



November 3, 2015

The Honorable Pat Roberts
Chairman
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry
328A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
Ranking Member
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry
328A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Roberts and Ranking Member Stabenow:

Following the May 18, 2015, World Trade Organization (WTO) decision finding U.S. mandatory Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) regulations to be in violation of the United States' international trade agreement obligations, the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA) voted during its 2015 Annual Meeting in September to urge the Senate to pass legislation repealing mandatory COOL requirements. This action is needed to bring the United States into compliance and avoid retaliatory trade sanctions by Canada and Mexico.

NASDA represents the Commissioners, Secretaries, and Directors of the state departments of agriculture in all 50 states and four U.S. territories. State departments of agriculture are responsible for a wide range of programs including food safety, combating the spread of animal and plant diseases, and fostering the economic vitality of our rural communities. Promoting their state's agricultural products and working to enhance export opportunities are also key responsibilities of NASDA members.

NASDA believes there is value in a policy that allows for differentiation of products by providing consumers with COOL information within the U.S. retail food supply. However, it is imperative that COOL policy be implemented in a manner that ensures the U.S. maintains its obligations under negotiated international trade agreements and avoids retaliatory trade actions against U.S. agricultural products.

Canada and Mexico have proposed trade sanctions in association with the WTO COOL decision, and those sanctions would negatively impact U.S. agricultural producers and other segments of the economy. NASDA urges Congress to swiftly repeal mandatory COOL requirements to facilitate ongoing access for U.S. agricultural producers to two of their most important export markets, without the threat of retaliatory measures.

We look forward to working with you on this very important issue. Please feel free to contact Nathan Bowen on NASDA's staff if we can be of any assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Greg Ibach", is written in a cursive style.

Greg Ibach
NASDA President
Director, Nebraska Department of Agriculture