

Origin added to meat labels

Label regulations spurred by recent concerns will go into effect March 16

BY DANA BRUXVOORT
Staff Reporter

Grocery shoppers soon won't need to wonder where their meat comes from.

The United States Department of Agriculture began requiring meat sold in retail stores to have labels indicating its country of origin beginning March 16.

"Regulations implanting the Country of Origin Labeling legislation ... are important to providing consumers with additional information about the source of food products and to helping producers differentiate their products," Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack wrote in a letter to industry representatives.

Vilsack said the legislation is a critical step in giving consumers more information about their food. He said the USDA will be reviewing industry compliance closely.

Brad McVey, meat manager at the Kirksville HyVee, said the store has been preparing for the change since last fall, which has made the adjustment smoother. He said he thinks the new requirements are a positive change.

"I think it's good that people are able to look at a package and tell where it's from if they have any reservations on that," McVey said.

He said the new requirements will be helpful to consumers and won't change the meat products HyVee offers.

"We could always let them know before if they asked," McVey said. "But now it's easier for them to obtain the information."

Because of recent food safety incidents, there is greater pressure to track where food comes from because it's important to pinpoint

a food item's origin if a problem emerges, he said.

The legislation requires all fresh meat, such as pork, beef, chicken and lamb, to be labeled with its country of origin, McVey said. If an animal was born, raised and slaughtered in multiple countries, each country must be listed on the label. He said the law doesn't cover processed meat.

He said the legislation isn't attempting to promote meat produced in the U.S., but this could become a selling point in the future.

Chris Friesleben, communication director for HyVee, said the legislation is a direct result of consumers' increased concerns about food safety.

"The whole landscape of food has changed in the last several years, but certainly in the last decade, as a result of globalization, [there has been] the fear of food contamination," Friesleben said.

She said HyVee is in compliance with the new requirements, but retailers are concerned that consumers will equate country of origin with food safety.

"I understand that there is a need for the consumer to be informed," Friesleben said. "But what concerns retailers is that the consumer then will only buy meat raised in the U.S., but that doesn't necessarily mean the product is safe."

The item must meet specific criteria to be labeled with "United States Country of Origin," according to a USDA press release. Other commodities which are required to display a country of origin label include fish, shellfish, peanuts, ginseng, pecans, macadamia nuts and perishable agricultural commodities like fresh and frozen fruits and vegetables.

Food service establishments, such as restaurants, cafeterias, food stands, bars and lounges are exempt from this requirement, according to the USDA.



New regulations require meat sold in retail stores to display country of origin. The new labels will not affect which products are sold in the HyVee meat aisle.

Amy Gleaves/Index

Teacher training funds plummet next year

BY ANDY MOORE
Staff Reporter

Dramatic budget cuts in the Missouri House have left little money for teacher training programs in elementary and secondary schools.

Regional professional development centers, which provide professional training for teachers, will receive "no less than \$2 million," for fiscal year 2010, according to HB 2. Employees of the Northeast RPDC and most of the districts it serves are leaning on Missouri senators to add more money to the appropriation bill, said Darl Davis, director of the Northeast RPDC.

Statewide professional development centers received \$15 million the previous year. The House originally planned to have no money for professional development for the coming fiscal year until the \$2 million was added to the bill. Although professional development programs receive some funding, it might not be enough to keep the programs running, and the RPDC might lose many employees, Davis said.

"We will receive something, even if it's two million," Davis said. "[The cut in funding] basically would destroy the system. It would almost be nonexistent."

Funding for RPDCs has decreased in the last few years. In 2007 and 2008 they received \$20 million from the state, an increase from previous years. Last year, it was cut to \$15 million, and it is



Teachers attended the Distinction in Performance Awards Banquet Monday night. Teacher training funds for next year are in jeopardy.

Amy Gleaves/Index

currently "zeroed out," Davis said.

Teachers in counties surrounding Kirksville receive training from the Northeast RPDC, located in Violette Hall, and there are many professional development centers throughout the state. The Northeast RPDC serves 32 districts in the area along with many more in other regions. It also works with Truman students enrolled in the MAE program. This particular

branch of the RPDC receives grants from both the state and federal governments — about \$660,000 and \$826,000, respectively.

Davis said the cuts in funding show the lack of understanding of how professional training aids schools in meeting the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act. He said it is not merely workshops to make people feel good, rather it

is a necessary support system.

"The state of Missouri has assured the federal government that there will be a support system provided for schools to implement No Child Left Behind," Davis said. "If the state of Missouri is not providing that, there can be fines levied by the federal government — sizeable fines in the millions — for not supporting that."

Donnie Campbell, superintendent of Green City School District, 20 miles northwest of Kirksville, said he relies on the RPDC for training teachers.

"Anytime we need help, the RPDC has been 20 minutes away and been willing to graciously ... provide that support and help and [get] teachers the info and the training they need to improve student learning," Campbell said. "If this is not here, I think it's one of those things that you don't have any idea how big an impact it's going to have until it's no longer there," Campbell said.

Campbell said smaller schools in rural counties will be especially hurt by having to compensate and pay for resources normally provided by the RPDC, such as the Missouri Assessment Program, literacy programs and complying with laws for special education students.

Campbell said that with little funding, the RPDC will be less equipped to help teachers stay up to date, and the younger teachers could be affected the most by the

lack of funding for training, making it difficult to meet the standards of No Child Left Behind. The stimulus money from the federal government will only help temporarily, Campbell added.

"Teachers do not have at their finger tips ways to teach more efficiently and help all students," Campbell said. "That's what the RPDC has been able to help us with — how to deliver instruction to all students at all ranges."

Rick Roberts, superintendent of Shelby County School District in Shelbyville, 55 miles southeast of Kirksville, said his teaching staff is concerned about missing out on many opportunities the RPDC has offered them, like reading strategies, leadership academies, reading specialists and special education.

"For anything to develop, every company, every place you go has professional development of some sort to increase knowledge of your people," Roberts said. "If you can't have that then we're really going to struggle."

The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education presented a banquet for the Distinction in Performance award in the Georgian Room in the Student Union Building on Monday night, honoring 30 area schools for outstanding academic achievements. Two districts in Adair County and the Kirksville R-III school district received awards. Campbell's and Robert's school districts, mentioned above, also received awards.

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