



## 'Distance Traveled' Food Labeling Proposed

January 20, 2010

The United Kingdom's government is proposing to label food with the country where it was produced. According to the industry publication "Food Production Daily," based in France, the Freight Transport Association, which represents the freight transportation industry in the UK, fears this could lead to consumer confusion regarding the environmental implications of transporting food long distances. (See the complete story pasted below.)

During the meeting of the Agricultural Committee of the Transportation Research Board (TRB) last week, there was some discussion of government policies being promoted in other European countries to mandate labeling of food according to the distance it has traveled. Companies that conduct business solely in the U.S. are not affected by government regulations in European countries. However, it is important to be aware of developments like this since the activists pushing such policies have effective global communication networks.

The issue of "food miles" has been the topic of earlier notices\* from AFTC and we are continually monitoring this issue. A report titled "Demystifying the Environmental Sustainability of Food Production" was discussed in AFTC notices late last year. This report debunked the increasingly popular myth among consumers that buying food from local sources is always more energy-efficient and more environmentally beneficial than buying food from far-off sources.

The co-author of that report, Dr. Roger A. Cady, presented the findings at the meeting of the TRB's Freight Transportation Planning and Logistics Committee last week. He is scheduled to discuss the report at our AFTC meeting planned for Feb. 22, 2010, during the ATA Winter Leadership meeting in Arlington, Va. Members attending the meeting will benefit greatly from hearing the presentation to better equip themselves to tell the story of the trucking industry's essential role in our modern and efficient transportation system.

\*

<http://www.truckline.com/Federation/Conferences/AFTC/NewsandUpdates/Food%20Transportation%20Efficiency%20Contributes%20to%20Climate%20Goals.pdf>

\* \* \* \* \*

**Freight industry attacks country of origin labels**

**By Guy Montague-Jones, 14-Jan-2010**

**The Freight Transport Association (FTA) has criticised UK plans to introduce *“clear and unambiguous country of origin labelling rules”* for food products.**

Last week the UK government set out its priorities for the food sector in the DEFRA Food 2030 strategy report. One of its main conclusions centred on the need for improved labelling, and in particular more accurate information on where food is produced and processed.

But the FTA, which represents major transport firms and supermarkets in the UK, has warned against becoming fixated with the idea of food miles. The trade association argues that food miles are just one piece in the carbon footprint jigsaw, and can be misleading when considered in isolation.

**Carbon contributors**

Christopher Snelling, the FTA head of global supply chain policy, said: *“By fixating on ‘country of origin’ as an indicator of a product’s environmental credentials we are not giving consumers an accurate picture.*

*“Method of production, for example heated greenhouses, often has a far bigger impact than miles travelled on a product’s carbon footprint.*

*“If consumers are given a misleading impression it will only lead to token gestures towards ‘going green’, rather than real results.”*

The FTA claims that giving too much credence to country of origin labels may even have undesirable consequences.

*“By deterring people from buying produce from Africa or Asia we risk penalising millions trying to make a living in the developing world,”* said Snelling.

**Air freight**

Much of the fruit and vegetables that comes into the UK from Africa and Asia arrives via air freight, which according to the FTA, contributes to around 0.6 per cent of UK carbon emissions.

Food from far flung destinations can even have a lower carbon footprint than products produced and processed in Western Europe. The FTA quoted a recent Waitrose report saying: *“Airfreighted produce can have a lower carbon footprint than produce grown in Northern Europe because of the additional heating required when growing crops in a cooler climate.”*

While food miles may not be the whole story they undoubtedly contribute to carbon emissions. To find out exactly what that contribution is the FTA launched the Logistics Carbon Reduction Scheme (LCRS) last week.

The initiative requires members to submit their fuel data to the trade body. The information will then be analysed and sent to the government to help inform policy and reveal ways of reducing emissions.

**Copyright** - Unless otherwise stated all contents of this web site are © 2000/2010 - Decision News Media SAS - All Rights Reserved - For permission to reproduce any contents of this web site, please email our Syndication department: Administration &

Finance - Full details for the use of materials on this site can be found in the Terms & Conditions

<http://www.foodproductiondaily.com/Supply-Chain/Freight-industry-attacks-country-of-origin-labels>