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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Consumers: Today, It Becomes Your Legal Right – Tell Your Grocer You Want USA Beef!

WASHINGTON, D.C. (Sept. 30, 2008) — Today, after years of political battles and skirmishes, mandatory country-of-origin labeling (COOL) for certain commodities — including beef — becomes the law of the land. Yet, enforcement of the law may be somewhat lenient during the next six months while the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) emphasizes public education and awareness, rather than strict enforcement of the COOL law.

“Also during those six months, R-CALF USA is requesting assistance from U.S. consumers by asking them to tell their grocers they want to purchase USA beef, they want to see it marked as such in the meatcases and if it’s not labeled appropriately, to specifically ask for it,” said R-CALF USA CEO Bill Bullard. “Consumers can help ensure that commodities are properly labeled even though we expect that some meatpackers and retailers will continue their fight to prevent consumers from having information as to where their food is produced.

“It’s frustrating, but true, that USDA is bending over backward to help the packers to not properly label meat at the expense of U.S. consumers and independent U.S. cattle producers, and the agency is doing this in contradiction of Congress’ intent when legislators wrote the law,” he continued. “USDA has provided a loophole to meatpackers, which allows them to label USA beef with a North American label, such as ‘Product of the U.S., Canada, and Mexico,’ so long as one or more imported animals go through a packer’s daily production run. We will fix this problem, but with consumers’ help, we’ll fix it sooner.”

Since Sept. 20, 2008, the U.S. has imported more than 1.7 million cattle from Canada and Mexico, but billions of pounds of beef from many other countries also is imported into the United States. Under the COOL law, any cattle brought into the U.S., then fed and processed here must receive a mixed label so consumers will know the beef did not come from an animal exclusively born, raised and slaughtered in the United States. But packers and USDA do not want consumers to be able to choose between this mixed-origin beef and USA beef, which is why they want to label everything as if it were a mixed-origin product.

“Consumers have a right to know what products were raised exclusively under the U.S. production system,” Bullard emphasized. “We have the most stringent health and safety standards in the world and consumers deserve to be able to choose beef grown right here in the USA. Choosing USA beef also is a way consumers can help strengthen the U.S. economy – by choosing to purchase beef produced by U.S. farmers and ranchers.”

R-CALF USA is calling on consumers to ask their grocers: “What product here is USA product? That’s what I want to buy.”

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R-CALF USA (Ranchers-Cattlemen Action Legal Fund, United Stockgrowers of America) is a national, non-profit organization dedicated to ensuring the continued profitability and viability of the U.S. cattle industry. R-CALF USA *(continued)*

represents thousands of U.S. cattle producers on trade and marketing issues. Members are located across 47 states and are primarily cow-calf operators, cattle backgrounders, and/or feedlot owners. R-CALF USA has dozens of affiliate organizations and various main-street businesses are associate members. For more information, visit www.r-calfusa.com or, call 406-252-2516.