



COOL

Country of Origin Labeling or COOL as it has come to be known is a law that was passed with the 2002 farm bill and signed into law by Pres. Bush in May 2002. COOL requires that all suppliers of the covered commodities supply consumers with information regarding what country that particular commodity originated from. The commodities covered include beef, pork, lamb, farmraised and wild fish and shellfish, fruits, vegetables, and peanuts. The implementation of this law had been delayed until September 30, 2008 except for fish and shellfish which went into effect on April 4, 2005. (USDA) website;

http://www.usda.gov/documents/COUNTRY_OF_ORIGIN_LABELING.pdf.

While some polls say over 90% of consumers want to know where their food comes from, agriculture is divided when it comes to supporting this mandatory legislation.

The opposition arises from a perception of increased governmental control of the livestock industry as well as increased paperwork for producers. Those in favor of the program feel that this is a way to increase sales of United States produced agricultural products, due largely to the fact that consumers prefer homegrown products. No matter which side of the fence you fall on, COOL is here and we have to comply with it.

So what does this mean for 4-H and FFA members that may only be raising a few animals? The number of animals produced for slaughter by an individual has no bearing on the law. Everyone must comply. All animals sold through the junior livestock sales at our area fairs must have documentation showing where they came from. If you purchase your animal for your project, you must obtain a **signed** affidavit or bill of sale from the **seller**, stating the origin of the animal. For those of you who raise your own animals, you must complete an affidavit along with supporting documentation such as birth records, tag numbers, ear notches, and a detailed description of the animal. It may not hurt to have some pictures of the animal from different stages of the project to keep with your records. These records should be copied and turned in to your County Extension office. The **Extension office** and **you** should keep these records for at least two years. This will help provide the USDA with a paper trail should any questions ever arise. Please check with your Extension office as to when you must turn in your affidavits, or if you have any questions regarding this new rule.