



## Fair Trade Practices Program



# Country of Origin Labeling (COOL)

## Supplier Information

### 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.

### What are COOL covered commodities?

The Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946 was amended to define the commodities required to display origin information when sold by retailers. These "covered commodities" are fresh and frozen fruits and vegetables; wild & farm-raised fish and shellfish; muscle cut and ground chicken, lamb, and goat meat; raw peanuts, pecans, and 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, Roasted Peanuts, Salad Mix, Teriyaki Flavored Chicken, Orange Juice, and Dried Fruit.

### Responsibility of Suppliers

Any person engaged in the business of supplying a COOL covered commodity to a retailer (e.g., grocery stores, supermarkets, and club warehouse stores), directly or indirectly, must provide accurate COOL and method of production information (if applicable) to their buyers. Restaurants, bars, delicatessens, farmers markets, or other food service establishments are EXEMPT from the COOL requirements.

## Recordkeeping Requirements

Importers, growers, distributors, handlers, packers, and processors are required to maintain COOL records.

- Suppliers must maintain records of a COOL covered commodity for 1 year from the date of the transaction. Records must include who they purchased the commodity from and who they sold it to.
- COOL information may be provided either on the product itself, on the master shipping container, or in a document that accompanies the product through retail sale.
- Records used in the normal course of business that are legible may be maintained in either hard copy or electronic format and may be maintained at any location. Upon request by a USDA representative, a supplier must provide records within 5 business days.

## Labeling Requirements

### Muscle Cuts of Meat: Chicken, Lamb, & Goat

For U.S. origin muscle cut products of chicken, lamb, and goat meat, the retail label must state, "Born (or 'Hatched'), Raised, and Slaughtered (or 'Harvested') in the U.S." COOL declarations for imported muscle cuts of meat are determined by U.S. Customs and Border Protection. Imported muscle cuts of chicken, lamb or goat meat may simply state, "Product of Country X" (the name of the exporting country).

### Ground Meat: Chicken, Lamb, & Goat

COOL requirements for ground chicken, lamb, or goat meat products must list all possible countries included or that may be reasonably 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 to identify the origin of perishable agricultural commodities and nut species.

### Fish & Shellfish

Fish and shellfish must include COOL and method of production at the point of sale. The "method of production" describes whether the fish or shellfish was farm-raised or wild-caught.

## COOL Compliance

USDA conducts supplier traceback audits stemming from records collected during retail surveillance reviews to determine the accuracy of the COOL and method of production claims conveyed through the chain of commerce. Any direct or indirect supplier of the covered commodity may be audited to verify consistency of information.

## Have additional questions?

Please visit the AMS Website or contact USDA's Food Disclosure and Labeling Division by email at [cool@usda.gov](mailto:cool@usda.gov) or by phone at (202) 720-4486.