

## **NCBA Submits Comments on Proposed Mandatory Country of Origin Labeling Rule**

WASHINGTON (Apr. 12, 2013) – The National Cattlemen’s Beef Association (NCBA) submitted comments yesterday on the United States Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) proposed amended Mandatory Country of Origin Labeling Rule (MCOOL). In the comments, NCBA stated that the proposed rule changing MCOOL will not satisfy the World Trade Organization (WTO) or the beef industry’s largest trading partners, Canada and Mexico, who originally brought the WTO complaint.

“We have long advocated that MCOOL is a marketing tool and while cattlemen and women are proud of the products they produce, a mandatory labeling program does not provide a value to our industry or our customers,” said NCBA President Scott George, a cattleman from Cody, Wyo. “We support and see value in voluntary labeling programs like Certified Angus Beef, where there is a genuine effort to distinguish and market the product. The proposed rule will not meet those ends and will only serve to increase the discriminatory treatment of non-U.S. product and will doubtlessly end in retaliatory tariffs on a wide range of our products and significant cost to our members.”

Under the proposed rule, all products sold at retail would be labeled with information noting the birth, raising and slaughter. This requirement will place greater recordkeeping burdens on producers, processors and retailers. Further, the rule would eliminate the ability to commingle muscle cuts from different origin, which will add to the costs of processing non-U.S. born, raised and slaughtered products, resulting in further hesitance to process product that was imported at any stage of development.

“These provisions only serve to give our trading partners a stronger case at the WTO,” said George. “The Canadian government has already confirmed that they will consider all options including extensive retaliatory measures. Our industry, battered by drought and high feed costs, and overregulation cannot afford additional burdens from the federal government. The USDA should spend its time and money working to avoid another threat of sequester of federal meat inspectors, not drafting new rules to fix an old problem.”

The WTO has given the U.S. until May 23, 2013 to come into compliance with our trade obligations. In 2012, Canada and Mexico accounted for nearly \$2 billion in beef exports, or 36 percent of total beef exports by value.

###