



# NEWS RELEASE

United States Department of Agriculture • Office of Communications • 1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20250-1300 • Voice: (202) 720-4623 • Email: [oc.news@usda.gov](mailto:oc.news@usda.gov) • Web: <http://www.usda.gov>

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Contact:

Billy Cox (202) 720-8998

Sam Jones (202) 720-8998

## VILSACK ANNOUNCES IMPLEMENTATION OF COUNTRY OF ORIGIN LABELING LAW

WASHINGTON, Feb. 20, 2009 - Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack today announced that the final rule for the Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) program will go into effect as scheduled on March 16th. He also released a letter inviting stakeholders to follow additional voluntary labeling practices. The rule, published in the Federal Register on Jan. 15, 2009, has been under regulatory review by USDA pursuant to a Jan. 20, 2009, memorandum from the President's Chief of Staff.

"I strongly support Country of Origin Labeling - it's a critical step toward providing consumers with additional information about the origin of their food," said Vilsack. "The Department of Agriculture will be closely reviewing industry compliance with the rule and will evaluate the practicality of the suggestions for voluntary action in [my letter](#)."

During the regulatory review process, Secretary Vilsack determined that allowing the rule to go into effect and carefully monitoring implementation and compliance by retailers and their suppliers would provide the best avenue to evaluate the program. This evaluation period will inform the Secretary's consideration of whether additional rulemaking may be necessary to provide consumers with adequate information.

The COOL regulation requires country of origin labeling for muscle cuts and ground beef (including veal), pork, lamb, goat, and chicken; wild and farm-raised fish and shellfish; fresh and frozen fruits and vegetables; peanuts, pecans, macadamia nuts, and ginseng sold by designated retailers. These commodities must be labeled at retail to indicate the country of origin.

The final rule outlines requirements for labeling covered commodities and the recordkeeping requirements for retailers and suppliers. The rule prescribes specific criteria that must be met for a commodity to bear a "United States Country of Origin" declaration. The rule also contains provisions for labeling covered commodities of foreign origin.

For complete information on the COOL statute and regulation, go to [www.ams.usda.gov/cool](http://www.ams.usda.gov/cool).

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