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## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **As USMCA/NAFTA 2.0 House vote nears, COOL must be included**

Congress misses golden opportunity to bring transparency to consumers and economic justice for rural communities in recent trade deal.

BILLINGS, Mont. — The Western Organization of Resource Councils (WORC) is calling on Congress to reject the United States Mexico Canada Agreement (USMCA) unless it includes reinstating mandatory Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) for beef and pork.

"While this agreement is being praised as an improvement over the original NAFTA, the lack of mandatory country of origin labeling shows that it's just another trade policy that fails ranchers and consumers. A beneficial agreement would allow for transparency about where our food comes from," said Wilma Tope a rancher from Aladdin, Wyoming and member of Powder River Basin Resource Council.

The U.S has required labeling of many food products, including fruits and vegetables, for decades, but did not require labeling of COOL for beef and pork until the 2002 Farm bill. Producers saw record prices for beef cattle after COOL was fully implemented in 2014. Congress repealed COOL for beef and pork in 2015, however, after the World Trade Organization (WTO) ruled that the U.S. law violated free trade agreements, and threatened monetary penalties.

"Restoring mandatory COOL in USMCA would benefit both ranchers and consumers. Currently, imported meat labeled "Product of USA," betrays American ranchers, consumers, and our rural communities. Consumers deserve the right to choose beef and pork from the US, ranchers deserve the right to an honest market. " said Jeanie Alderson, rancher from Birney, Montana, and Chair of Northern Plains Resource Council

Since the repeal of COOL, cattle producers have seen their prices decline significantly, while meatpackers pocket the difference through market manipulation and integration of domestic and international beef supplies. WORC and its member groups had hoped to see a renegotiated NAFTA bring back mandatory COOL.

"Reworking the deal with Canada and Mexico at the table was the best way that we could implement COOL without triggering tariffs or another dispute with the WTO and we lost that opportunity with this deal. Consumers are missing an opportunity to choose the predictable quality that only U.S. Beef can provide," said Curt Kralicek a rancher from Manning, North Dakota and Chair of Dakota Resource Council.

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*Northern Plains Resource Council is a grassroots conservation and family agriculture group that organizes Montanans to protect our water quality, family farms and ranches, and unique quality of life.*

*The Powder River Basin Resource Council, founded in 1973, is a family agriculture and conservation organization in Wyoming. Resource Council members are family farmers and ranchers and concerned citizens who are committed to conservation of our unique land, mineral, water, and clean air resources.*

*Dakota Resource Council's mission is to promote sustainable use of North Dakota's natural resources and family-owned and operated agriculture by building member-led local groups that empower people to influence the decision-making processes that affect their lives and communities.*

*The Western Organization of Resource Councils (WORC) is a network of eight grassroots organizations in seven Western states with 15,000 members, many of them ranchers and farmers committed to common-sense reform in agriculture, oil and gas development, coal mine reclamation, and rural economic development. Headquartered in Billings, Mont., WORC also has offices in Colorado and Washington, D.C.*