

For Immediate Release: February 20, 2009

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## **NFU Applauds Strengthened COOL Standards**

WASHINGTON (Feb. 20, 2009) — National Farmers Union (NFU) President Tom Buis commended U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Secretary Tom Vilsack today for his actions to implement mandatory country-of-origin labeling (COOL). Vilsack announced today he has asked meatpackers to meet the clear intent of Congress when labeling their products.

“COOL has little value if products are not clearly labeled with their true country of origin,” Buis said. “I’m pleased Secretary Vilsack acknowledges this and is taking the appropriate steps to ensure our food is properly labeled.”

NFU had expressed concern over the Bush administration’s interpretation of COOL, which would have allowed a “multiple countries” label to be used, regardless of country of origin. Buis said the loophole would allow meatpackers to circumvent the intent of the law.

“This is about truth in labeling,” Buis said. “There’s no denying the demand for country of origin labeling and under Secretary Vilsack’s guidance, consumers will know the true origin of their food.”

Buis also commended the department’s effort to narrow the definition of processed, ensuring more products to be labeled.

NFU has been a long-time advocate for COOL, playing a key role in the negotiations that led to its inclusion in the 2008 Farm Bill and working with meatpackers to ensure they follow the law’s intent. Buis said the organization will be monitoring COOL’s implementation and will not hesitate to urge Vilsack to revisit the rule if necessary.

“It has taken many years to get as far as we have, but we will not rest until COOL is in place as Congress and the American public expects,” Buis said.