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House Expected to Vote Wednesday to Repeal Country-of-Origin Meat Labels Due to a Trade Agreement Provision That Is Replicated in the TPP

Groups Warn Congress That Fast Tracking the TPP Trade Deal Would Topple More U.S. Consumer Protections; Public Citizen Releases List of Top U.S. Consumer, Environmental Policies Undermined by Past Trade Deals

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The threat to consumer laws posed by the massive Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) deal will be on full display Wednesday when the U.S. House of Representatives is expected to pass legislation to repeal the U.S. policy requiring country-of-origin labels on meat sold here. This law is just the latest in a string of U.S. policies that have been repealed or weakened to comply with provisions in previous trade agreements that also are included in the current draft of the TPP deal.

Major consumer groups, including Public Citizen, [wrote](#) to President Barack Obama last month supporting the labeling policy and warning about the TPP's threats to other consumer laws. The meat labeling is [supported by nine in ten Americans](#), but has been under attack by meat and livestock producers in Mexico and Canada who successfully challenged the policy as violating U.S. obligations under World Trade Organization (WTO) rules.

“How could Congress be considering Fast Track for more trade deals that will undermine our food safety after just being ordered by a foreign trade tribunal to eliminate Americans’ right to know where the meat at our grocery stores comes from?” said Lori Wallach, director of Public Citizen’s Global Trade Watch.

The TPP [would require us to permit food imports](#) if the exporting country claims that their safety regime is “equivalent” to our own, even if it violates the key principles of our food safety laws. These rules effectively would outsource domestic food inspection to other countries. Under the TPP, any U.S. food safety rule on pesticides, labeling or additives that is higher than international standards would be subject to challenge as an “illegal trade barrier,” which is what led to the demise of the meat labeling policy.

“The president says ‘we’re making stuff up’ about trade deals undermining our consumer and environmental policies, meanwhile, thanks to recent trade pacts, Congress is about to gut

consumer meat labels, and we now have to import processed chicken from China that Congress previously banned. To comply with NAFTA, the Obama administration [opened all U.S. roads](#) to trucks originating in Mexico that lack our safety and air pollution standards,” Wallach said.

Speaking at Nike in May, the President [stated](#), “Critics warn that parts of this deal would undermine American regulation – food safety, worker safety, even financial regulations. They’re making this stuff up. This is just not true. No trade agreement is going to force us to change our laws.”

Despite the fact that the pact is secret from the public, Members of Congress, who are allowed to read it, confirm that the draft TPP deal would undermine our laws.

Past trade agreements on which the TPP was modeled repeatedly have undermined domestic consumer and environmental policies. The meat labeling controversy comes after a previous WTO ruling required the United States [to reverse its ban](#) on sale of processed chicken prepared in China, a ban enacted by Congress because of severe shortcomings in China’s food safety and inspection regimes.

Public Citizen’s List of Top U.S. Public Interest Policies Undermined by Trade Deals:

- Instead of only allowing imports of poultry and meat from processing facilities U.S. inspectors certified as complying with U.S. safety and inspection standards, [now we allow products from any plant](#) in any country whose policies, even if violating core elements of U.S. meat and poultry safety law, are deemed equivalent based on comparison of written policies.
- U.S. patent laws [were altered](#) to comply with the WTO to extend the duration of monopolies provided to medicines, delaying generic drugs that provide lower priced drugs to consumers.
- The U.S. ban on sales of tuna caught using dolphin-deadly nets was eliminated and now [a final WTO ruling is imminent](#) against voluntary dolphin-safe tuna consumer labels.
- The Obama administration [lifted the ban](#) on access to all U.S. highways for Mexican-domiciled long-haul trucks that had been excluded due to safety and air quality concerns.
- U.S. Clean Air Act regulations on gasoline cleanliness [were rolled back](#).
- The U.S. [lifted a ban](#) on U.S. sale of shrimp caught with nets that drown sea turtles.
- The U.S. automobile “CAFE” fuel efficiency standards fleet analysis regime [was weakened](#).
- U.S. country of origin labels for meat are [pending elimination](#).
- The ban on processed chicken from China [was lifted](#) despite horrifying inspection reports and China’s lax safety and inspection systems.

Through the TPP, U.S. policies could be challenged both by foreign governments, and also by corporations and foreign investors that [would be empowered](#) to sue the U.S. government for future profits lost in a special tribunal that operates outside of the U.S. court system.

More on Previous Public Interest Policies Undermined by Trade Pacts

In January 2015, the Obama administration [announced](#) it would allow Mexico-domiciled long-haul trucks on all U.S. highways after losing a North American Free Trade Agreement challenge and being threatened with sanctions on more than two billion in U.S. trade flows. Consumer groups warn that the trucks pose significant safety threats, while environmental groups warn that they do not meet U.S. emissions standards.

In response to previous WTO rulings, the United States [has rolled back](#) U.S. Clean Air Act regulations on gasoline cleanliness standards successfully challenged by Venezuela and Mexico; Endangered Species Act rules relating to shrimping techniques that kill sea turtles after a successful challenge by Malaysia and other nations; and altered auto fuel efficiency (Corporate Average Fuel Economy) standards that were successfully challenged by the European Union.

The Fast Tracked legislation that implemented the WTO included provisions to enact a patent extension sought by pharmaceutical interests that consumer groups had successfully defeated for decades but the WTO terms required. The Uruguay Round Agreements Act [amended the U.S. patent law](#) to provide a 20-year monopoly – replacing the 17-year term in U.S. law and increasing medicine prices by billions by extending the period during which generic competition would be prohibited. The bill also [watered down](#) the Federal Meat Inspection Act and the Poultry Products Inspection Act both of which required that only poultry and meat that actually met U.S. safety and inspection standards could be imported and sold here and allowed imports that meet “equivalent” standards with foreign nations certifying their own plants for export.

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