



# WAL-MART: OPPOSED TO COUNTRY OF ORIGIN LABELING



## A HISTORY OF WAL-MART’S OPPOSITION TO COOL

**JUNE 1, 2003:** In an interview with *Beef* magazine, Wal-Mart Senior Vice President and General Merchandise Manager of Perishable Foods Bruce Peterson says,

*“Ideally, we think the law should be repealed...It’s clear the proponents of COOL don’t understand the consumer. COOL applies costs to the system and provides zero benefits to the consumer.”* [*Beef* magazine. June, 2003.]

**JUNE 26, 2003:** Peterson testifies before the House Agricultural Committee’s hearing on Country of Origin Labeling, saying,

*“Any overzealous regulations or laws which unduly burden our suppliers, many of whom are small and medium-sized enterprises, ultimately provides a disservice to our customers.”*

[Statement of Bruce T. Peterson, Jr., to the House Agricultural Committee, 6/26/2007]

**FEBRUARY 2, 2005:** Peterson writes a letter to the Department of Agriculture’s William T. Hawks, urging a revision to the law that would place the bulk of labeling burdens on suppliers, not retailers:

*“We respectfully request that the USDA allow a complete supplier record to serve as the only record necessary at store level and remove the requirement for corporate or intermediary recordkeeping.”* [Letter to the Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs from Bruce Peterson, Executive Vice President of Wal-Mart, 2/2/05.]

**2000-2004:** Wal-Mart contributes more money to COOL opponents’ campaigns than any other company in the United States:

CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTIONS TO COOL OPPONENTS, 2000-2004			
	Grand Total	Total Hard \$	Total Soft \$
<b>Wal-Mart Stores, Inc.</b>	<b>\$3,459,102</b>	<b>\$3,085,102</b>	<b>\$375,722</b>
Food Marketing Institute	\$1,571,252	\$970,353	\$600,899
National Cattleman’s Beef	\$1,144,505	\$1,130,161	\$14,344
ConAgra Foods, Inc.	\$847,765	\$646,215	\$201,550
Smithfield Foods, Inc.	\$836,050	\$186,050	\$650,000

[“Tabled Labels: Consumers Eat Blind While Congress Feasts on Campaign Cash,” Public Citizen. p 17.]

**2000-2004:** Wal-Mart spends more than \$2.7 million on anti-COOL lobbying:

<b>LOBBYING EXPENDITURES BY GROUPS OPPOSED TO COOL, 2000-2004</b>	
<b>Group</b>	<b>Expenditures</b>
American Farm Bureau Federation	\$11,840,000
Grocery Manufacturers of America	\$4,720,000
Cargill, Inc.	\$2,941,043
<b>Wal-Mart Stores, Inc.</b>	<b>\$2,760,000</b>
National Food Processors Association	\$2,236,945

[“Tabled Labels: Consumers Eat Blind While Congress Feasts on Campaign Cash,” Public Citizen. p 9.]

### **WAL-MART LABELS FOOD WHEN IT SUITS THEM**

**AUGUST 25, 2006:** Wal-Mart is eager to label food when it benefits their image. In August 2005, Wal-Mart announced it would sell only American shrimp (in three states, not nationwide) due to “overwhelming consumer demand.” Wal-Mart touted this new policy in an attempt to win favor with consumers. Despite this seeming advance, the company continues to purchase the vast majority of its seafood products from foreign waters. [“Wal-Mart to Sell Only US Shrimp in 3 States,” Biloxi Sun Herald, 8/25/06]

### **WHY DOESN'T WAL-MART SUPPORT COOL?**

**From Wal-Mart's own website:** “As the world's largest retailer...we buy products from more than 60,000 suppliers in 70 countries.” As the country's largest grocer, Wal-Mart follows the same practices, purchasing the majority of its food products from overseas. Labeling all these items will be costly and labor-intensive for Wal-Mart, but ultimately in the consumer's best interest.

[<http://walmartfacts.com/newsdesk/statement-speeches.aspx?categoryID=290#a1822>]

### **WHAT DOES WAL-MART WANT TO HIDE?**

**Wal-Mart is no longer an All-American Store.** In the 1980's, Wal-Mart prided itself on its “Buy American” campaign, but the company abandoned this ideal in 1985. Reluctant to acknowledge the fact that most of its products are now made in foreign countries, Wal-Mart's opposition to Country of Origin Labeling is only the company's latest attempt to disguise its true nature.

[Wal-Mart Press Release, 3/13/85]

Wal-Mart Watch is proud to support the National Farmer's Union's efforts to push for full funding and implementation of mandatory Country of Origin Labeling.

