

April 2013

## Act Now to Help Maintain Country-of-Origin Labeling on Food Products

In the 2008 Farm Bill, Congress required mandatory Country-of-Origin Labeling (COOL) for most agricultural products. Consumers are now able to clearly see if they are buying food produced by American farmers and ranchers.

National Farmers Union was at the forefront of the fight for the passage of COOL. Now, we continue to lead the defense of the law. Last year the World Trade Organization (WTO) told the United States that we had to get rid of mandatory COOL. Now it is up to President Barack Obama and Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack to decide what to do about the WTO ruling. The right decision is to reject the WTO ruling and stand up for American farmers and consumers by maintaining strong standards for this labeling program.

**It is crunch time in the fight for COOL. Below are three easy things you can do to support this common-sense law and stand up for American farmers and consumers:**

Sign the petition at [www.NFU.org/COOL](http://www.NFU.org/COOL) asking President Obama and Secretary Vilsack to protect COOL.

Share the link to the petition on your Facebook profile.

Tweet about COOL with the hashtag #keepCOOL.

You may also submit comments in support of the administration's proposal to come into compliance with the WTO's requirements by strengthening COOL. Visit [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov) and search for "Country-of-Origin Labeling" to submit your comments before the **April 11 deadline**.

[www.NFU.org/COOL](http://www.NFU.org/COOL)

## 23 REASONS YOUR HOME WELL WATER MUST BE TESTED

Why test my home well water? "Well" ... pun intended...besides ensuring safe, clean drinking water, there are at least 23 additional, logical reasons! Always take ownership & remember this is your well & your water. You control what happens to them & what goes into them. Since your well is a small, closed system, problems can easily be diagnosed, treated & resolved. Test monitoring & preventative maintenance can sustain personal health & reduce costly visits to the Doctor. It is your responsibility.

The Wasilla Soil & Water Conservation District (WSWCD) has recently assessed: 1) the number of home wells with on-site septic systems within the Borough's Core area; 2) unsafe water shed protection practices & 3) a serious lack of understanding/concern to conserve water quality at home. As a result, a new water well testing education campaign/service has been developed to make it more attractive to test your water.

Neither the State of Alaska Dept. of Environmental Conservation nor the local municipal governments provide direct services for home water well owners. Their level of interest focuses on public systems. At the local response level, thus enters the Wasilla Soil & Water Conservation District into the picture for you. In response to resident concerns & a review of scientific water quality data potentially affecting local aquifer sources, WSWCD has developed an action plan to educate folks about the values of safe drinking water & a testing service for home owners.

As part of their traditional "water" outreach to fellow citizens, WSWCD is committed to teaching basic water shed & practical well protection. As part of the District's successful Winter Conservation Series a FREE session titled "Private Home Well Protection & Testing" will be offered on Thurs. April 4, 7-8:30 pm @ Mat Su College. Basic stewardship information will review what well owners need to know. Compliments of the National Ground Water Association, a package of ground water information sheets specifically prepared for well owners in mind will be distributed to session participants. In light of the fact that ground water starts as surface water, the presentation will also consist of: practical land use measures & best management practices for keeping your water clean & safe.

As a concluding highlight of the session & to encourage/motivate folks to test their wells for their safety, as well as their loved ones, WSWCD will unveil a new Home Water Well Testing Service. This collaborative effort with Analytica Labs will offer residents an incentive to test their water & receive certified laboratory results at a reduced group rate. Analytica has accumulated extensive experience sampling throughout the Valley, & in remote Alaska locations. As a convenience, Analytica's local Valley presence includes an office in the Wasilla Carrs Mall. Session presenters are Elizabeth Rensch, from Analytica & WSWCD District Manager, Chuck Kaucic.

Therefore, at your request & with your health in mind, your non-regulatory, long-

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## FROM THE PRESIDENT

And somebody said March is about over ... April showers bring May flowers. Well, maybe somewhere else, but not here in Alaska. It is looking a lot like Christmas out there. Cold and snow! This month has gone by fast and I can't say a whole lot about extra stuff I got done. How about you? The pigs have been doing a whole lot better than last year. Just had the second litter last night—10, but two of them were very weak when I left this morning. The good thing is that it has heated up in the night just a little bit – encouragement! In the lower 48 there are less and less people in the animal business. Too bad, there is a market for just about anything you can grow or raise. At the time of writing Rick Hurd is in Africa working in Senegal with the locals. His only message so far has been; Hello Bob! Incredible so far, I haven't seen exactly what the millet storage problems are but I will tomorrow. It's an incredible place; Thank you! Rick. I am happy for him.

Other members are planting in their greenhouses while others are still working on equipment for the upcoming season. How many of you filled out the census? I spent some time on the phone with a gal from Montana. She even knows some of the same Farmers Union members I know. Small world but it is your world, if you need a place to stay or visit just look to your membership. There are members all over the place. That is one big benefit of attending the annual convention, you get to meet other farmers and make connections. Next year the annual convention is in Santa Fe, N.M., so begin your plans now for a nice trip and I am sure beautiful weather.

## WATER (CONTINUED)

term (since 1948) Conservation District has teamed up with an expert Lab to fill the void that is not recognized as a priority by the government.

WSWCD appreciates the support of fellow Cooperators Mat Su College, Palmer Soil & Water Conservation District, Alaska Rural Water Assn. & Analytica to provide water quality services to fellow neighbors & residents.

Registration is simple. It is limited due to classroom capacity & therefore, is available on a first contact - first reserved basis. To register, contact Lynne Atkins, WSWCD Admin Asst. @ 357-4563 ext. 109 or via email: adminasst@wasillaswcd.org.

I attended a meeting at the Division of Agriculture regarding land and land sales. The land that is sold as agriculture land has covenants that go along with title. Similar to subdivision or home ownership covenants in type and purpose. What you can and can't do with the land, the idea was to protect our agricultural land base so that it doesn't erode like that in the lower 48. What a purchaser gives up when purchasing "ag" lands is fee simple title. The discussion centered around the ability of the purchaser to obtain a loan for the building of a home on ground that has agricultural covenants and the purchaser usually has no equity. It did come out that things can be worked with the help of ARRC/Steve and FSA/Danny but it would be case by case. There is always hope. Other things discussed included future land sales and on line was Ed Fogle's Deputy Commissioner of DNR. Wow, that guy is sharp. I think he has been at it for a while. In attendance from the ag department was Eric, Doug, and Francie. It was a pretty sharp working group. Delta representation was dominated by Bryce and there were a few other notable people and don't let me forget Don Berberich. Don told me that he has some fruit plants for sale this year, check out his website: juicejellyandjam.com. Also the FFA convention is April 24-27 in Fairbanks so pitch in and help. Volunteers can call Amy Harmon at 982-2310. Last but not least, the division of ag has money to loan, so if you need it go get it. Have a great day and a beautiful month. -Bob

## SUIT FILED AGAINST EPA OVER PESTICIDES

On March 21 a coalition of environmental, consumer and beekeeper organizations filed suit against the EPA for failing to protect bees from certain pesticides. The lawsuit claims that the EPA did not adequately regulate the class of insecticides known as neonicotinoids. It further claims that EPA rushed the insecticides into the market. While there has been widespread die-offs, USDA investigations have failed to find a specific cause to the deaths.

For more information, contact Jan Ahlen, NFU government relations representative, at jahlen@nfudc.org.

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