

# COUNTRY-OF-ORIGIN LABELING

## MONTANA'S RIGHT TO AN HONEST MARKET

A free market economy depends on transparency. Without information consumers can't make informed decisions about what they buy. Producers can't know when they are getting a fair price for the food they raise.

American shoppers get to know where our shovel, shirt, or boots come from – and even most of our food – but not the origin of the meat we buy. That's not cool.

**Consumers deserve the right to choose USA beef and pork.**

**Farmers and ranchers deserve the right to an honest market.**



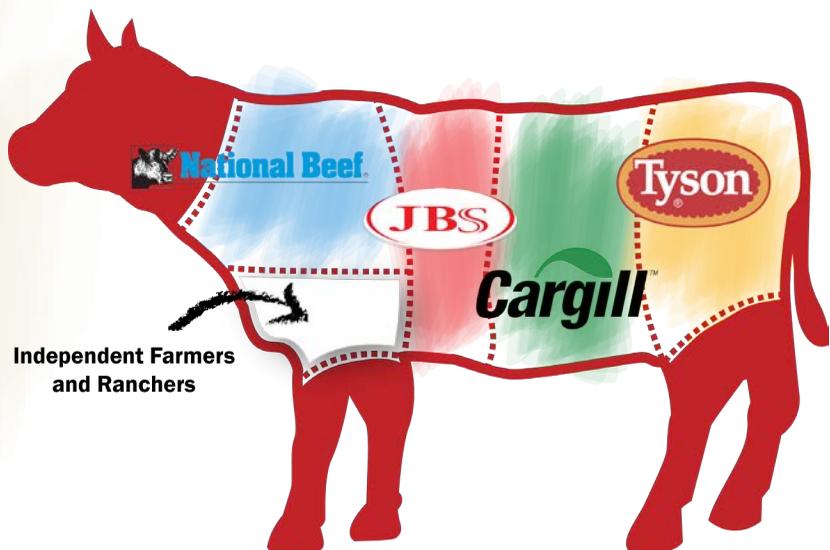
## How it works

It's very straightforward. Montana Country-of-Origin Labeling (COOL) will require a sign or "placard" at the meat counter or meat case telling customers where beef and pork is from. With Montana COOL, beef and pork that is born, raised, and processed in the USA will have a sign or placard noting that information. Beef and pork from other countries will be distinguished with a sign or placard noting that it's imported. These placards give consumers the ability to choose USA meat.

## COOL is part of reforming a rigged system

**Four big meatpackers – JBS, Cargill, Tyson, and National Beef Packing – control over 80% of the meatpacking market.**

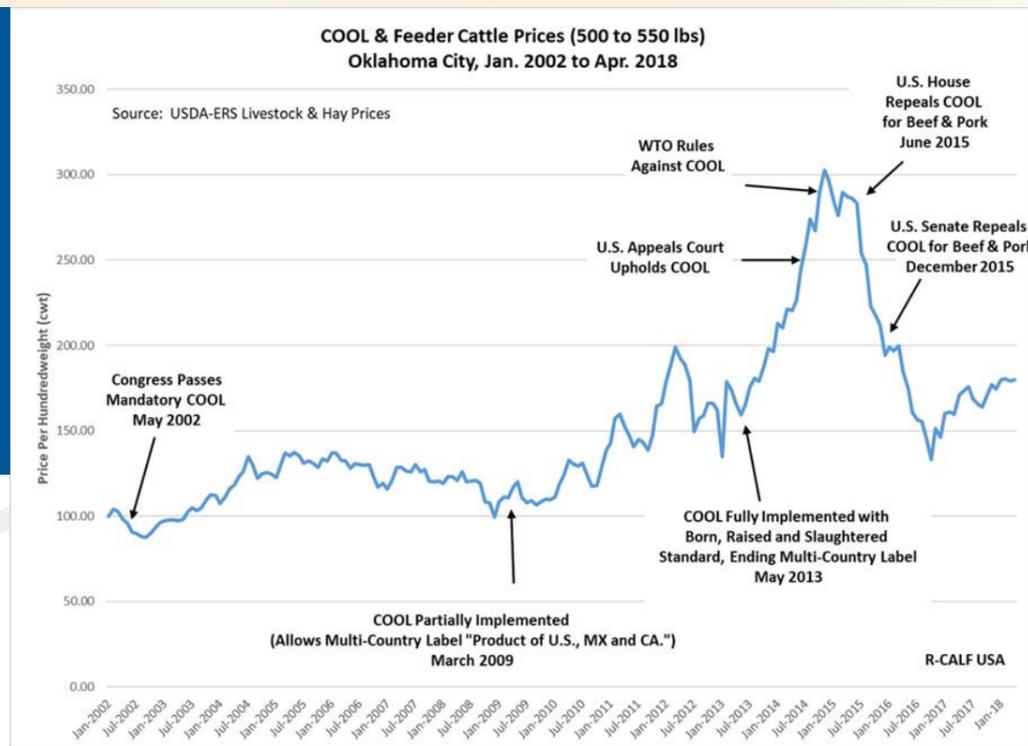
- **When there's so little competition in the market, meatpackers have the power to control prices.**
- **This concentration of market power results in customers paying more for beef, while America's ranchers are paid less.**



## Reforming a rigged system

- Those big meatpackers import cheaper beef from other countries, driving down what they pay for American beef (which has higher food safety standards and input costs).
- The COVID-19 pandemic has shown the meatpacking industry to be unstable, unpredictable, and unsafe. Huge facilities owned by the big meatpackers have had widespread virus outbreaks, disrupting supply chains for ranchers and retailers while risking the health and safety of workers and consumers.

Without Mandatory COOL, domestic meat prices go up, incentivizing meatpackers to import cheaper meat from outside the U.S. This costs ranchers profit and customers more money in grocery stores.



## Not mandatory? Not COOL!

The big packers successfully lobbied Congress to make Country-of-Origin Labeling for beef and pork a *voluntary* program. That's simply not working.

We need honesty to be **required** for labeling beef and pork, as is required for all other products in Montana.

Currently, our laws allow for what is essentially fraudulent labeling. Imported beef and pork can be labeled "Product of USA" even if it's meat raised somewhere else and only packaged in the United States. This fraudulent label betrays American ranchers, rural communities, and consumers by misrepresenting imported beef as American.

## COOL is a step forward for Montana

### Good for retailers

Montana COOL builds trust in meat products. It increases customer confidence in the supply chain, safety, and price stability for beef and pork. Placarding will provide added promotional value that meets rising customer demand to understand the source of their food.

### Good for farmers and ranchers

It will raise farm and ranch income by giving Montana producers a marketplace that is more transparent and fair, and by connecting them with consumers who value their products.

### Good for consumers

It allows consumers to know where their meat comes from while giving them the choice to support American farmers and ranchers.

### Good for workers

Since COOL was repealed nationally in 2015, 14,000 jobs in American meatpacking facilities have been lost. Without COOL, processing meat overseas is cheaper and perpetuates exploitation of workers and the environment. United Food and Commercial Workers – the largest private-industry union representing workers at grocery stores, retailers, meatpackers, and processors – supports restoring mandatory COOL.



### Good for Montana communities

A bigger share of consumers' food dollars will stay in Montana, and circulate through local economies.

### Wildly popular with the public

COOL has had better than 90% approval among American consumers since its introduction. The only opposition comes from the meatpacking industry and trade groups that stand to benefit when consumers don't know where their meat comes from.

## Montana's legal right to stand up for our ranchers

Placarding is a state's right to "communicate information to its citizen-consumers," which is protected both by the First Amendment and by the last sentence of 21 U.S.C. 678 (the Federal Meat Inspection Act). While the World Trade Organization - influenced by the meatpacker lobby - allowed Canada and Mexico to slap fines on the U.S. for federal COOL in the past, Montana placarding is different.

# COUNTRY-OF-ORIGIN-LABELING: MONTANA'S RIGHT TO AN HONEST MARKET

MYTH	FACT
Voluntary COOL is all we need.	We have voluntary COOL now, and it isn't working. Honesty should be <b>required</b> for labeling Montana beef and pork.
COOL will cost ranchers money.	COOL won't cost ranchers a penny!
Montana COOL threatens retailers with penalties for mislabeling.	Under Montana COOL, grocers are only penalized by <i>knowingly</i> and <i>deliberately</i> misleading customers.
Consumers will choose cheaper beef over U.S. beef.	In studies, over 90% of consumers approve of COOL.
COOL will drive down demand for beef.	The U.S. consumes more beef than any other country. Honest labeling will make customers more comfortable with their beef purchases.
The government shouldn't interfere with the free market.	COOL restores free markets. Markets are rigged when beef is labeled fraudulently and consumers can't choose USA beef.

## How YOU can make a difference:

1. **Sign our petition** to let state legislators know you support mandatory Country-of-Origin Labeling: [northernplains.org/support-cool](http://northernplains.org/support-cool)
2. **Write a letter** to the editor on COOL for your local newspaper, so that more people can hear from their neighbors about why this matters.
3. **Contact Caroline** at [caroline@northernplains.org](mailto:caroline@northernplains.org) or (406) 248-1154 for more information about COOL, and to get updates on what you can do as the 2021 legislative session approaches.

