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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:

On behalf of the family farm and ranch members of the Iowa Farmers Union, I am writing in response to the proposed rulemaking regarding the definition and labeling of U.S. cattle and beef products.

Iowa Farmers Union strongly supports the Food Safety Inspection Service's current definition for voluntary labeling of cattle and beef products as "born, raised, slaughtered and processed in the United States." All other definitions would mislead consumers and damage the integrity of the U.S. beef industry.

For example, we oppose the petition submitted in September 2000, that would allow imported beef products to be fed in the U.S. for 100 days, processed in the United States and received a country of origin label, "Beef: Made in the U.S.A."

U.S. producers spend significant time, money, resources and energy producing top quality livestock. Cattle and beef products that were born and partially raised in another country should not be labeled under the same category as those born, raised, slaughtered and processed under America's unparalleled standards.

Our nation has an international reputation for growing and producing high quality beef. Labeling can be a valuable marketing tool to help promote U.S. products and to allow producers to better compete in the marketplace. As a matter of choice, many consumers may wish to purchase meat from animals born and raised in the United States.

While the clothes we wear and the cars we drive bear a country-of-origin label, the foods we feed our families do not. Consumers deserve the right to know the origin of their food. This is why Iowa Farmers Union strongly supports a mandatory labeling program with a uniform definition for domestic beef as born, raised, slaughtered and processed in the United States.

It is our hope that FSIS will implement meaningful labeling regulations for cattle and beef products. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

John Whitaker, President
Iowa Farmers Union

