



Fair Trade Practices Program



Country of Origin Labeling (COOL)

Retailer Fact Sheet

What is COOL?

Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) is a labeling law that requires retailers to provide information to consumers regarding the origin of certain foods, referred to as “covered commodities.” There are two regulations: 7 CFR Part 60 for fish and shellfish, and 7 CFR Part 65 for all other covered commodities.

Who must comply with COOL?

Retail establishments (such as grocery stores, supermarkets, and club warehouses) who are subject to licensing under the Perishable Agricultural Commodities Act (PACA) must comply with COOL. PACA defines retailers as firms that purchase for resale at least \$230,000 or more of fruits and vegetables per year. Food service establishments such as restaurants, cafeterias, food stands, or other similar facilities are exempt from the COOL regulatory requirements.

Responsibility of Retailers

The declaration of COOL and the method of production for fish and shellfish, must be legible and placed in a conspicuous location, to render it likely to be read and understood by a consumer under normal conditions of purchase. The COOL declaration may be typed, printed, or handwritten provided it does not obscure other labeling information. COOL labeling options include placards, signs, labels, stickers, bands, twist ties, pin tags or other formats that allows consumers to identify the country of origin.

What are COOL covered commodities?

A covered commodity is one that must have COOL information for consumers to see. COOL covered commodities include perishable agricultural commodities (fresh and frozen fruits and vegetables); wild and

farm-raised fish and shellfish; muscle cut and ground chicken, lamb, and goat meat; peanuts, pecans, macadamia nuts, and ginseng.

What are excluded items?

Processed foods are excluded from COOL requirements. A processed food item is a covered commodity that has undergone a specific process resulting in a change of character (i.e., cooking, curing, smoking, restructuring); or has been combined with another food component. Examples include but are not limited to: Canned Tuna, Almonds, Salad Mix, Teriyaki Flavored Chicken, Orange Juice, and Dried Fruit.

Labeling Requirements

Muscle Cuts of Meat: Chicken, Lamb, & Goat

Muscle cuts of chicken, lamb, and goat derived from animals harvested in the U.S. must include where the animal was born/hatched, raised, and harvested, such as: Born, Raised, Harvested in the USA. Imported muscle cuts retain the origin declared to U.S. Customs and Border Protection when the item enters the U.S., such as: Product of Australia.

Ground Meat: Chicken, Lamb, & Goat

COOL requirements for ground meat products must list all possible countries included.

Fruits, Vegetables, Peanuts, Pecans, Macadamia Nuts, & Ginseng

The COOL declaration is the location where the product was harvested. State, regional, or distinct locality designations may be used as the COOL declaration.

Fish & Shellfish

The COOL requirements for fish and shellfish must also include the method of production, which indicates if the item was farm-raised or wild. The acceptable method of production labeling options are farm-raised, farmed, wild, or wild-caught. For more information, review 7 CFR Part 60 to determine origin information for fish and shellfish.

Retailer Recordkeeping Requirements

Retailers must maintain records for 1 year that identify the COOL, method of production, and name and address for the immediate previous supplier. These include records used in the normal course of business and may be maintained in either hard copy or electronic and may be maintained in any location. Upon request by a USDA representative, a retailer must provide records within 5 business days.

Retailer Compliance

The USDA conducts reviews at thousands of retail establishments each year. A COOL retail review verifies covered commodities are labeled with COOL and method of production; and assess a retailer's compliance with recordkeeping requirements.

Anyone may report a suspected COOL violation through the COOL complaint portal at:

<https://www.ams.usda.gov/rules-regulations/cool/compliance-enforcement>

Have additional questions?

Visit the USDA COOL website (<https://www.ams.usda.gov/rules-regulations/cool>) or contact USDA's Food Disclosure and Labeling Division by email at cool@usda.gov or by phone at (202) 720-4486.