



MICHIGAN SOYBEAN
PROMOTION COMMITTEE

a new release



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High-Quality U.S. Soy Protein Yields High-Quality U.S. Beef

Consumers who want to know where their food comes from will have assurance of U.S.-grown food when the country-of-origin labeling (COOL) law goes into effect September 30. Beef producer Eric Sneed sees the new labeling as an opportunity for farmers to differentiate their products from imported foods in the marketplace.

“I’d rather have my food come from the United States,” said Sneed, who farms near Byron, Michigan. “When we make big purchases, we always look for U.S.-made products.”

Sneed’s Cyr Farms raises 200 dairy steers for market, plus a few feeder cattle and fair pigs each year. He buys Holstein calves and feeds them to about 1,375 pounds, selling them to a Michigan packer. In Sneed’s feed ration, soybean meal provides the high-quality protein he wants to produce high-quality beef.

Along with his wife, Jackie, Eric continues the farm started by his grandfather, Jack Cyr. Eric and Jackie work the farm’s original 120 acres, plus 680 acres rented to grow corn, soybeans, wheat, and alfalfa hay. The couple met at Michigan State University, where both earned agriculture degrees.

The new law, part of the Farm Bill, requires labeling the country of origin for beef, veal, lamb, chicken, goat, and pork; perishable agricultural commodities including fresh and frozen fruits and vegetables; plus several commodities not grown in Michigan. The label will be a visible, legible sticker, tag, placard or other form of labeling at the retail grocery level.

“One benefit of the new labeling is that when a food-safety issue arises, it will help track problems,” said Ken Nye, commodity specialist at Michigan Farm Bureau.

Nye explained that implementing the system has been a challenge for the meat industry. “It has taken time to put in place an ID system to track livestock to assure we are labeling correctly. We realized if we were going to have accurate county-of-origin labeling, we needed to have an animal ID tracking program,” Nye added. “Country-of-origin labeling and animal ID go hand in hand.”

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Beginning in 2007, Michigan mandated that cattle in the state have identification tags in the left ear as part of the effort to eradicate bovine tuberculosis. The electronic ID tag, akin to a pierced earring, has a low-frequency microchip with a unique number assigned to each animal for its lifetime. A microchip reader reads the numbers, speeding the tracing of livestock if needed. The ear tag must be in place when an animal leaves the farm.

The Michigan program fits with the voluntary National Animal Identification System to help producers and animal-health officials respond quickly and effectively to animal disease occurrences. The tags play an important role in protecting the health of livestock, ensuring the safety of the food supply and managing animal disease.

“My calves have RFID tags when I buy them from the Frankenmuth area,” Sneed noted. The official ear tags prove the animal’s country of origin. Producers of other commodities will sign a statement naming the origin of the product, which may require extra record-keeping.

“I keep good records of my animals’ shots, vaccinations, and antibiotic withdrawal dates so I know all residues have left an animal’s system before it goes to market. In the United States, antibiotics may be given to prevent or treat disease in cattle, but Sneed uses antibiotics only when animals are sick.

You’ll find good records, but one thing you won’t find at Cyr Farms is a cattle prod. Sneed believes his cattle gain better and remain calmer without the electric prods. Like other livestock farmers, he puts the welfare of his animals first.

“Farming gets into your blood,” he shared with a smile. “I never wanted to do anything else.”

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The Michigan Soybean Promotion Committee works to enhance the profitability of Michigan’s soybean producers through investment of soybean checkoff funds. MSPC works to build markets for soybeans through educational programs, promotion of biodiesel and other new soybean uses, and funding agronomic research. MSPC is led by a board of farmers elected to direct the investment of soybean checkoff funds on behalf of the more than 10,000 Michigan soybean farmers. For information about soybean checkoff results, call (989) 652-3294 or visit www.michigansoybean.org. To learn more about good stewardship practices and the connection between crop production and animal agriculture, visit www.animalag.org.