

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Nation's Community-Focused Retail Grocers and Wholesalers Support Market-Driven Alternative to Mandatory Food Labeling

WASHINGTON – The National Grocers Association (N.G.A.), in concert with Food Marketing Institute, and the nation's leading beef, pork and seafood producers, today announced an agreement among the groups to develop a voluntary program to provide consumers with country of origin information covering meat, seafood and produce which would replace the burdensome and ineffective mandatory labeling program established under the 2002 Farm Bill.

“N.G.A. has consistently supported repeal of mandatory labeling and its replacement with a voluntary system. The current law and proposed regulations will hurt all segments of the food industry – including producers, processors, and community-focused retail grocers and wholesalers,” said N.G.A. President & CEO Thomas K. Zaucha. “America's grocery industry remains committed to providing consumers with the safest, highest-quality food products, as well as furnishing useful and pertinent information about these products. We believe this is best accomplished through voluntary means, driven by consumer demand and marketing leverage.”

N.G.A., the Food Marketing Institute, United Fresh Fruit & Vegetable Association, National Cattlemen's Beef Association, National Pork Producers Council, and National Fisheries Institute announced plans today to hold a summit in the very near future with other concerned segments of the food industry to develop a consensus voluntary labeling program.

“N.G.A. and its members have been consistent in their message to lawmakers that the mandatory program offers no benefits in terms of food safety or security, and serves only to mislead consumers by implying that imported products are less safe. There are no benefits, only crushing burdens of paperwork and added costs,” said Tom Wenning, N.G.A. Senior Vice President and General Counsel. “N.G.A. stands ready to work with the food industry and with Congress to develop a common-sense, market-driven solution to replace mandatory labeling.”

N.G.A. is the national trade association representing the retail and wholesale grocers that comprise the independent sector of the food distribution industry. An independent retailer is a privately owned or controlled food retail company operating in a variety of formats. Most independent operators are serviced by wholesale distributors, while others may be partially or fully self-distributing. Some are publicly traded but with controlling shares held by the family and others are employee owned. Independents are the true “entrepreneurs” of the grocery industry and dedicated to their customers, associates, and communities. N.G.A. members include retail and wholesale grocers, state grocers associations, as well as manufacturers and service suppliers.