

Mexico Plans to Continue COOL Objections

By **Lisa M. Keefe** for *Meetingplace.com* on 1/30/2009

Mexico's Agriculture Minister, Alberto Cardenas, has said the country will forge ahead with its WTO complaint objecting to U.S. rules requiring country-of-origin labels on meat, according to Reuters.

Both Mexico and Canada challenged the COOL interim rule in complaints to the World Trade Organization in December, saying it violated world trade rules. However, those complaints expired when the interim rule was overtaken by the final rule, so to continue to seek a WTO ruling, the countries would have to enter new complaints.

Canadian livestock producers have been cautiously optimistic that changes in the final rules will make COOL a bit more friendly to Canadian livestock and products than the interim rule. (See *New COOL soothes Canadian livestock producers, for now*, on *Meetingplace.com*, Jan. 13, 2009.) Canadian officials have not indicated whether or not they plan to file a new complaint with the WTO.

The final COOL rules were on track to become law on March 16, but an Obama order to halt all new regulations for review may push that date back.

The White House on Wednesday announced President Obama will travel to Canada on Feb. 19 to meet with Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper. Canada has traditionally been the first foreign visit for incoming presidents. The North American Free Trade Agreement is expected to be on the agenda. It's unclear whether or not COOL will be discussed.