

Jan 04, 2016

Country-of-origin labeling (COOL) remains in place for sheep and lamb

For Immediate Release

December 18, 2015 – Ottawa, Ontario – In a joint press held earlier today, Minister Lawrence MacAulay (Agriculture) and Minister Chrystia Freeland (International Trade) announced that an omnibus appropriations bill that includes language to repeal U.S. Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) for beef and pork has cleared both the U.S. House and Senate, and was sent to President Barack Obama to be signed. But the bill will not see the repeal of COOL for sheep and lamb products. President Obama has now signed the bill.

Both Ministers MacAulay and Freeland claimed this recent development a ‘victory’ for Canadian agriculture. But Canada’s sheep industry is exceptionally disappointed in the federal government’s elation over what is merely a selective repeal of legislation that will continue to contravene Canada’s free trade agreements.

Prior to BSE and COOL, the economic value of sheep and lamb exports exceeded \$18million annually. In 2014, Canada exported sheep and lamb export revenues were less than \$500,000. As a result of COOL, the Canadian sheep industry estimates it has lost between \$223 million and \$305 million in sheep and lamb exports.

“The federal government’s position from the beginning of COOL discussions should have been in defense of all Canadian agriculture, and not just a select few” said Phil Kolodychuk, Chairman of the Canadian Sheep Federation. Kolodychuk added “partial repeal of COOL legislation flies in the face of the WTO ruling and undermines existing trade agreements for all agriculture commodities. The decision by the US to maintain some level of COOL legislation in place is a litmus test of Canada’s resolve in defending its free trade position.”

The Canadian Sheep Federation has made efforts with both this government and previous Ministers of Agriculture and International Trade to discuss the impact that COOL has had on Canada’s sheep industry, but has been refused the opportunity to do so. In today’s press conference Minister MacAulay committed to addressing any unresolved COOL issues moving forward. The Canadian Sheep Federation will aggressively pursue that commitment.