

# *What South Dakotans Should Know About COOL...*

## **What is COOL?**

COOL stands for Country of Origin Labeling. COOL requires retailers to let consumers know the country of origin of beef, lamb, pork, goat meat, chicken, and fish, in addition to perishable commodities and peanuts, pecans and macadamia nuts. It's a common sense measure that will benefit our agricultural community and consumers alike.

## **Why do I support COOL?**

I have long supported Country of Origin Labeling. I introduced my first meat labeling bill as a member of the House of Representatives in 1992. As a Senator, I reintroduced that legislation in 1997, and I was the primary author of the COOL language included in the 2002 Farm Bill. During the 2008 Farm Bill reauthorization, I pressed to ensure COOL would finally be implemented.

## **Why do we need COOL?**

- It's every consumer's right to know. Americans deserve to know where the food they feed their family is from. Polls show that the overwhelming majority of Americans want COOL. If we know where our T-shirts come from, shouldn't we know where our T-bones come from?
- It also benefits American producers. The law serves as a marketing tool for ranchers and producers in South Dakota and across our nation. It allows consumers to choose to purchase an American product in the grocery store aisle.

## **Who else supports COOL?**

A poll by *Consumer Reports* showed that 92% of Americans want to know the origin of the food they are buying. COOL draws broad, bipartisan support, as evidenced by the bill's overwhelming support in the United States Congress.

## **What are some misconceptions about COOL?**

There are plenty. One major concern was that COOL would cause a lot of paperwork, resulting in headaches for farmers and ranchers. To address this concern, I helped enact changes in the 2008 Farm Bill clarifying that producers can confirm the origin of their products using records maintained through the course of their normal day-to-day business. Another concern involved the cost of COOL; the fact of the matter is that almost every other industrialized nation already has a COOL law, and they have implemented the program with minimal cost.

## **When will COOL be implemented?**

After being signed into law in the 2002 Farm Bill, the original implementation date of September 30, 2004 suffered a string of delays due to a series of backroom deals and closed door discussions. Now, at long last, COOL will be implemented by September 30, 2008.

## **Where can folks learn more details about how COOL will be implemented?**

USDA has published their interim final rule about COOL in the August 1, 2008 issue of the *Federal Register*. You can read the document online at <http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSv1.0/getfile?dDocName=STELPRDC5070926>. In addition, I've posted information about COOL and other important issues on my website at <http://johnson.senate.gov>.

