



TEXAS CATTLE FEEDERS ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

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USDA Publishes Final Rule Repealing COOL

The USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) published a final rule in the March 2, 2016, edition of the *Federal Register* to amend their country-of-origin labeling (COOL) regulations in response to statutory changes. The final rule officially removes beef and pork muscle cuts and ground beef and pork from the list of covered commodities subject to the COOL regulation. Retailers are no longer required to provide this information for beef and pork at the point of sale. COOL regulatory requirements for chicken, lamb, goat, farm-raised and wild caught fish and shellfish, perishable agricultural commodities, peanuts, pecans, macadamia nuts, and ginseng are still in effect.

USDA stopped enforcing the COOL requirements for beef and pork on Dec. 18, 2015, after the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2016 was signed into law. A provision in that law amended a previous statute by removing beef and pork from the list of products that must carry a COOL label.

Ag Groups Petition Sixth Circuit for En Banc Hearing on WOTUS Lawsuit Jurisdictional Question

A coalition of agriculture and other industry groups, including NCBA, filed a petition on Monday with the U.S. Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals for the full court to rehear arguments regarding jurisdiction to decide the numerous legal challenges to the waters of the U.S. (WOTUS) rule.

Last week, two of the three judges on the panel concluded that sufficient jurisdictional precedent existed for the Sixth Circuit to hear the consolidated, initial challenges to the WOTUS rule, rather than individual District Court cases around the country.

The petition states, "It would be an enormous waste of party and judicial resources to litigate these petitions to judgment on the merits, if it later turns out that this Court lacked jurisdiction all along. And district courts throughout the country have (for the most part) held the APA cases in abeyance awaiting this Court's decision on jurisdiction. But the panel's splintered 1-1-1 jurisdictional decision raises more questions than it answers, casting doubt and uncertainty on the future course of all of those cases."

To view the petition, visit <http://tinyurl.com/WOTUS-3-4-16>.

Senate Committee Advances GMO Labeling Bill

The U.S. Senate Agriculture Committee on Tuesday voted 14 to 6 to approve a bill that would preempt state labeling laws and require USDA to set a national standard for voluntarily labeling food products containing genetically modified organisms (GMO). The legislation, which would also require USDA to promote the benefits of biotechnology, is sponsored by Sen. Pat Roberts (R-Kan.), the Committee's chairman.

"Simply put, the legislation before us provides an immediate and comprehensive solution to the state-by-state patchwork of labeling laws," Roberts said. "It sets national uniformity, based on science, for labeling food or seeds that are genetically engineered. This allows the value chain from farmer-to-processor-to-shipper-to-retailer-to-consumer to continue as the free market intended."

The amendment filed to require USDA to establish a voluntary country-of-origin labeling program was withdrawn.

On Wednesday, Sens. Jeff Merkley (D-Ore.), Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.), Jon Tester (D-Mont.) and Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) introduced an alternative bill that would require food makers to disclose the presence of GMO ingredients on Nutrition Facts labels.

Texas Primary Elections Recap

The results from the March 1, 2016, Texas Primary Elections are in, and BEEF-PAC supported candidates did extremely well. All of the Texas Supreme Court, Texas Senate and U.S. House of Representatives candidates supported by BEEF-PAC won their election contests. Of the 83 candidates supported by BEEF-PAC, only three candidates vying for seats in the Texas House of Representatives (Kevin Downing, Marsha Farney and Debbie

Riddle) lost their elections. Three other Texas House candidates (Ernest Bailes, Doug Miller and Wayne Smith) will compete in the May 24 Texas Primary Runoff Elections.

A number of other races will also be decided by runoff elections, including the Texas Railroad Commissioner, Congressional District 15, Congressional District 19 and Senate District 24. The BEEF-PAC Trustees will meet in the coming weeks to discuss these races.

A list of the candidates supported by BEEF-PAC in the Primary Elections is available at <http://tinyurl.com/BEEF-PAC-2-12-16>.

USRSB Releases Annual Report

The U.S. Roundtable for Sustainable Beef (USRSB) released its first Annual Report this week to publicly share the accomplishments achieved to date and to outline goals planned for the upcoming year. The USRSB was officially launched in March 2015, and since that time, the focus of the group has been to develop the organization structure; establish a core group of members across the beef supply chain; and to identify key areas where the beef industry has already accomplished a lot over the years and where on-going improvements in the efficiency, profitability and management of beef operations can continue to evolve and improve.

As indicated in the Annual Report, the USRSB has 98 members that represent producers, packers/processors, retail/food service, allied industry and civil society. NCBA, TCFA and a number of TCFA feedyard members are active members of the USRSB and have helped to shape and direct the activities, direction and work of the roundtable. As an organization, TCFA holds one of the ten seats on the USRSB Board of Directors. TCFA Vice President Ben Weinheimer represents TCFA as the primary member on the Board, with Tom McDonald, JBS Five Rivers Cattle Feeding serving as a designated alternate, when needed. Ben also serves as co-chair of the sustainability Indicator Working Group, which is where most of the activity occurred in the first year. The Indicator Working Group identified six high priorities areas, which include: animal health and well-being; efficiency and yield; water resources; land resources; air and greenhouse gas emissions; and worker safety and well-being. Over the course of the next year, the USRSB will expand the level of detail associated with each indicator to make it more relevant to each segment of the supply chain. As an example, feedyards will be able to demonstrate current and on-going efforts related to “animal health and well-being” through programs such as the TCFA Beef Quality Assurance Program.

In March, the Indicator Working Group will host a series of education and outreach webinars to review the indicator development process. Each webinar is open to USRSB members, along with the public, and will be focused on each segment of the supply chain as the key audience. While each webinar is geared towards a targeted constituency audience, similar material will be covered in all three. To preregister for the webinars, click on the links below:

Webinar #1: March 17, 2016 at 1 p.m. CDT

Target audience: Beef packers and processors

Webinar info: <https://cc.callinfo.com/r/1jouyqx73tsqz&eom>

Call information: 866-365-4406

Access Code: 0571521

Webinar #2: March 24, 2016 at 1 p.m. CDT

Target audience: Beef retailers, food service, restaurants and distributors

Webinar info: <https://cc.callinfo.com/r/1xreo98otmj64&eom>

Call information: 866-365-4406

Access Code: 0571521

Webinar #3: March 31, 2016 at 1 p.m. CDT

Target audience: Cow-calf producers, stocker operators, auction markets and feedyards

Webinar info: <https://cc.callinfo.com/r/1xpx4xrqft6zy&eom>

Call information: 866-365-4406

Access Code: 0571521

More information about USRSB membership, working groups and upcoming events can be found on the USRSB website at www.usrsb.org. To view the Annual Report, visit <http://tinyurl.com/USRSB-3-4-16>. For questions or more information about TCFA's role, contact TCFA Vice President Ben Weinheimer at ben@tcfa.org.

NRCS Accepting Applications for EQIP

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Texas has received its initial allocation of Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) funding for 2016 and is currently accepting applications. NRCS will begin ranking and obligating contracts after March 18, 2016. All agriculture producers interested in submitting a contract application for 2016 should contact their local NRCS office before the ranking deadline.

EQIP is a continuous sign-up program that allows landowners or operators to apply for financial and technical assistance for the application of specific conservation practices. Contracts are offered periodically depending on budgetary allocations. Applications made after the deadline will be considered in the next funding cycle. Higher priority will be given to those applications that address national, state and local priorities and provide higher cost efficiency.

New Mexico to Reduce Workers Comp Benefits for Intoxicated Employees

New Mexico Governor Susana Martinez signed legislation this week that reduces workers compensation benefits for employees who injure themselves on the job while intoxicated.

"If an employee is drunk or high on the job, they shouldn't be rewarded with full workers compensation benefits when they injure themselves," Governor Martinez said. "It's a matter of common-sense, and that's why I'm signing this legislation."

To read the full press release, visit <http://tinyurl.com/N-M-03-04-16>.

U.S. Reopens to Dutch Beef

The U.S. is now allowing imports of Dutch beef for the first time since the early 1990s when restrictions were imposed due to food safety concerns. The Netherlands is the third country in the European Union behind Ireland and Lithuania to regain access to the U.S. beef market.

To read the USDA's food safety audit on Dutch beef, visit <http://tinyurl.com/FSIS-3-4-16>.

Anti-HSUS Ad Runs During 2016 Academy Awards

The Center for Consumer Freedom's Humane Watch ran a television advertisement during the 2016 Academy Awards exposing the way the Humane Society of the U.S. (HSUS) spends its budget. The commercial said that HSUS only spends a fraction of the money it raises on funding local animal shelters but instead puts the majority of its funds into offshore accounts and internal salaries.

To read more and view the ad, visit <http://tinyurl.com/HSUS-3-4-16>.

Federal Judge Rejects Request to Restore Prairie Chicken Protections

Federal District Judge Robert Junell rejected a request from the Fish and Wildlife Service to reinstate federal protections for the lesser prairie chicken. It was a ruling from Junell last year as well which resulted in the removal of the lesser prairie chicken from the threatened species list and brought to question how the government should consider voluntary conservation when making listing decisions under the Endangered Species Act.

Study Shows Potential Effects of Eliminating GMOs

A recent study out of Purdue University analyzed the potential outcome of what would happen if genetically modified organisms (GMO) were banned in the U.S. Among the effects were higher food prices, increased greenhouse gas emissions, loss of forest and pasture land and more.

According to the study's findings, eliminating all GMOs in the U.S. would cause corn yield declines of 11.2 percent on average. Soybeans lose 5.2 percent of their yields and cotton 18.6 percent. To make up for that loss, about 102,000 hectares of U.S. forest and pasture would have to be converted to cropland and 1.1 million hectares globally for the average case.

To learn more about the study's findings, visit <http://tinyurl.com/GMO-3-4-16>.

Beef 4 Kids Initiative in Need of End-of-Year Funds

The Beef 4 Kids initiative is greatly in need of funds to purchase beef sticks for the Snack Pak 4 Kids program to help meet the weekend nutrition needs of children through the end of the school year. Please help us continue this program that is vital to the children of the Texas Panhandle with a donation to the Beef 4 Kids program. *Donations of any amount are greatly appreciated.*

For information on how to donate contact Jayce Winters at jayce@tcfa.org or (806) 358-3681.

Top Takeaways from Annual Meat Conference

Midan Marketing created a summary of the most important takeaways for the meat industry to focus on that were communicated and discussed at the Annual Meat Conference last month in Nashville.

Major themes included the importance of understanding and digitally connecting with millennials and the equal importance of not forgetting to cater to baby boomer shopper. Other hot topics included health and clean label concerns and the “right to know” consumer attitude.

To see Midan’s full list and analysis, visit <http://midanmarketing.com/2016/02/26/amc-2016-top-10/>.

NPR Analyzes Influences on Consumer Meat Choices

With so much messaging from the mass media and other sources encouraging Americans to eat less meat, National Public Radio (NPR) set out to see if the influence was really having an impact on consumer behavior. NPR’s findings showed that there really hasn’t been much impact on how much meat people eat. According to the survey which polled 3,000 Americans and compared the results with a similar poll conducted three years prior, it found a slight change from 32 percent to 39 percent of respondents who said they were eating less meat. The survey also found that 7.4 percent of people eat no meat during a typical week, 51 percent eat meat one to four times per week, and 38 percent eat meat five or more times per week.

“Bottom line: There may be a growing chorus of veggie cheerleaders, but don’t assume everyone is influence by them,” the article concluded. Learn more at <http://tinyurl.com/NPR-3-4-16>.

In-N-Out Burger Joins Antibiotic-Free Movement

West Coast hamburger chain In-N-Out Burger has announced that it will be transitioning to serving beef raised without the use of antibiotics important to human medicine. The company has been receiving pressure from consumer groups to set a strong antibiotics policy along with their existing quality standards. Activists are pressing the company to follow the lead of other chains such as Chipotle Mexican Grill, Panera Bread and Shake Shack, which currently serve meat raised without the use of antibiotics.

To read more, visit <http://tinyurl.com/In-N-Out-Burger-03-16>.

Activist Crowdfunds to Fly Drones Over Farms

Activists are now turning to crowdfunding to do investigative video footage of farms. A recent Kickstarter campaign has raised over \$75,000 with an increased goal of \$95,000 to “find out what factory farms are hiding with ‘ag-gag’ laws.”

If you ever see an unidentified drone flying over your property, contact local law enforcement immediately. You can also register your property at www.noflyzone.org to create a no fly zone for drones.

2016 Fed Beef Challenge

The best cattle in Cattle Feeding Country will make their way to the historic Amarillo Livestock Auction on Wednesday, April 13 for the 2016 TCFA Fed Beef Challenge. Feedyards from throughout the TCFA area will bring their top quality steers, heifers and Holstein steers to compete for awards, cash and bragging rights. In addition to the carcass contest to determine the best beef, there will be a live evaluation contest, steak feed and special activities benefiting the TCFA Education Foundation. Visit www.tcfa.org/news-events/fbc.html for contest rules and the printable entry form. Contact Brady Miller at (806) 358-3681 or brady@tcfa.org for more information.

Calling All Junior Cattle Feeders

The start of the 2016 Junior Fed Beef Challenge is just around the corner. Junior cattle feeders from all across Cattle Feeding Country will compete for scholarships, cash and prizes by participating in four phases of the event, including carcass merit, record keeping, written exam and oral presentation or interview. Steers can be validated March 1 – March 28. Find all contest details at www.tcfa.org/news-events/ifbc.html, or contact Brady Miller at (806) 358-3681 or brady@tcfa.org.

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Texas Cattle Feeders Association

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