



Independent Beef Association of North Dakota

Your statewide voice in the cattle industry.

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I-BAND Urges Congressional Restraint with COOL

I-BAND (May 20, 2015) ~ The Independent Beef Association of North Dakota (I-BAND) is urging Congress not to intervene in a trade dispute involving the U.S. country of origin labeling (COOL) program. On May 18 the World Trade Organization's (WTO) Appellate Body ruled against labels on certain cuts of red meat that indicate where the animals were born, raised and slaughtered, saying the rules for implementation of the labeling program discriminate against imported Canadian and Mexican live cattle and beef.

The following comments can be attributed to Larry Kinev, I-BAND president.

“Shortly after the WTO ruling was made public the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association (NCBA), along with the multi-national meat packing industry, issued a statement calling on Congress to completely repeal COOL. In a matter of hours, NCBA’s North Dakota affiliate followed suit when Steve Brooks, North Dakota Stockmen’s Association’s (NDSA) president issued a statement echoing NCBA’s call for repeal of the law that allows U.S. ranchers to differentiate their product from that of foreign competitors. It is disturbing that a U.S. cattle producer and an organization that professes to represent North Dakota cattle ranchers would call for repeal of a law that paves the way for U.S. ranchers to retain the identity of their product in the global marketplace. North Dakota ranchers are proud of their product and we want to differentiate it from a generic, multi-national commodity, which is what we’ll have if COOL is repealed.”

“The NDSA statements reflect the misinformation and fear-mongering that NCBA and the packing industry have continued to propagate about COOL by saying that the U.S. is now subject to ‘crippling’ retaliatory tariffs that will ‘harm cattle producers and the U.S. economy.’ Nothing could be further from the truth. In reality, Canada and Mexico would have to prove that COOL has actually harmed their cattle and beef industries and they would have to prove an economic value attached to that harm before retaliation would be permitted by the WTO. When we are experiencing the highest U.S. cattle markets in history and prices for Canadian and Mexican cattle are based on U.S. markets, that’s going to be difficult to prove, if not impossible, and an Auburn University study conducted earlier this year by Dr. C. Robert Taylor, a renowned economist, confirms this.”



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“The truth is, the U.S., Canada and Mexico will now have the opportunity to negotiate their way through the WTO ruling and find solutions to the dispute. Any intervention by Congress at this point would vacate the solution-oriented process. While Congress may have a role to play once the negotiations have played out and a statutory modification is warranted, the time for congressional intervention is not now.”

“We expect statesmanship and leadership from our elected officials, not a knee-jerk reaction based on misinformation. I-BAND has supported, from the start, the ranchers’ right to label their beef with a made-in-the-USA label and the consumers’ right to all the information we can provide about the food they purchase. I-BAND will be working with our congressional delegation, encouraging them to continue to let the WTO process and further negotiations between affected nations play out and we will continue to convey the feelings of a majority of North Dakota cattle producers.”