alabama State Association of Cooperatives
Alaska Farmers Union
Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment
Alternative Energy Resources Organization (AERO) (MT)
American Agriculture Movement
American Federation of Government Employees (AFL-CIO),
Local 3354, USDA-St. Louis
American Grassfed Association
American Raw Milk Producers Pricing Association
Arizona Consumers Council Foundation
Arkansas Farmers Union
Ashtabula, Geauga, Lake County (OH) Farmers' Union
Berks (PA) Gas Truth
BioRegional Strategies
Buckeye Quality Beef Association (OH)

California Dairy Campaign
California Farmers Union
Campaign for Contract Agriculture Reform
Campaign for Family Farms and the Environment
Caney Fork Headwaters Association (TN)
Carolina Farm Stewardship Association (NC)
Social Services Office-Catholic Charities of Central and
Northern Missouri/Diocese of Jefferson City
Cattle Producers of Louisiana
Cattle Producers of Washington
Center for Earth Spirituality and Rural Ministry (MN)
Center for Food Safety
Center for Media and Democracy's Food Rights Network
Center for Rural Affairs
Central Co-op (WA)
Chicago Consumer Coalition

Church Women United of New York State
 Citizen Action Coalition of Indiana
 Citizens for Sanity.Com, Inc. (FL)
 The CJD Foundation
 Cleanwater Action Council of Northeast Wisconsin
 Coalition for a Prosperous America
 Colorado Independent CattleGrowers Association
 Community Alliance for Global Justice (WA)
 Community Farm Alliance (KY)
 Community Food and Justice Coalition (CA)
 Consumer Assistance Council, Inc.
 Consumer Federation of America
 Consumer Federation of California
 The Consumer Federation of the Southeast
 Contract Poultry Growers Association of the Virginias
 The Cornucopia Institute
 Cornucopia Network NJ/TN Chapter
 Crawford Stewardship Project (WI)
 Cultivating Community (ME)
 Cumberland Countians for Ecojustice (TN)
 Dakota Resource Council
 Dakota Rural Action of SD
 East New York Farms!/United Community Centers
 Ecological Farming Association (CA)
 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
 Florida Certified Organic Growers and Consumers, Inc.
 Food & Water Watch
 Food Chain Workers Alliance
 Food Democracy Now!
 GardenShare (NY)
 Grassroots International
 Hmong National Development, Inc.
 Hunger Action Los Angeles
 Illinois Farmers Union
 Illinois Stewardship Alliance
 Independent Beef Association of North Dakota (I-BAND)
 Independent Cattlemen of Nebraska
 Independent Cattlemen of Wyoming
 Indian Nations Conservation Alliance
 Indiana Farmers Union
 Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy
 Interchurch Ministries of Nebraska
 International Brotherhood of Teamsters
 International Texas Longhorn Association
 Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation
 Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future (MD)
 Kansas Cattlemen's Association
 Kansas Farmers Union
 Kellyn Foundation (PA)
 La Montanita Co-op
 Label GMOs San Francisco
 Land Stewardship Project (MN)
 Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (MOFGA)
 Massachusetts Fishermen's Partnership, Inc.
 Michael Fields Agricultural Institute (WI)
 Michigan Farmers Union
 Midwest Environmental Advocates (WI)
 Midwest Organic & Sustainable Education Service (MOSES)
 Minnesota Farmers Union
 Mississippi Assoc. of Cooperatives
 Missouri Farmers Union
 Missouri National Farmers Organization
 Missouri Rural Crisis Center
 Missouri's Best Beef Cooperative
 Montana Farmers Union
 Murray County (OK) Independent Cattlemen's Association
 National Consumers League
 National Family Farm Coalition
 National Farmers Organization
 National Farmers Union
 National Grange of the Order of Patrons of Husbandry
 National Latino Farmers & Ranchers Trade Association
 National Organic Coalition
 National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition
 National Young Farmers Coalition
 Nature Abounds (PA)
 Nebraska Farmers Union
 Nebraska State Grange
 Nebraska Sustainable Agriculture Society
 Nebraska Wildlife Federation
 Nebraska Women Involved in Farm Economics (NE WIFE)
 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 Entry Sustainable Farming Project
 N. Carolina Assoc. of Black Lawyers, Land Loss Prevention
 Project
 North Dakota Farmers Union
 Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance
 Northeast Organic Farming Assoc. - NH
 Northeast Organic Farming Assoc. - NY
 Northeast Organic Farming Assoc. - VT
 Northeast Organic Farming Association, Interstate Council
 (NOFA-IC)
 Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Working Group
 Northern Plains Resource Council (MT)
 Northern Wisconsin Beef Producers
 Northwest Atlantic Marine Alliance (MA)
 Northwest Farm Bill Action Group
 Oglala Sioux Livestock and Land Owners Association (SD)
 Ohio Environmental Stewardship Alliance
 Ohio Farmers Union
 Oregon Rural Action
 Organic Consumers Association
 Organic Farmers' Agency for Relationship Marketing (OFARM)
 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)
 Public Citizen
 R-CALF United Stockgrowers of America
 Rio Grande Community Farm
 Rocky Mountain Farmers Union

Roots of Change
Rural Advancement Foundation International - USA (RAFI-USA)
Rural Coalition/Coalición Rural
Rural Vermont
The Second Chance Foundation
Slow Food USA
Small Planet Institute
Social and Economical Development Project
South Dakota Farmers Union
South Dakota Livestock Auction Markets Association
South Dakota Sheep Growers Association
South Dakota Stockgrowers Association
Sustain LA (CA)
Tidal Creek Cooperative (Food Market) (NC)

Tilth Producers of Washington
Tooling, Manufacturing and Technologies Assoc.
U.S. Cattlemen's Association
United Church of Christ Justice and Witness Ministries
Virginia Association for Biological Farming
Virginia Citizens Consumer Council
Washington Farmers Union
Waterkeeper Alliance
Western Colorado Congress
Western Organization of Resource Councils (WORC)
Western Sustainable Agriculture Working Group
WhyHunger
Wisconsin Farmers Union
Women, Food and Agriculture Network