

Ruling upholding mandatory country-of-origin labeling may impact GMO labeling

A recent court ruling that upheld mandatory country-of-origin labeling (COOL) of meat may come to bear on litigation over labels for genetically engineered food.

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit last month found that requiring meat producers to label their products with country-of-origin information doesn't violate their free speech rights. The ruling essentially said the government has a substantial interest in enforcing the COOL law even though the mandatory labels aren't meant to correct consumer deception.

Advocates of labeling foods with ingredients containing genetically modified organisms, or GMOs, believe the ruling buttresses their argument that such labels are constitutional. "You have a factual disclosure. The court ruled that companies don't have the right to hide that information from consumers," said George Kimbrell, attorney for the Center for Food Safety, a nonprofit that supports GMO labeling.

Drew Kershen, an agricultural biotechnology law professor at the University of Oklahoma, said the COOL ruling broadens what is considered a significant government interest in compelling speech. "They've downplayed the First Amendment free speech aspect of commercial speech" while bolstering the consumers' right to information, Kershen said.

Read the full, original article: [COOL ruling could impact a GMO label lawsuit](#)