

Dear Montana Congressional Delegation:

We, the undersigned who represent the majority of Montana cattle producers, urge you to support the American Beef Labeling Act. Sponsored by U.S. Senator John Thune (R-SD), this legislation seeks to reinstate the mandatory country of origin labeling (mCOOL), which was passed by Congress in the 2002 Farm Bill. However, Congress repealed mCOOL for only beef and pork in 2015. In the 2025 Legislative session, Montana's Representatives and Senators passed Senate Joint Resolution 25 ([copy included with this letter](#)), urging Congress to re-implement Country of Origin Labeling for beef.

Today, the "USDA Inspected" and "Product of the USA" labels are misleading for consumers, leaving them with the impression they are purchasing U.S. beef. Currently, beef imported from any other country can legally have a label stating "Product of the USA" simply if it is re-packaged for retail within our borders. Many consumers may be satisfied buying imported beef, and that should be their right. However, what is not right is buying Brazilian or other imported beef while being led to believe it was born, raised, and processed in the USA. To be fully effective, mCOOL needs reinstatement on the national level.

Without accurate country of origin labeling for beef, regardless of how you feel about tariffs, we will be unable to accurately collect the specifically formulated tariffs for each country on imported beef without a mandatory country of origin label.

Why did Congress exempt beef and pork from the labeling law in the first place? Large packing corporations profit from the lack of mCOOL at the expense of American ranchers. The "Big Four" packers control over 80 percent of the beef market, and import beef from Brazil and other countries, package it in the U.S. and sell it with a "Product of the USA" label. This is one example of large corporations taking advantage of consumer trust and making money at the expense of hard-working Montana ranchers by slapping a "Product of the USA" label on lesser-quality imported meats.

The "Big Four" packers in the USA are the same four large packers in Canada and Mexico. The "Big Four" encouraged Canada and Mexico to file a complaint against the USA on labeling for all foods with mCOOL, claiming Americans would prefer to buy American and discriminate against them. An example utilized in this claim is that Mexican cattle receive less money than northern plains cattle. However, markets demonstrate that Texas, New Mexico and other southern states' cattle receive less money than northern plains cattle too. In reality, it is because of genetics and condition -- not country of origin. Congress repealed mCOOL on beef and pork over 10 years ago -- and Mexican cattle are still receiving less money than northern plains cattle.

Depriving U.S. ranchers of mCOOL for beef means Congress is effectively devaluing the U.S. cattle industry against other food, beverage, and manufacturing industries. American ranchers deserve better—they deserve credit for the high quality of beef that they raise and sell in retail locations. American consumers deserve honest and transparent labels to make informed decisions to feed their families.

This bill will accomplish just that. It's clear that consumers want to know where their food comes from.

The undersigned organizations and individuals urge you to support and consider co-sponsoring the American Beef Labeling Act for your consumer and producer constituents alike.

Sincerely,

Montana Farmers Union

Northern Plains Resource Council

Montana Cattleman's Association

R-CALF

Montana - National Farmers Organization (NFO)

Abundant Montana

United States Cattlemen's Association