

Cargill Boards the COOL Train

by **Tom Johnston** on 10/17/2008

Three days after Tyson Foods notified customers and producers of its plans to follow the intent of a new mandatory country-of-origin labeling law, competitor Cargill Meat Solutions followed suit.

The Wichita, Kan.-based company said Friday, Oct. 17, it has begun transitioning its beef and pork programs to label products as a “Product of the USA” and “Product of USA, Canada, Mexico,” and expects at least 70% of product to meet the “Product of the USA,” or Category A, labeling standard beginning Jan. 1.

Both Tyson and Cargill reportedly had previously stated intentions to mitigate the costs of segregating livestock and products by labeling all of them, including those born, raised and harvested in the United States, as multi-country, or Category B.

“All our customers had indicated they wanted Label B,” Cargill spokeswoman Rebecca Hayne told Meatingplace.com.

However, USDA, citing the law’s purpose to provide consumers with a clear choice partly by labeling U.S.-born-raised-and-harvested animals as Category A, moved to close the so-called “loophole.”

Cargill executives said the transition will be accomplished efficiently by partnering with producers to ensure that animals with common characteristics are delivered to processing plants in groups, and by working closely with its retail, foodservice and export customers.

“We anticipate that we will need to make some shifts in the way we operate our plants, probably designating different delivery windows for different types of animals,” Cargill Beef President John Keating said in a statement.

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