

## FAQs – Country of Origin Labeling (Beef and Pork Repeal)

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**Q:** *How does the omnibus bill affect Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) requirements?*

A: The omnibus bill repealed the mandatory COOL requirements for muscle cuts of beef and pork, and ground beef and pork.

**Q:** *Are the other covered commodities affected by the proposed omnibus bill?*

A: No; COOL regulatory requirements are still in effect for the remaining covered commodities: muscle cut and ground chicken, lamb, and goat; wild and farm-raised fish and shellfish; fresh and frozen fruits and vegetables; peanuts, pecans, macadamia nuts, and ginseng.

**Q:** *What are the next steps in the regulatory process to repeal COOL requirements for beef and pork?*

A: USDA will be amending the COOL regulation as expeditiously as possible to reflect the repeal of muscle cut and ground beef and pork items.

**Q:** *When does this repeal go into effect?*

A: Effective as of Dec. 18, 2015, USDA ceased to enforce the COOL requirements for muscle cut and ground beef and pork items as outlined in the Jan. 15, 2009, and May 23, 2013, final rules.

**Q:** *If my COOL retail review included a noncompliance(s) cited for beef and pork items, am I still required to submit corrective actions to address the noncompliance(s)?*

A: No; USDA ceased to enforce the COOL requirements for muscle cut and ground beef and pork on Dec. 18, 2015. Corrective actions will not be required for muscle cut and ground beef and pork items; however, retailers are required to submit corrective actions for noncompliance findings for the remaining covered commodities: muscle cut and ground chicken, lamb, and goat; wild and farm-raised fish and shellfish; fresh and frozen fruits and vegetables; peanuts, pecans, macadamia nuts, and ginseng.

**Q:** *Will retail surveillance reviews be conducted in 2016?*

A: Yes; retail surveillance reviews for all other covered commodities will be conducted as planned for 2016. During the reviews, muscle cut and ground beef and pork items will no longer be reviewed for COOL compliance.

**Q:** *Will the number of retail surveillance reviews decrease due to the repeal of beef and pork?*

A: No; AMS will continue to conduct retail surveillance activities in all 50 states in 2016. The proportion of beef and pork covered commodities accounts for approximately 17 percent of all COOL covered commodities sold at retail.

**Q:** *Are retailers required to include any country of origin information on beef and pork products sold at retail?*

A: Retailers and their suppliers are no longer required to convey country of origin information for beef or pork products to their buyers and/or consumers under the mandatory COOL program. However, imported beef and pork products sold in consumer ready packages must still bear the foreign country of origin under USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) regulations. Country of origin information for the remaining covered commodities must still be conveyed to buyers and consumers.

**Q:** *Can packers or retailers voluntarily include a country of origin statement on beef and pork products?*

A: In general, packers and retailers may voluntarily provide origin information to their consumers, as long as the information is truthful and not misleading. Packers and retailers should work directly with FSIS for guidance and label review (as applicable). FSIS will handle requests on a case-by-case basis. Direct labeling questions through [askFSIS](#).

**Q:** *Can companies continue using existing labels that include country of origin information for beef and pork products?*

A: USDA will be amending the COOL regulation as expeditiously as possible to reflect the repeal of muscle cut and ground beef and pork items. This rulemaking will include additional guidance, including information about the use of existing label inventories.

**Q:** *Who can we contact with questions about COOL?*

A: Contact a COOL Specialist by phone at (202) 720-4486 or send an email to: [cool@ams.usda.gov](mailto:cool@ams.usda.gov).