

HCS HCRs 15 & 9 -- COUNTRY-OF-ORIGIN LABELING

SPONSOR: Christensen

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Special Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs by a vote of 15 to 0. Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Rules-Legislative by a vote of 7 to 1 with 2 voting present.

The following is a summary of the House Committee Substitute for HCR 15.

This House Concurrent Resolution specifies that the Missouri General Assembly supports the right of consumers to know the origins of their food, the use of country-of-origin labels, and urges the United States Congress and the President to reinstate mandatory country-of-origin labeling.

This bill is the same as HCR 9 (2025), HCR 5 (2023); and HCR 35(2024).

The following is a summary of the public testimony from the committee hearing. The testimony was based on the introduced version of the bill.

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that American farmers produce the best cattle in the world, and there are costs associated with that. Because our farmers have to comply with greater health and safety standards, they are undercut in price by foreign-raised cattle; they need a competitive edge, and the ability to clearly communicate whether beef is American or from another country can give this edge, because consumers want to buy American. Unfortunately, animals born, raised, and slaughtered elsewhere are able to be labeled as American, even if all that happens in this country is the slaughter, slicing, or repackaging. Country-of-origin labeling worked well in the past and should be mandatory again. Foreign interests wouldn't be against this labeling if it didn't hurt them, and the legislature should be on the side of independent cattlemen in the United States. Canada already requires country-of-origin labeling and it is easy to track because cattle are branded when they enter the country. American cattlemen are struggling financially and many have converted cattle-grazing land to produce row crops. This leads to soil damage and erosion because that land should never have been farmed in that way in the first place.

Testifying in person for the bill were Representative Christensen; Arnie Dienoff; Freddie Keaton, Independent Cattlemen of Missouri; Ken Wolken, Independent Cattlemen of Missouri; Ben Thomas,

Independent Cattlemen of Missouri; Robert Max Thornsberry Dvm, Independent Cattlemen of Missouri; J. Micah Bristow, Circle 5 Cow School; Larry Urton; Donald Young Jr.; and Jamie P. Blair, Missouri Rural Crisis Center.

OPPONENTS: Those who oppose the bill say that while country-of-origin labeling is a good thing, it is best achieved through voluntary, industry-led programs. The government's previous mandatory country-of-origin labeling law cost the industry billions without benefits for the producers. The reason it doesn't help producers is that the labels are tiny and easily ignored, whereas voluntary industry-led programs are more conspicuous. The World Trade Organization also levied sanctions over the mandatory labeling. The program will also necessitate Electronic Identification (EID) of cows, which the industry opposes. Costs are likely to be passed along to the consumer.

Testifying in person against the bill were Missouri Pork Association; Missouri Farm Bureau; Mike Deering, Missouri Cattlemen's Association; Jeff Reed, Rolling Shoals Farm; Missouri Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

OTHERS: Others testifying on the bill say there is dissent among members of the Missouri cattleman's association, and this is the right time to be passing these resolutions to get opinions to Congress before the next farm bill.

Testifying in person on the bill was Steven Carroll.

Written testimony has been submitted for this bill. The full written testimony and witnesses testifying online can be found under Testimony on the bill page on the House website.