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 354, 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
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)
Massachussets 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 Association
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)
North Dakota Farmers Union
North Dakota Farmers Union
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
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