



The American Beef Labeling Act (S.421) and the COOL Enforcement Act (H.R. 5818): Restoring Mandatory Country of Origin Labeling



Mandatory Country of Origin Labeling (MCOOL) was first enacted by Congress in the 2002 Farm Bill, requiring retailers to clearly label certain food products with their country of origin.

In 2015, after a lengthy dispute led by Mexico and Canada that challenged the United States' MCOOL requirements for beef and pork as an undue trade barrier, the World Trade Organization made a controversial ruling against the U.S. Rather than face billions of dollars in retaliatory tariffs, Congress opted to repeal MCOOL requirements for beef and pork. MCOOL remains in place for a variety of other products including lamb, chicken, and fresh produce.

As global markets consolidate, and consumers demand greater awareness of where their food comes from, U.S.-based, family-scale farmers who rely on domestic markets lose out. Prior to 2019, the U.S. consistently exported more agricultural products than it imported. Over the past few years, this trend has flipped and the USDA estimates a record-high farm trade deficit in 2025 of nearly \$50 billion.¹

Some countries that the U.S. imports meat products from have lower food safety, environmental, and labor protections, as well as lower prices for farmers. These factors mean that multinational corporations can import product into the U.S. cheaply, both undercutting U.S. farmers and ranchers who cannot out-compete and enabling substandard environmental and labor practices abroad. Reinstating and expanding MCOOL offers additional market transparency and opportunities for farmers and ranchers, without unfair competition from multinational agribusinesses.

Reinstating and expanding MCOOL offers additional market transparency and opportunities for farmers and ranchers, without unfair competition from multinational agribusinesses. **The American Beef Labeling Act (S.421) and the COOL Enforcement Act (H.R. 5818) would restore MCOOL for beef products.**

In addition to many groups including NFFC, the Ranchers-Cattlemen Action Legal Fund United Stockgrowers of America (R-CALF), National Farmers Union, the reinstatement of MCOOL has consistently received overwhelming bipartisan support from voters. Consumers deserve to know where their food comes from, desire to support their local food producers, and should be able to trust that food labels provide accurate information.

- 43-48% of consumers always or most of the time look for the “Product of USA” label when buying meat products.²
- Nearly three-quarters of Democrats (72%) and four in five Republicans (79%) said they are more likely to vote for a candidate who supports the American Beef Labeling Act.³
- 86% of voters support the reinstatement of MCOOL for beef.³

The American Beef Labeling Act (S.421) and the COOL Enforcement Act (H.R. 5818) will help to restore market integrity and fair competition for US producers, while allowing consumers to make fully informed purchasing decisions.

Congressional Action Can Restore MCOOL

The bipartisan American Beef Labeling Act (S.421) and the COOL Enforcement Act (H.R. 5818) amend the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946 to reinstate MCOOL for beef. The Senate bill requires the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative and the Department of Agriculture to work together to develop and implement means of reinstating MCOOL that complies with all WTO rules within one year of the bill's enactment.

The ongoing review process of the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) is also another route through which Congress could encourage the implementation of MCOOL.

NFFC, alongside allies like the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy and the Western Organization of Resource Councils, has encouraged the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative to prioritize reinstating MCOOL in negotiations, including through insertion of a “peace clause” into the treaty which would temporarily prevent challenges before the WTO to each country’s food labeling efforts. Members of Congress can amplify this request as they are consulted by the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative for this review.



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¹Kaufman, J., Jiang, H., & Williams, A. (2025). Outlook for U.S. agricultural trade: May 2025 (Report No. AES-132). U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service and U.S. Department of Agriculture, Foreign Agricultural Service. <https://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/pub-details?pubid=112706>

²RTI International, Cates, S. C., Wood, D., Creel, D., Brophy, J., Love, E., & Barefoot, A. (2022) *Analyzing Consumers’ Value of “Product of USA” Labeling Claims*. US Department of Agriculture. https://www.fsis.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media_file/documents/Product_of_USA_Consumer_Survey_Final_Report.pdf.

³Morning Consult. (2022). *Opinions on the American Beef Labeling Act*. Coalition for a Prosperous America. <https://prosperousamerica.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/MC-CPA-Beef-poll-September-2022.pdf>