



MONTANANS DEMAND MANDATORY COOL!

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The Honorable Brooke Rollins
The Secretary of Agriculture
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Madam Secretary,

Your recent comments in support of MCOOL were welcomed by Montana ranchers and consumers. Montanans encourage your continued support in the form of steps to move MCOOL forward. Without action, ranchers continue to be undervalued by packers, and consumers continue to be misled in the grocery store. Recent reporting shows that "farm bankruptcies in MT increased 200% in 2025." According to the USDA census, in Montana's Ravalli County alone, over 150 farms and 50,000 acres of farmland were lost between 2017 and 2022. However, your active support and reinforcement can be what changes the landscape of American beef.

We, the undersigned organizations, urge the Department of Agriculture to take immediate action to reinstate Mandatory Country-of-Origin Labeling (MCOOL) for beef. As a coalition representing a majority of Montana cattle producers, members of the Montana Country-of-Origin Labeling Coalition have recognized the need for MCOOL to support not only American ranchers, but also American consumers in making informed decisions at the grocery store.

While the newly implemented Product of USA Labeling rule by the USDA does close a few loopholes that had previously been exploited by the meat packing industry, our concern is that it does not go far enough and continues to weaken the integrity of the US food supply. Leaving COOL voluntary continues to harm the American consumer, who has no idea where grocery store beef is born, raised, or harvested, and leaves room for vague labels that are not an indication of the true origin of the meat itself.

As a member of the Make America Healthy Again commission, you know one of the commission's goals is to "identify and report on best practices for preventing childhood health issues, including through proper nutrition and the promotion of healthy lifestyles." Protein has been identified as the base of a balanced diet. However, protein is currently one of the most expensive items in grocery stores. While imports from other countries can assist in lowering these costs, MCOOL will ultimately force the packers to lower the prices for the imported beef allowing a more affordable option for consumers because it costs the packers less to buy imported beef that is raised and processed at a lower standard than US beef. Additionally, how can parents ensure proper nutrition if they do not know where their beef is coming from? Other countries have varying standards on hormones, steroids, and antibiotics allowed to be used on their cattle. Consumers should be able to make informed choices and have transparency of the country of origin. With America as a trailblazer with a focus on public health, we should not allow other countries to benefit from the premium our high-quality beef receives without an

appropriate label. Our ranchers also should not have to risk a negative reputation if there are diseases coming from beef in other countries. In order to focus on America First and Making America Healthy Again, we need to inform consumers of where their beef is coming from.

As established in the “Addressing Security Risks From Price Fixing And Anti-competitive Behavior In The Food Supply Chain” Executive Order put forth by President Trump, the Food Supply Chain Security Task Force will investigate food-related industries and determine whether anti-competitive behavior exists in food supply chains in the United States, as well as whether control of food-related industries by foreign entities is increasing the cost of food products in the United States or creating a national or economic security threat to Americans. You have recognized that the lack of MCOOL on beef is a transparency issue to consumers. That lack of transparency is only benefiting the foreign beef packing monopoly. By keeping consumers in the dark about the origin of their beef, they are able to sell lower quality product to Americans. With proper labeling, these companies will have to lower the price of imported beef to keep consumers purchasing that product. In order to remain in compliance with the goals of this executive order, your department should be pursuing any avenue available to reinstate MCOOL and stop the monopoly efforts of foreign packing companies.

From the helm of USDA, you have the power and responsibility to actively remain on the front line to reimplement MCOOL by exhausting all avenues available to establish fairness and transparency for ranchers and consumers. MCOOL on beef is not new legislation; it was the rule of law until 2015 when it was repealed. The basis for it being repealed has not stood up over the past 10 years, as the United States has not seen retaliatory tariffs on products that continued to have a country-of-origin label. The only damage that has been seen in the past decade is putting American consumers and producers second, and that can be changed with the reimplementation of MCOOL. In order to put America first, America needs to reinstate MCOOL.

We greatly appreciate your consideration.

Sincerely,

Montana Farmers Union
Northern Plains Resource Council
R-CALF
Montana Cattleman’s Association
Intertribal Agriculture Council
Montana Chapter of National Farmers Organization
Abundant Montana