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CONTACTS:

- Angel Amaya, Western Organization of Resource Councils, Communications Director; (361) 779-2572, aamaya@worc.org

PRESS RELEASE

USDA Needs Solutions, Not Surveys

WORC delivers letter to USDA urging them to close loophole which allows imported beef and pork to be labeled “Product of the USA”

Billings, MT -- Yesterday, the [Western Organization of Resource Councils \(WORC\) submitted a letter to USDA](#) urging the agency to stop allowing imported beef and pork to be labeled “Product of the USA”. [USDA is requesting comments](#) from the public on its plan to do a survey by April 4, 2022. According to their website, the survey will determine “consumer awareness and understanding” of the labeling along with willingness to pay. WORC asserts that a survey is not necessary, but the end to voluntary “Product of the USA” labeling is.

Congress repealed mandatory Country-of-Origin Labeling (COOL) rules for beef and pork in 2015 after a World Trade Organization ruling. This resulted in rules for voluntary Product of the USA labels going into effect. Under current labeling rules, imported beef or pork from anywhere in the world can have a “Product of the USA” label, as long as it is packaged in the United States.

Gilles Stockton, rancher from Grass Range, MT and member of Northern Plains Resource Council said, “The simple and ethical thing for USDA is to disallow the use of the label unless it is in fact a product of the USA. If a beef importer wants to claim that the meat in question had been repackaged in the USA, well they can say so. Nothing is stopping them. But repackaging and then claiming that makes it a “Product of the USA” is fraud.”

“In addition to truth in labeling, we must also strengthen antitrust law enforcement by breaking up monopoly power, stop subsidizing industrial ag, and stop favoring larger plants over small processors. Fixing the Product of the USA loophole is one step towards leveling the playing field for producers,” **said Kathryn Bedell, rancher from Grand Junction, CO and member of Western Colorado Alliance.**

“Americans have the right to know where their food comes from,” **said David Schwalbe, rancher from Bismarck, ND and member of Dakota Resource Council.** “An honest label protects our food security and supports U.S. cattle ranchers and producers for the high quality meat they produce. We are calling on USDA to get to work and fix the label immediately.”

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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.

[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.

[Western Colorado Alliance](#) is a community group of over 2,000 members and supporters that works with residents across rural Western Colorado to build a future where engaged local voices are leading communities across Western Colorado that are healthy, just, and self-reliant. The Alliance brings people together to build grassroots power through community organizing and leadership development to address issues such as climate change, oil and gas impacts, public lands management, access to clean energy, and sustainable agriculture.