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ICA Urges USDA to Fix COOL

Lockhart, Texas –October 1, 2008 – For Immediate Release –Today the Independent Cattlemen's Association of Texas requested that the US Department of Agriculture work to correct the Interim Final Rules (IFR) for country of origin labeling. In a recent letter to the USDA Agriculture Marketing Service, ICA asked USDA to correct the wording of the proposed regulations concerning “multiple country of origin labeling.” Under the current verbiage of the IFR, packers and processors could label beef that was US born, raised and slaughtered as product of multiple countries such as ‘Product of the United States, Canada, Australia or Mexico’ if during production animals of foreign origin were also being processed. Although the association is pleased with the implementation of the COOL rules, the interim final rules allow too much of an exception for processors and packers with regard to multiple country of origin labeling. USDA felt this exception was in order so as to create less documentation for packers and processors.

ICA President H.A. ‘Peanut’ Gilfillian stated, “We have worked too hard for too many years for the opportunity to showcase US beef, to allow packers and processors to use this loophole in the rules to label our product with a label that could state the incorrect origin. As US cattle producers, we must not allow anyone to label our beef with a statement that depicts the possible origin as a foreign country. Both ranchers and consumers deserve to know where our food originates. With many products being recalled from foreign countries by USDA and more and more consumers demanding US products, we must insure our product is labeled precisely and the true origin is prominently displayed. Without the correct labeling, consumers will still be subjected to purchasing mystery meat.”

ICA, a Texas association of working cattlemen and women has joined with other groups and organizations across the country in demanding action from USDA. In the past, USDA listened when ICA asked for a common sense producer verification affidavit and even agreed to drop proposed mandatory animal identification requirements. ICA will continue to work for definite country of origin labeling and the elimination of any loopholes. The Independent Cattlemen's Association of Texas has over 8,000 members

and may be contacted for further details at 512-620-0162 or by email at www.icatexas.com.