

November 2013

COOL Update

Country-of-Origin Labeling (COOL) has been in the news quite a bit recently, following the Canadian Agriculture Minister's claims that he thought the law would be repealed, as well as several negative comments made during the opening discussions of the 2013 Farm Bill conference committee.

Fortunately, NFU and its allies have been working to dispel the myths and misinformation that have been spread by the packer-producer organizations and their foreign counterparts. Recently, a group of consumer organizations sent the conferees a letter highlighting the support of consumers and their demand to know where the food they bring home to their families is produced.

But now is truly the time for our members to get involved. This is an important time in the fight to defend Country-of-Origin Labeling. COOL opponents on the farm bill conference committee are leading an effort to use the farm bill to repeal the law entirely.

Farm bill conferees will be solidifying their positions and working out differences as we speak, meaning that the time for action is NOW!

This is nothing more than an attempt by COOL opponents to scare Congress into premature and unwarranted legislative action because they see the writing on the wall: meatpackers' chances of winning COOL challenges at the World Trade Organization (WTO) and in court are slim. Now more than ever, we need your help to protect American farmers, ranchers and consumers and keep this common-sense law in place!

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PRESIDENT SHUMAKER VISITS MICHIGAN, INDIANA

Michigan and Bob Thompson make a great place to visit and be a part of the Michigan Farmers Union. I was invited down to their convention and in the process learned a few things and enjoyed the hospitality.

The event was held in the city of Claire at the Doherty Hotel. The food was good and the speakers even more satisfying. I made some new friends and got to share Alaska with them so we may have some more visitors in the future.

One dairy farmer talked about his dad and the making of the Alaska Hwy and another about the settling of the Matanuska Valley and the call that rang out even in Michigan. Another was a five-generation operation. But in all, the bunch was the finest I've met anywhere. A great convention.

I also got to share with them some of my experiences in Africa. We talked about the Farmer-to-Farmer program that is linked up to our national office and in the process we had one young man ready for the experience. When I was traveling by a farmers market, and by the way it was getting cold, I noticed some big piles of carrots, corn, and I was to learn

sugar beets. The operation had a bobcat and would load any combination up in the back of a pickup. The purchaser was feeding deer although baiting deer is illegal. It was deer season; I guess they could have owned a tame herd. What will deer hunters think of next?

I also got to stop in at our Shumaker Brothers Farms LLC in Indiana. It is always nice to visit the home place. The leaves were beautiful and the fields in the process of being harvested. The next-door neighbor had this combine with tires similar to those tundra tires on the slope. Big and wide, they look like they would float over any bog or mud hole. It even snowed a little bit while I was there but nothing like coming home. Wheweee, I guess didn't expect it to be this cold. But then again, that is what separates us from the ticks and snakes, I wonder when they will start arriving, I bet the first to know will be a farmer. Have a great day and keep your furrows straight.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

It is amazing the things you can see when out in the country and doing a little traveling, but for those of you who missed the annual meeting in Palmer, well, you did miss a great event full of good to great speakers, live entertainment, and good food.

Once again we met at the Eagle Hotel in Palmer. There were some difficulties getting the national office online first thing but leave it to Dave to figure out the answer. We gathered around his cell phone and took a call from Chandler and Brittany of the national office. We got an up-to-date bird's eye view of what is happening on the Hill with some of the fluff and grits of farm bill talk, Country-of-Origin Labeling (COOL), and other farmer items of interests. Kudos to team Capitol.

We were lucky enough to get the local performers, Matanuska Mews (Kelly Sidebottom & Ann Granath) and what an excellent job they did. They performed while we ate a hearty lunch.

Danny Consenstein gave us a great run down of issues he and the FSA office are currently facing. Bob Jones pitched in his 10 cents on NRCS. Those two guys are doing a great service to our state.

Now more than ever we all need to get on board with the Farm Bill issues. Mike Miller stepped in on issues revolving around the food bank and families in need. I wish all of you could have heard him. We even had a challenge to match dollar for dollar on the "feed the hungry campaign" and I sweated all the way to \$225.00 and capped my expense. All total we gave \$450.00 to the Food Bank of Alaska. Next time I won't challenge others

COOL (CONTINUED)

Here are two things you can do to help keep COOL:

Contact your Senators and Representative, or members of the farm bill conference committee, and tell them that you strongly support COOL and oppose any legislative changes to the COOL law. Call the Capitol switchboard at 202-224-3121 and ask for a specific member's office; and

as quickly.

Dr. Steve Brown gave a very interesting and informative discussion/speech regarding the "new crop" for Alaskans. It is a root crop known as Rhodiola. Keep your eyes on this one - it has potential.

Franci followed with information on land issues and legislative issues, an asset to any meeting. Hans Geier discussed the Fairbanks Cooperative Store and some of the things going on up there. Taffina Kactkus discussed peony production and shared copious amounts of information on that beautiful flower. We should see many many stems in the coming years out of the Matanuska Valley as well as state wide.

We have a website!

<http://akfarmersunion.org/home/> So check it out.

I hope I didn't forget too many people but Dave Schade talked about water issues and if you are not on board with your wells you had better get there. Give Dave a call; he works for all of us. We just about concluded the meeting but not before we elected a new board member Eric Johnson, a man of many hats. He was also appointed as the delegate for our next National Farmers Union Convention March 8-11 in Santa Fe, N.M. We will be well represented but everyone should come or go, it will be an awesome adventure for all.

The general meeting was adjourned and the board sat for dinner as announced. The next day I took off for Indiana and Michigan. All for now. *-Bob*

Donate to the COOL Legal Defense Fund at www.COOLDefenseFund.org to help Farmers Union defend this pro-farmer and -rancher law from a legal attack by the same multinational packers and processors who are pushing for legislative changes to the law.

ALASKA FARMERS UNION

P.O. Box 84080 Fairbanks, AK 99708
(907) 347-5367

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