

Ranchers will ask Trump, Congress to reinstate COOL after lawsuit dismissal

By **MATTHEW WEAVER**
Capital Press

Some ranchers say they will ask the Trump administration and Congress to reinstate country-of-origin labeling on beef after a federal judge dismissed their lawsuit against the USDA but found evidence that the lack of labeling had damaged the industry.

U.S. District Judge Rosanna Malouf Peterson of Spokane on June 5 dismissed the lawsuit filed by R-CALF United Stockgrowers of America and Cattle Producers of Washington.

Peterson ruled in favor of the USDA because ranchers failed to pursue the lawsuit within the six-year time-frame to challenge the 1989 federal Foreign Products Rule and because the regulations follow Congress' clear intent, according to her ruling.

But the judge agreed with ranchers that the government's decision has caused them financial harm.

"The court finds that plaintiffs have demonstrated that their alleged injury is fairly traceable to defendants' action," Peterson wrote.

"We're obviously disappointed that we lost the lawsuit, but we're actually elated that the court specifically found the lack of country-of-origin labeling on



Two rancher groups say they will ask the Trump administration and Congress to reinstate country-of-origin labeling on beef after a federal judge dismissed their lawsuit against the USDA.

beef has harmed U.S. beef producers," said Bill Bullard, CEO of R-CALF.

The judge found that harm to U.S. cattle producers is "directly traceable" to USDA not enforcing country-of-origin labeling, Bullard said.

"That is a huge piece of evidence that we now need to take to the administration and to Congress in an attempt to reinstate (COOL) through either executive order or congressional enactment," he said. "The case has served its purpose to create awareness for the problems associated with the

lack of labeling on imported beef."

Bullard alleges the government allows multinational meat packers to remove and replace foreign labels as products of the U.S., even if the product only undergoes minor processing in a U.S. processing plant.

"Such as having the meat unwrapped, remove the foreign label, rewrap the meat and apply the 'Product of USA' label," he said.

Scott Nielsen, president of Cattle Producers of Washington, believes the issue fits with President Donald Trump's trade policy.

"He's for big business, but they don't seem able to have undue influence with his administration," he said.

Nielsen said Peterson's comments raise awareness of the issue.

"The place where this thing will be won or lost is with consumers," he said. "We're on the same side as consumers ... wanting to know where their food comes from. That movement is going to continue to get traction."

CPOW is working with lawmakers and consumer groups to raise awareness, Nielsen said.

Annual Walla Walla sweet onion harvest begins

Farmer introduces new 'rosé' variety

By **MATTHEW WEAVER**
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Walla Walla sweet onion farmers started harvesting last weekend, the leader of the crop's marketing committee says.

"They look good," said Michael J. Locati, farmer and chairman of the Walla Walla Sweet Onion Marketing Committee. "We're excited for a pretty good season."

Locati expected to start harvest June 9.

About 10 to 15 farmers raise the niche onion on 500 acres in Walla Walla County and a small part of north-eastern Oregon. Walla Walla sweet onions are protected by a federal marketing order designating the legal production area.



Matthew Weaver/Capital Press
Walla Walla sweet onion harvest started last weekend, said Michael J. Locati, chairman of the Walla Walla Sweet Onion Marketing Committee.

Harvest runs through the middle or end of August. Average yield is roughly 650 50-pound units per acre.

Other than a minor wind-storm that battered the crop in late April or early May, Locati said there have been no issues.

Onion sizes are trending towards jumbo, about 3 inches and up in diameter, he said.

"The price right now is a good starting price," Locati said. "Profitability, the margins are getting slimmer with the way labor costs have gone up, especially in Washington state."

Locati is introducing a

red Walla Walla sweet onion in "very limited production," less than 5 percent of the yellow Walla Walla sweet crop.

He's been developing it for 10 years, he said, picking off-pigment onions during harvest and planting and raising the reddest ones.

"It's not a deep red, I call it more of a rosé Walla Walla sweet," he said. "It's just another option. It's a beautiful, kind of pinkish-hue onion, very mild. When you think of a red, you think of a hot onion. Great potential, for sure."

Walla Walla River Packing Co. also will begin offering organic Walla Walla sweet onions for the first time this year, Locati said.

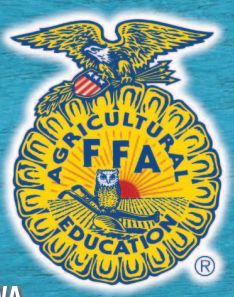


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Santa Rosa FFA Rebuilds School Farm After Tubbs Fire



Renderings of the planned \$8 million school farm. Rebuilding efforts are anticipated to begin this 2018-19 school year.

Founded in 1928, Santa Rosa FFA is one of the oldest chapters in California. Although located in the heart of the fertile wine-growing Sonoma Valley, during the 90 years the surrounding population has become urban. The chapter has adapted to the changing population and today thrives with over 200 student members.

One unique feature which sets Santa Rosa High School's Agricultural Program apart from others is the working farm and livestock facilities. This school farm laboratory offers livestock facilities, a vineyard, fruit trees, and various crops; providing the opportunity to enhance the hands-on education for students in various fields of the agricultural industry.

Unfortunately, on Oct. 9, 2017, the school farm was lost to the deadly Tubbs fire that swept through Sonoma and surrounding counties. Chapter advisor Dawn Stornetta who lived on the 60-acre facility, narrowly escaped with her dog. Within minutes the fire destroyed the home, barns, and crops with the exception of a couple metal structures. Fortunately, no livestock was at the farm that day; however, the loss of the barns greatly affected their students' means to raise an animal for their summer fair.

The majority of the students live in town and wouldn't be unable to keep project animals at home.

The community pulled together to help the chapter. Jackson Family Wines provided space at their Russian



Santa Rosa FFA's 2017 pumpkin patch harvest was spared by the fire, which destroyed much of their 60-acre school farm.

River Valley vineyard and ranch, only minutes away from the site of the school farm, to house the animals. Private families and the Sonoma County Fairgrounds also provided housing opportunities for student projects displaced by the fire.

This coming 2018-19 school year the goal is to start rebuilding the school farm and replace the materials lost in the fire. To expedite moving forward with this process the chapter hosted the Forever Blue Dinner and Auction on May 12. They were joined by over 100 supporters to celebrate this next phase in the chapter's history.

Working in conjunction with Santa Rosa City Schools, California-based grocer Raley's Family of Fine Stores announced a donation of \$500,000 toward the project. According to Raley's website they have been contributing to the community they serve for over 80 years. In 2017 alone Raley's gave back more than \$10 million to various organizations throughout Northern California along with the Reno and Tahoe markets.

"At Raley's, we believe that giving back to our community is one of the most important things we do. We have aligned our giving platform to reflect our company's vision, to infuse life with health and happiness. Using our food expertise, we want to enhance our communities' knowledge about fresh and healthy food options."



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