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Submission to the Senate Standing Committee on Agriculture and Industry enquiry into country of origin food labelling.

From: Mr Bruce Collins, Qld

I am particularly concerned that current Country of Origin Labelling (CoOL for food) system does not provide enough information for Australian consumers to make informed purchasing decisions.

I submit that the product label should clearly identify the following:

- Country of origin of product;
- Where the product was processed and packaged;
- The percentage of Australian and imported ingredients in the product; and
- The country of origin of imported ingredients.

These requirements should apply equally to all food products, whether produced in Australia or overseas.

An example of current misleading labelling is a packet of frozen vegetables stating "Made in New Zealand from local & imported ingredients" which could actually mean "Grown & processed in China, & packaged in New Zealand".

While this may be a legal practice within the Free Trade agreements of those countries, it should not negate the right of consumers to have correct information so that they can make informed choices.

The ACCC website sets out definitions of the terms 'Product of', 'Grown in', and 'Made in'.

It appears the 'Made in' can mean various things, depending on the cost of production of the item concerned.

Set out below are questions on various food products commonly found on our supermarket shelves. Can you tell me the answers to these questions? Those are the things that consumers have a right to know when they are making food purchasing choices.



This tin of beetroot says 'Made in New Zealand.'

Does this mean the beetroot was grown in NZ?

Or if 50% or more of the cost of producing the tin of beetroot, is in the canning, labelling & marketing process, could the beetroot be imported from another country? If so, how do we know which country?



This tin of pineapple says 'Product of Australia.'

So this means the pineapples were grown in Australia.

Is that correct?



This tin of beans says 'Made in Australia from imported and local ingredients'. It also says 60% legumes on ingredients list.

Does this mean that the beans (the major ingredient) were grown in Australia?



This says 'Made in Australia from imported and local ingredients.' It also says 85% peanuts on ingredients list.

Does this mean that all the peanuts were grown in Australia, or that there is a mix of Australian and imported peanuts?

If so, how do we know what proportion and which country?



This packet of dried fruit says 'Packed in Australia from local and imported ingredients', but it also says 'Australian grown sultanas, raisins & currants', so we know country of origin of the basic ingredients, which, we believe, is what consumers want to know.

If this processor can do this, why can't others?

It seems that alleged costs of providing accurate information to consumers is used as a smokescreen to hide the truth.

I thank you for the opportunity to make this submission.

SB Collins 30/04/14