

00-036A
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Pat Loften

Letter To The Editor

Dear Editor:

Have you ever stopped to wonder why we know exactly what county our T-shirts are from, but we have absolutely no idea what country our T-bones are from? We, as consumers, deserve to know the country of origin of the food we feed our families.

While we buy clothes, cars, toys and many other manufactured goods that bear a country-of-origin labels there is no requirement for the food we feed to our families. There are several opportunities currently available for food consumers and producers to let our national lawmakers know that we want more honest and complete food labeling.

The Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) is accepting public comments until October 9 concerning a new proposed ruling to define U.S. cattle and fresh beef products for labeling purposes. Current FSIS regulations allow voluntary labeling of fresh beef products using terms such as "U.S. Beef," and "Fresh American Beef." FSIS interprets these terms to mean that products are derived from cattle born, raised, slaughtered and processed in the United States.

However, there is a movement to change the rule by allowing beef products from imported cattle that are then fed a minimum of 100 days and processed in the United States to be labeled "Beef: Made in the USA." This rule change would be misleading to consumers and damaging to the integrity of our U.S. livestock industry.

U.S. beef producers spend

significant time, money, resources and energy in order to produce top quality livestock. Cattle and beef products that were born and partially raised in another country should not be labeled as a product of the United States.

Consumers and producers should write in support of the current definition of U.S. cattle and beef products for labeling purposes as "born, raised, slaughtered and processed in the United States."

One original and two copies of written comments should be sent by October 9 to: 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. A sample letter is available on Texas Farmers Union's website, www.texasfarmersunion.org.

While this rule would take care of voluntary beef labels, there is currently national legislation to require mandatory food labels on all meats as well as fruits and vegetables. All consumers and producers should urge their national legislators to pass S.280, known as the "Consumer Right to Know Act," and H.R. 1121, or the "Country-of-Origin Meat Labeling Act." Both would make country-of-origin food labeling mandatory.

Collectively, we can make a difference in getting truthful and meaningful labeling regulations on the food that we choose for our families. Let's all contact our leaders today!

Sincerely,

C. J. Kuper

*Please pass bill
S 280 Consumer
Right to Know Act*

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