

HCR 29 -- COUNTRY OF ORIGIN LABELING

SPONSOR: Elliott

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Corrections and Public Institutions by a vote of 9 to 0.

This House Concurrent Resolution specifies that the Members of the House of Representatives, the Senate concurring therein, support the right of consumers to know the origins of their food, support the use of country-of-origin labels, and urge the United States Congress to reinstate mandatory country-of-origin labeling.

This bill is the same as HCR 35 (2026).

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that meat is one of the few, if not the only, products that's imported into the U.S. that isn't labeled. In 2008, mandatory country-of-origin labeling (MCOOL) was established. In 2015, under pressure from the World Trade Organization, the label was repealed. Beef and pork are currently carved out, but MCOOL is required for lamb, goat, ground chicken, fish, and shellfish. Beef coming into the nation, if it was processed here, can be labeled as a product of the USA, even though the cow came from Argentina or Brazil. Other countries come in with an inferior product, without safety restrictions, and the product gets labeled deceptively. Missouri has the best beef out there want transparency and to make importers label the right country on meat products. Consumers should have the option to pay more for higher quality. Let them choose the cheaper products when they need to. Don't obscure the truth about the products they're buying from them. Voluntary labeling efforts mean nothing and are confusing; it's insufficient, allows for deceptive marketing practice, and amounts to little in the mind of the consumer. The U.S. should allow farmers and ranchers to differentiate their products in the marketplace. This resolution has bipartisan support at the Federal level and will be in accordance with World Trade Organization regulations. This is an issue of stability and national security. It is vital that a country is able to feed itself, and many of the worst examples of insecure nations came from a disrupted food supply. This is common-sense legislation. We had it before, and there was no overly costly overhead. The information already has to be tracked, and there are systems available to recall in cases of a breakout. The information goes all the way to the retail case; however, they just choose not to display it because the knowledgeable consumer

is more likely to choose American beef. Supporters state American beef is forced to compete on price alone. America has the highest costs because land, labor, and regulations are superior here. American cattlemen should be allowed to differentiate their product so they can compete on quality and safety instead of being forced to only compete on price. Let the American consumer decide how important the country of origin is. Other countries that oppose American country of origin labeling have it in their own country. Exports of high-quality American beef in other countries are labeled. Yet, in the country with the most beef consumption in the world, labeling isn't required. Supporters further state that consumers want higher quality and taste; labeling helps them find it. Consumers want to put the money back in their own community, and labeling makes that possible. Those with lower incomes can still make the choice for cheaper products. Almost all hog production is now owned by China. That's the direction that things are headed for beef if the leverage provided by MCOOL isn't provided for farmers. This would be an important step forward to keep independent cattle farmers around.

Testifying in person for the bill were Representative Elliott; Liberty Link Missouri; Webster Davis; Bryan Johnson; Donny Young, Icom; Ken Wolker, Independent Cattlemen of Missouri; Ben Thomas; Jacqueline Casteel; Matthew Van Schyndel; Chase Boggs; Freddie Keaton, Independent Cattleman of Missouri; Jamie Blair, Missouri Rural Crisis Center; and Arnie Dienoff.

OPPONENTS: Those who oppose the bill say that this is a divisive issue. This was in the 2002 farm bill, executed in 2009. Tracking and segregation did not add up to profitability for the producer, and the demand for MCOOL was not what was anticipated from the consumer, unfortunately. Instead, a voluntary program is preferable, not a government mandate. Recent changes in the voluntary program are laudable in their increased accuracy and clarity. The economic impacts show people weren't purchasing their beef based on country of origin, but price. The solution isn't in more regulation. Previously, this cost the beef and pork industries billions of dollars, and those costs get passed on to the consumer in the end.

Testifying in person against the bill were Missouri Cattlemen's Association; Missouri Farm Bureau; Missouri Chamber of Commerce; and the Missouri Pork Association.

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.