

2008 Country of Origin Labeling Rule Information

The following are key features of the USDA COOL Interim Final Rule (IFR):

- The USDA Interim Final Rule (IFR) goes into effect **September 30, 2008** with a 6-month period for education and outreach (grace period).
- The covered commodities include various kinds of ‘muscle cuts’ of beef, pork, etc., but as it relates to the produce industry with perishable agricultural commodities including **fresh and frozen fruits and vegetables**.
- The USDA has expanded this provision to **permit the use of state, regional or local labeling** for imported products as well. Examples: Washington [apples]; Valencia [oranges]; Tampico [onions]
- In regards to stickering fruits and vegetables for bulk displays, USDA recognizes in the IFR that **100% stickering is not achievable**. In addition, USDA agrees that consumers will be able to discern COOL information if a majority of the product is labeled in these bulk displays.
- **The Country of Origin declaration may be provided to consumers by a variety of means** including: label, placard, sign, stamp, band twist tie, pin tag or other clear and visible sign on the covered commodity or on the package, display, holding unit or bin.
- The declaration **must be legible and conspicuous**, and allow consumers to easily find and read the country(ies) of origin without a strain when making their purchases. The declaration can be provided in three ways: 1) a statement (e.g., Product of Canada); 2) country name only (e.g., Canada); 3) use of a checkbox, with the appropriate designation checked.
- Country abbreviations may only be used for the United States (U.S. or USA), The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (U.K.) and Luxembourg (Luxemb.).
- There are **no specific regulations on the exact placement or the type, font, or color** of the COOL declaration.

In summary, USDA encourages suppliers and retailers to work together to ensure that COOL legislation is implemented and understood. The Country of Origin declaration may be applied at either supplier source or retailer level, but either way, suppliers and retailers must collaborate in order to be in compliance.