



Canada: Country of Origin Labeling Laws for Beef Products

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Canada: Country of Origin Labeling Laws for Beef Products

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SUMMARY Food labeling in Canada is governed by the Safe Food for Canadians Regulations. The regulations provide that the geographic origin of prepackaged consumer foods must be shown, and that edible meat products bear a Canadian inspection seal. Food products must be labeled as a “product of” the country where the product underwent its final substantial processing step. With regards to U.S. country of origin labeling (COOL) on beef products, a complaint by Canada to the World Trade Organization found that U.S. mandatory COOL laws led to losses by Canadian industry of over US\$773 million, and Canada was authorized to retaliate. Canada continues to monitor mandatory U.S. COOL laws.

Food labeling in Canada is governed by the Safe Food for Canadians Regulations (SFCR)¹ promulgated under paragraph 51(1)(d) the Safe Food for Canadians Act.² Prepackaged foods must be labeled with:

the name and principal place of business of the person by or for whom the food was manufactured, prepared, produced, stored, packaged or labelled, on any part of the label other than any part that is applied or attached to the bottom of the container of the food[.]³

With respect to prepackaged consumer foods:

The geographic origin of a food must, subject to the requirements of any other federal or provincial law, be shown

(a) in close proximity to the name and principal place of business of the person by or for whom the food was manufactured, processed or produced; and

(b) in characters of at least the same height as those in which the information referred to in paragraph (a) is shown.⁴

Canadian non-prepackaged and prepackaged edible meat products must bear the inspection seal included in the figure below:

¹ Safe Food for Canadians Regulations (SFCR), SOR/2018-108, <https://perma.cc/72S7-9XYR>.

² Safe Food for Canadians Act, S.C. 2012, c. 24, <https://perma.cc/Q8VP-BDAR>.

³ SFCR s. 51(1)(d).

⁴ Id. s. 223(3).

Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 1 or Figure 2 is to appear with the circle outline, the maple leaf excluding the word “Canada” and, in the case of Figure 1, the number identifying the licence holder’s establishment that replaces the numbers “00”, in the same, single colour that contrasts with the colour of the background and the word “Canada” such that the Figure is easily visible.⁵

According to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, with respect to country-of-origin labeling (COOL) for meat products,

The words “Product of” / “produit de”, followed by the name of the country of origin, must be declared on the label of an imported meat product in close proximity to the product’s common name and in characters that are at least 1.6 mm in height, or 0.8 mm in height if the area of the principal display surface is 10 cm² or less [210(2) and (3), 297(1) and (2), SFCR].

This applies whether or not the imported meat product is subsequently packaged or labelled in Canada without being manufactured or prepared in Canada [297(3), SFCR]. . . .

Country of origin declaration must be shown in:

- both official languages for consumer prepackaged products, or
- at least one official language (for example, English or French) for prepackaged other than consumer prepackaged products [205(1), 206, SFCR]⁶

⁵ Id. sched. 2.

⁶ *Labelling Requirements for Meat and Poultry Products*, Canadian Food Inspection Agency, <https://perma.cc/UDK7-LGS9>.

According to a 2022 report of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans regarding seafood labeling, “CFIA requires that a product be labelled as ‘coming from the country in which the food has undergone the last substantial processing step that has changed the nature of the food.’”⁷ This aligns with the international standards contained in the Codex Alimentarius.⁸

Canada is monitoring the issue of US COOL regulations. In 2015, the dispute settlement body of the World Trade Organization found that mandatory US cattle and pig COOL regulations led to annual losses to Canada of Canadian \$1.05 billion (approximately US\$773 million), and allowed Canada to take retaliatory measures.⁹ In 2017, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food issued a report on nontariff trade barriers, which included discussion of COOL.¹⁰

Canada is opposed to mandatory US “Product of USA” labeling regulations. The agriculture and international trade ministers have issued a statement in response to the proposed regulations.

The Canada and United States meat and livestock sectors are highly integrated. This collaboration contributes to the growth and resilience of farmers and processors on both sides of the border. It also allows us to ensure a reliable supply of high-quality products.

Canada remains concerned about any measures that may cause disruptions to the integrated North American livestock supply chains.

Canada will closely review the proposed amendments to the labelling of meat, poultry and egg products in the U.S. and will participate in the U.S. rule-making process to ensure that these changes conform to the U.S.’ international trade obligations and do not disrupt supply chains.

Canada will also firmly oppose any proposition from the United States to renew a mandatory country of origin labelling system for pork and beef, a practice which the World Trade Organization allowed Canada to take retaliation measures against the United States.

Canada will work with the U.S. to ensure that new definitions and rules allow farmers, processors and consumers in both countries to continue to benefit from efficient, stable and competitive markets.¹¹

⁷ House of Commons, Standing Comm. on Fisheries & Oceans, *Traceability and Labelling of Fish and Seafood Products*, Fifth Report, 44th Parliament, 1st Sess., June 2022, <https://perma.cc/QR7L-VL8K>.

⁸ *Codex Standard for the Labelling of Prepackaged Foods*, CODEX STAN 1-1985 (Rev. 1-1991), art. 4.5.2., U.N. Food & Agric. Org., <https://perma.cc/7RUW-SEP6>.

⁹ World Trade Org., *United States – Certain Country of Origin (COOL) Requirements* (Dec. 7, 2015), <https://perma.cc/A79R-DZKV>.

¹⁰ House of Commons, Standing Comm. on Agric. & Agri-Food, *Non-Tariff Barriers to the Sale of Agricultural Products in Relation to Free Trade Agreement*, 8th Report, 42nd Parliament, 1st Sess., Nov. 2017, <https://perma.cc/6NMV-KGNB>.

¹¹ *Ministers Bibeau and Ng Respond to Changes Proposed to “Product of USA” Labelling Regulations*, Agric. & Agri-Food Canada (Mar. 7, 2023), <https://perma.cc/656C-V2BW>.