



1400 Independence Avenue, SW.
Room 3071-S, STOP 0201
Washington, DC 20250-0201

April 4, 2012

Dear Industry Representative:

This letter pertains to the implementation of the mandatory Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) regulations administered by the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). As you may know, U.S.COOL requirements are the subject of dispute settlement proceedings before the World Trade Organization (WTO). Although we were pleased that the Panel's report in the COOL dispute, issued on November 18, 2011, confirmed the United States' right under WTO rules to require that food products be labeled with their origin, we were disappointed that the Panel disagreed with the way that the United States designed its COOL requirements with regard to beef and pork. Accordingly, the United States has appealed certain aspects of the Panel's report at the WTO.

The final COOL regulations became effective March 16, 2009. Since then, AMS has devoted significant resources to education and outreach. These efforts have had their intended results. COOL compliance rates are very high. The most recent compliance reviews established an estimated 96% compliance rate for covered commodities under COOL.

AMS believes the COOL regulations are working well and that there is no need to change the regulations. In light of this, the Department withdraws the letter to industry representatives pertaining to COOL dated February 20, 2009.

Retailers must comply fully with the current COOL regulations, notwithstanding the ongoing WTO litigation. The current COOL regulations will remain in full force and effect as the United States continues to defend the COOL requirements at the WTO. Please note that if any changes are made to the COOL regulations in the future, they will be made pursuant to the normally applicable notice and comment rulemaking procedures.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert Keeney". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a white background.

Robert Keeney
Acting Administrator