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Consumer Reports food-labeling poll shows consumers want to know where their food comes from and expect higher label standards

Amid troubling food safety issues in the United States, most consumers want to know where their food comes from and favor strengthening food labeling requirements, a recent *Consumer Reports* poll has found.

The survey, conducted by the *Consumer Reports* National Research Center, polled a nationally representative sample of 1,004 people on issues concerning food safety and labeling. In addition to those listed below, consumers were asked about labels including "no hormones administered," "free of disease," and "irradiated" foods.

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN LABELING

According to the poll, 92 percent of consumers agree that imported foods should be labeled by their country of origin. While the federal government mandated country of origin labeling, or COOL, back in 2002 for nearly all food products, implementation has been delayed until October 2008, with the exception of seafood.

Consumers Union, the nonprofit publisher of *Consumer Reports*, has called for immediate implementation of COOL.

NATURAL AND ORGANIC LABELING

The poll also found that foods labeled as "natural," or "organic" are highly popular among consumers.

At the same time, consumers indicated that they expect more from natural labels than current standards dictate for processed food and meat. Eighty-six percent said they expect the natural label to mean that processed food does not contain any artificial ingredients. But current standards only prohibit artificial colorings and additives. Artificial sugars and oils like high fructose corn syrup or partially hydrogenated oils can still be used in natural foods.

In addition, nearly 9 out of 10 consumers want natural meat to come from animals that were raised on a diet without drugs, chemicals and other artificial ingredients. Currently, the natural label on meat only pertains to how the cut of meat was processed and not how animal was raised or what it ate. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) is in the process of reconsidering a variety of options concerning the natural label on meat.

As for organic fish, 9 of out of 10 consumers agree that it should be produced without environmental pollution and be low in contaminants. But the USDA is still working on developing standards for organic fish. In the meantime, organic fish is being marketed without any government oversight.

In July 2007, Consumers Union, which helped institute a ban on the organic label on fish sold in California, joined the Center for Food Safety's petition to ban the organic label on fish nationwide.

Consumers can find out which labels are most meaningful on food and other products on our dedicated labeling site, Eco-labels.org.

The *Consumer Reports* poll was conducted via telephone from June 7 to 10, 2007.

Get the [complete food-labeling poll results](#) and [press release](#).

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