

FSIS Docket Clerk
Docket #00-036A
Department of Agriculture
Food Safety and Inspection Service
Room 102 Cotton Annex Building
300 12th St. SW
Washington, DC 20250-3700

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To Whom it May Concern:

I am writing in response to your call for comments on regulations to define what cattle and beef products can be labeled as "Products of the U.S." (Docket #00-036A). I urge you to define this category as only those animals born, raised, and slaughtered in the United States.

It is vital that the standard for beef products to qualify for a "Made in the USA" label be simple and truthful. Allowing animals that are born in another country and live in the U.S. for as little as 100 days is not truthful. This kind of loophole creates a label with much less meaning, which does not help American ranchers and farmers who could use it to better market their product. It also diminishes the ability of consumers to know where their food is produced or to choose which products to buy based on concerns about safety, environmental, or labor standards in different countries.

As we continue to hear about other countries problems with mad cow disease and foot and mouth disease, many consumers are starting to think about the origin of their beef products. To many of us, there is a difference between an animal that was born, raised and slaughtered in the U.S., and one that was imported for its last 100 days. Allowing the 100 day exception to the labeling rules would obscure that difference, and does not allow consumers to act upon their desire to buy homegrown products.

I believe that most consumers want to know where the food they feed their families comes from, and that we have a right to know as much about our food as we do about most other manufactured products. I urge you to make sure that the criteria for which beef products qualify for the "Product of the USA" label are strong enough to allow us to do that.

Sincerely,

Janet Hitt



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